

The Civil Society Facility, Media Freedom and Accountability Programme,
EuropeAid/134613/C/ACT/MULTI

A World The Size Of A Saucer - International news reporting in SEE countries

This project is funded by
The European Union

A project implemented by
The Center for Independent Journalism

South-East European Partnership for Media Development

SEE Partnership for Media Development is implemented by a consortium of media organizations from **Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania.** Media professionals from Kosovo and Turkey will also be involved.

The Project is co-financed by the European Commission, the Civil Society Facility, Media Freedom and Accountability Programme, Europe Aid/134613/C/ACT/MULTI

The SEENPM members that are part of the project: Albanian Media Institute (Albania), Mediacenter for Media and Civil Society Development (BiH), Media Initiatives – Association for Media Development and Promotion of Professional Journalism (BiH), Macedonian Institute for Media (Macedonia), Montenegro Media Institute (Montenegro), Media Center (Serbia), Media and Reform Centre Nis (Serbia), Media Development Center (Bulgaria).

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A project implemented
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The European Commission is the EU's executive body.

"The European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders".

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A REGIONAL OVERVIEW

When people think of "interesting times", as in the proverbial Chinese curse, the year 2016 will probably come to minds of many. It was a full and pregnant year, with a wealth of events that have influenced the world. The Brexit vote and the whole discussion about the relevance of the EU, the terrorist attacks all over the world, the coup in Turkey, the war in Syria, the flux of migrants toward and across Europe, the stronger stances in the Russian discourse and, last but not least, the US elections that brought to power Donald Trump. We all have learned new words: post-truth, fake news, alternative facts.

Not a dull moment for journalists. But what about the media consumers? Were they prepared for this cascade of information? And how did this information get to them? Who was there to help them navigate these murky waters, to provide them with context, localization and interpretation of facts?

The present report is the third in a series of reports examining less-explored angles of the freedom of expression, prepared within the frame of the South East European Partnership for Media Development. It looks at how the media in South-Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) served their public interest role, by providing their audiences with sufficient, correct, balanced and comprehensible information. For the sake of the comparability, we looked especially at the Brexit and US elections campaigns, as two events that are journalistically relevant and with a predictable impact on the region.

In the preparation of the national reports, the authors consulted media reports and studies about the status of the media and journalism in their countries. They also conducted interviews with journalists, academics and foreign affairs experts, who commented on the ability of the media in the targeted countries to cover international news in a manner that is comprehensible for the local public, to provide both local angles and broader context and to see the trends beyond the sheer facts and figures. We also looked at how the social media play in this respect, what is their role in the free flow of information and to what extent they offer a fertile environment for a valuable, pluralistic exchange of opinions. Last but not least, we looked for the possible propaganda in the media in the five countries, identifying the authors and the interests at play.

With all this information at hand, we can compound, as in a cortical homunculus drawing, the media reflection of the international current affairs and thus see how big the world is for the public in our project countries.

INTERNATIONAL REPORTING: SCARCE, SHALLOW, POLITICIZED

One common trait our national reports show is the apparent lack of interest in and poor quality of the international reporting in all five countries.

For example, according to the Bosnian report, only 10% of the news space is reserved to foreign news. Against the background of a quite eventful year, what was on the rise was "the so-called analytical opus, i.e. the correlation [of the international events] with Bosnia and Herzegovina's international position." The Albanian daily Panorama sported no news on the Brexit vote on the very day of the referendum, but only an editorial. All the same, on November 8, 2016the newspaper did not mention anything on US elections and did not have a "world" section at all. On the other hand, "in a very unusual move for the Albanian media", Top Channel TV station devoted the whole main news edition of June 24 to the reporting and analysis of the Brexit referendum, from voting, to economics, and even to the expected effects on sports. The Macedonian report notes that "false news is the only direct link between the American presidential elections and Macedonia", despite the big appetite for news on this topic of the local public. Instead, "it received sketchy information that was often not properly framed, and there was no thorough analysis in the domestic media", reads the report.

There are a couple of reasons why the frequency and quality of international reporting is decreasing in the region. One of them, shared by all the countries in our focus, was the shriking of the newsrooms and the disappearance of the specialised reporters. Even more dramatic is the situation of the national correspondents abroad. "Montenegro is perhaps one of the few countries in Europe that does not have a permanent correspondent anywhere in the world", reads the national report. The same can be found in the Macedonian media who, for many years back, havenot had any reporters abroad, with the exception of the national television. Unfortunately, the ratings of the national TV are "low and their reports go unnoticed". In Bosnia and Herzegovina, only the most powerful media outlets have correspondents, primarily based in Washington, Istanbul and Brussels. In Albania, apart from the main TV channels, there are no correspondents in other countries, even in the neighboring ones. Under the economic pressures the media in the region face, the international news staff working locally is also reduced.

To cover the international field, the media in these countries turn to international sources. The most used sources of information were BBC, CNN, Reuters, AP, ANSA, VOA, The Guardian, the Daily Mail, and AFP. "We are dealing with translations, rather than reporting", reads the Albanian report, stressing that more often than not the source of the news is not even cited.

This accounts not only for less international news in the media, but also for a poorer quality of whatever appears, as the materials are not prepared by specialized professionals. For example, in Albania, the only country in the project where a study of foreign news desks has been performed recently, the overwhelming part of the reporters covering this field are in the, and about 37% of them had a journalism degree."In fact, when asked how they managed to specialize in international reporting, 57% of them said that they had made it through individual efforts, 16% through university courses, and 10% during training", reads the Albanian report. The news reports thus resulting are shallow, with no real meaning for the local population. Sometimes, the events covered from these sources are just sensationalistic (such as crime or celebrity "news") or human-interest stories (such as natural catastrophes).

With no specialized reporters to provide context and interpretation of facts, the newsrooms turn to "analysts" who fill in the empty public space. But, as the Serbian report points out "their knowledge about world events is either too professional (a too large number of details narrows the picture, not the opposite) or subjective (clear pro-Russian or pro-West attitudes, or isolated political views as starting point for commenting world politics)". The Macedonian report sees the value of expert voices in opening up the needed debates on international issues "unless they are under the influence of the players in the domestic foreign policy".

This type of "externalization" of the discourse brings expert voices to the conversation and eases a bit the burden on the newsrooms, but is not without consequences for the public. One of them is the fragmentation of knowledge, resulted from treating each event separately. It is better discribed by the Montenegrin report: "A particular lack of empathy was observed in the most part of Montenegrin media when reporting on the refugee crisis. (...) The audience is rarely explained the background of an event, dispute or statement. Viewers and readers do not have a clear picture of the position of a country and most probably very few of them could explain who has participated in Afghanistan or Syrian war, how the president of USA is elected or where the Council of

Europe or European Council are located and what their purpose is".

Another consequence, revealed by our national reports, is the politicization of the foreign news agenda and its "annexation" to the interest and discourses of various parties. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the media covering the Brexit vote or the US elections followed the political positions of the groups they - openly or discreetly - support. "This was mostly noticeable in selecting the information and giving space to people who agree with the majority group, rather than in journalists' by-lined commentaries", reads the report. It goes on with illustrative examples: "Serb media had a positive view of Russia's engagement and interpreted it as a reaction to the "hegemonic policy" and military intervention of the United States. On the other hand, Bosniak media condemned Russia's interference, which they claimed additionally deepened the plight of the people in Syria". A similar light is shed, from a different angle, by the Macedonian report: "The usual belief is that the outcome in the USA will determine the outcome of the Macedonian elections and the aftermath. However, just like in many other spheres, things are becoming simplified and there was a cheering atmosphere for the US elections as if they were a football match".Albania shows a softer version of this instrumentalization of the foreign news, mentioning that some of the TV stations have dedicated programs to foreign affairs, "but mainly through interviews with foreign ambassadors and other key people in Albanian foreign policy". The Serbian report brutally cuts through the matter: "Media in Serbia barely deal with international topics, unless they refer to Serbia".

SOCIAL MEDIA: INFORMATION WITHOUT CONTEXT

With legacy media so unprepared to deal extensively with the people's appetite for foreign news, social media seem to have taken over as an important source of information, enjoying all the freedom of an unregulated medium without too much care for rules of fairness and accuracy.

In Montenegro, the topics related to international news are often debated on social networks, "even more than domestic issues". Moreover, these discussions seemed to be able to detach the issues from the local agenda, as they were not focusing so much on the impact on Montenegro, being formulated "rather in terms of geopolitical reviews and how the social actors in Montenegro are set in relation to these events". The same is also true for Serbia, where, when it comes to world news, social media have become the major source of information, especially for young people. "Social networks are open to all topics, which is much more than we can say about traditional media", reads the report.

But, even without any external intervention, the polarization of opinions was clearly visible in social media, too. As the Bosnian report shows when analyzing the conduct of social media users during elections, "numerous NGO activists from Sarajevo and Banja Luka - who are supported by European and American donations - favored in their posts Hillary Clinton and opposition to Brexit and emphasized the importance of human rights of minorities". Emphasizing that "individuals shared and commented on what they liked", the report makes a clear distinction between personal beliefs and agendas and the government's ones.

There is also another warning very clearly spelled by some of our reports."Social media are becoming ground and channel for everything", thinks an expert quoted by the Serbian report. This "everything" includes, unfortunately, unchecked and inaccurate information, but also hate speech, discrimination and intolerance. "Unlike traditional media, social media do not stick to professional journalism standards. They stick to standards even less than tabloids where journalistic standards are visible only in traces", reads the report.

PROPAGANDA

Hard to define, but easier to spot, propaganda seems to be present to various degrees in the media in the region. The Albanian report states that there is no clear propaganda trait visible in the media "but particular influences could be the Turkish ones, more rarely anti-Western, and recently, especially after Trump's winning the elections, an anti-Soros attitude has also emerged in some media". According to it, the editorials seem to be more prone to such influences than the news and there were reports on websites in Arab language or even in Albanian, which allegedly did propaganda for ISIS.There are no Russian media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but the Serbian and English online editions of Russian media are certainly followed in the Republika Srpska more than in the BiH Federation. According to an expert quoted by the Bosnian report, BiH Federation "lives in a parallel reality created over decades by globalist NGOs and media which have been drilled into believing that spreading the ideology of Euro-Atlantic

integration is the foremost duty and obligation". In Macedonia, the report mentions a Russian impact on some pro-government media, "after the opening of several Russian portals and establishing correspondents of Russian media, while in the recent years also Russian capital started entering Macedonia". In Serbia, it seems the Russian propaganda is very active, countered by "weaker and less crude attempts by the USA". But the experts quoted by the report consider it "minuscule compared to the domestic propaganda", meaning the way the party in power "has subdued and put under its control all media with significant reach and influence, relentlessly brainwashing the citizens".

THE WORLD AND THE REGION

With this information at hand, we tried to see the place of the SEE region in relation with the "big world". What we found is an almost isolated group of countries, paying lips service to integration, but consistently looking inwards, to their own local political navel.

An international story has more chances to make its way to the Albanian public if it has even a minimal Albanian angle to it: Albanian officials meetings with Brussels officials, the reaction of EU to something that happened in Albania or stories from the life of Albanian emigrants in Europe. Macedonia, a country on the migrants' route to Europe and directly affected by the massive influx of refugees, has avoided apparently any political debate among the main political players.The small number of articles on international activities of the country shows how much Bosnia and Herzegovina is preoccupied with its internal problems and how incapable or unwilling of carrying out international activities. In the words of the report, "Balkans and Bosnia and Herzegovina have, in the American foreign policy, the importance of a decimal in a calculation." Speaking of calculations, the numbers tell the same story of isolation when it comes to Serbia. A survey by the end of last year (quoted by the national report) asked the Serbs "Which worldwide event has made the strongest impact in 2016?" "The "absolute winner" was the election of Donald Trump for USA President, with 61% of votes, then Brexit, with 61%, Fidel Castro's death, with 43%, while terrorist attacks in Belgium and France took fourth place with only 23%. NATO missile shield activation in Romania had only 1% and was on the last position", reads the report. Or, as a Montenegrin expert grimly worded the conclusion, the countries in the region concentrate on themselves, living "autistic" lives.

CONCLUSIONS

The reporting of foreign news is scarce and of questionable quality in the SEE countries covered by the project. Information comes to the public mostly from intermediary sources such as big international media and is only marginally treated, explained for the use of local audiences and put into local context. The absence of specialized journalists and correspondents, and the apparent lack of interest of most media to cover the international scene concur to this situation.

International news reporting often mirror the internal politics and media often follow the interest of the ethnic or political groups in the countries. In some cases, the international events are reported on only if they have links with the local politics or reflect the diplomatic activities of the countries. This also applies to information regarding EU and NATO that is superficially reported and interpreted despite the countries' expressed interest to join these organizations.

Social media contribute to a more vivid and interesting debate on international issues in all the countries we studied, but the amount of inaccurate or biased information, as well as the presence of hate speech make the medium unreliable. The lack of media literacy of most of the users, as well as the attempts of some political actors to manipulate the public discourse using the social media further complicate the situation.

As a result, the access of the people in the countries in the region to information on international affairs is limited. While people are informed about events, the significance of these events and the impact on the world and their own future are not always properly underlined. The news comes form a handful of countries (USA, UK, France, Germany, Turkey), while the rest of the world is virtually non-existent. People end up only half-informed, with a poor perception of the world around them and isolated even form their neighboring countries.

A successful integration of the countries in the region into the European Union and NATO has to have a serious information

component, through methods that take into account the media consumption habits of the people, as well as the credibility and accountability of the source of information. If they want to maintain their relevance, media and journalists have to endeavour to better know the information needs of their public and to better, more responsibly, cater for them.

ALBANIA

Author: Ilda Londo

INTRODUCTION

The Albanian media landscape is very dynamic and rich in numbers, but the ongoing economic crisis on the Albanian media scene, coupled to the global shifts in the profession and the economic model of media outlets, along with the transformation and convergence of media, have led to new challenges for the media. In addition, the very nature of the Albanian media functioning has increasingly put the spotlight on political developments in the country, dedicating most of their human resources to political reporting, while only a small minority is engaged in foreign news reporting.

Currently, the landscape of Albanian media is abundant for a population of almost three million. There are two national commercial TV stations, 67 local TV stations, 113 cable providers and cable channels, five satellite TVs; and, so far, four national terrestrial multiplexes have recently received their license1, while the public broadcaster will manage two of the national terrestrial networks, where several programs will be available. Similarly, there are two national commercial radio stations, 68 local ones2, and the public radio and its branches in some of the main cities. Although a few of the stations broadcast in all ways (satellite, cable, terrestrial, digital and analogue), the abundance of the overall number of channels is beyond any doubt. Even though television is still considered the main means of information for the overall population, there are also numerous daily newspapers (about 20) and other publications of different periodicity. Last, but not least, the last years have witnessed a mushrooming of portals, which, in spite of their problems with professional quality, authenticity of information, and overall ethical considerations, are becoming increasingly present in the lives of Albanians.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF FOREIGN NEWS REPORTING IN ALBANIAN MEDIA

In this overall richness of information sources, one of the trends that seems to be constant is the continuous reduction of human resources, namely fewer reporters, across all media. When considering the newsroom composition, the first victims seem to be the people that are in charge of international news. A 2016 survey of about 30 mainstream media (print, TV, and online) revealed a growing tendency to reduce the number of staff covering foreign affairs reporting: 40% of respondents confirmed that the staff had decreased, 30% said that it had remained the same, while almost 17% said that it had increased, a trend that concerned only the recently opened portals[3]. In addition, considering both the ranking of foreign news in TV news editions or newspaper pages, this seems to be among the most neglected sections, and often the newsroom staff is not committed to covering just foreign news, but whatever they can: out of 30 media outlets surveyed, only 11 of them had staff dedicated to foreign news exclusively, while 15 covered foreign news and other topics[4], which points both to a case of work overload, as well as to a potential lack of specialized reporters. As the same survey points out: "On the other hand, there are also media outlets in which international reporting is entrusted to reporters from other sections or those who are free for the moment get to work on international news, thus reflecting a poor level of appreciation for this category of information."[5]

The 2016 survey on international news reporting in Albanian media offers other interesting data on the age and professional qualification of foreign news reporters, factors that have their influence on the ultimate quality of world news reports. More specifically, the overwhelming part of reporters covering this field belong to the 25-39 years age group, namely 83% of them,

1 List of TV operators, Audiovisual Media Authority, http://ama.gov.al/mediat/tv/
2 List of radio operators, Audiovisual Media Authority, http://ama.gov.al/mediat/radio/
3 Rr. Zguri, "Reporting international affairs in Albanian media," 2016.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.

while 10% are between 40-49 years old, and 3% are under 24. This finding is more or less in line with other research efforts to document the demographics of the staff in the Albanian media, but the young age of reporters usually comes also with little experience. The 2016 survey also revealed that about 37% of foreign news reporters had a journalism degree, 20% had majored in foreign languages, about 7% in international relations, and about 27% had studied other degrees[6]. In fact, when asked how they managed to specialize in international reporting, 57% of them said that they had made it through individual efforts, 16% through university training, and 10% during training[7]. Hence, in this case the domination of self-made reporters compared to those that have formal education, - be it through university, or through continuous learning - also bears its stamp on the quality of news produced.

That being said, a few of the main TV stations have correspondents in cities like Brussels, London, Rome, or in the Balkan region, and occasionally there are reports in the media. However, most of these reports cater to the Albanian part or nature of the events or trends reported, such as Albanian officials meetings with Brussels officials or the reaction of EU to happenings in Albania, stories from the life of Albanian emigrants in Europe, and so on. Hence, even with correspondents, most often the main focus remains on the effects on Albania or Albanians abroad, rather than on what is particularly going on beyond Albanian borders and what this means for the world.

Nonetheless, correspondents' reporting is usually rare, as they are an endangered species in the Albanian media. What is then the main source of information for Albanian journalists that report on foreign news? Both interviews and monitoring seem to agree on that: reports from foreign media are widely used and republished in Albanian media, be it in print, online, or TV. "Since Albanian televisions invest a lot in equipment or luxurious studies, but fail to invest in correspondents from other countries, at least in countries that would be relevant to Albania, journalists and editors of foreign affairs are forced to secure the news through the internet, but usually referring to serious sources, such as *Reuters, AP, AFP, etc*." [8]

In fact, the survey carried out with 30 international news reporters in 2016 indicated that among the most used sources of information were *BBC, CNN, Reuters, AP, ANSA, VOA, The Guardian, the Daily Mail,* and *AFP*. Interviews with journalists and experts of foreign news reporting in the Albanian media also confirmed that in most cases we are dealing with translations, rather than reporting, while a few journalists also indicated that they started working first by translating foreign news, and then moved on to other sections of the newsroom[9]. This situation reveals not only the practices in reporting foreign news in the country, but also the importance and priority attached to this section within the newsroom, which, clearly, does not seem very high.

While almost all news media in the country refer to or simply translate what main foreign news agencies report, a disturbing trend that has resisted in the last 25 years is the use of information without even quoting it. This is especially the case with print and online websites. The above-mentioned three-month monitoring of four daily newspapers conducted in 2016[10] revealed that almost all stories lacked the name of the author, as they are purely translations of news from foreign media. Only about a quarter of the articles in the newspapers quoted the source, which reflects the overall lack of respect for copyright, as well as the tendency to report foreign news through the lenses of usually highly-regarded, but nonetheless, not authentic sources to the newspapers.

What should be mentioned in this context is also the role that foreign news agencies have been played in Albania, especially immediately after the fall of the regime in the early 90s, when Albanian media were still few, inexperienced, and media freedom was still an open struggle. Many of the global news agencies established branches in Albania, including *BBC, Deutsche Welle, VOA*, etc., and were broadcast regularly, constituting a usually credible and reputable source of information in an era when the quality of information was questioned continuously. A few of these programs are still broadcast, even directly on Albanian TV stations, as in the case of *VOA* Albanian news edition, which is aired by several TV stations. However, many of these programs either have shut down or have been reduced, leaving a void in this respect.

In order to have a better view of the way the Albanian media report on foreign news, and how prepared the Albanian public is to understand what is going on in the world, the report considered the main trends of foreign affairs coverage having in mind especially three main global events of 2016 in the Albanian media: the Brexit referendum and its aftermath, the US

6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Interview with ErionKacorri, host of Diplomaticus TV program.
9 Interviews with journalists from main TV stations.
10 Rr. Zguri, "Reporting international affairs in Albanian media," 2016.

elections, and the refugee crisis and terrorist attacks. The monitoring included what is considered to be the most popular mainstream daily newspaper in the country, Panorama[11]. In addition, the main news editions of the two national commercial televisions, *Top Channel TV* and *TV Klan* were included. The monitoring focused on the peak periods regarding events, such as Brexit and US elections, and on specific issues, and observations regarding terrorist attacks and refugee crisis. While by no means exhaustive and all-inclusive in terms of the media included in the monitoring, the following analysis intends to provide an overview of the main and most visible trends in foreign affairs reporting in some of the main Albanian media outlets.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS SECTIONS IN ALBANIAN MEDA

All traditional media, be it general media or focused on news, have established sections, pages, or programs on foreign affairs. Some of the TV stations have also dedicated programs to foreign affairs, but mainly through interviews with foreign ambassadors and other key people in Albanian foreign policy. The importance of the space devoted to foreign affairs varies from one media to another, and depends on the developments of the day. However, sometimes, reading the newspapers and watching the news editions, you get the impression that, with the exception of major events, foreign affairs reporting is the last void in the newsroom, and it covers what space is left after other local developments have been covered, both in newspapers, and in TV news editions. Sometimes, it is totally missing, depending on the day's developments. For example, on the day of November 8, the day of US elections, the daily *Panorama*, considered for this report, did not mention anything on US elections and did not have a "world" section at all. That may be explained also with the newspaper's shifting role in covering news at a time when more immediate means such as TV and online media are available, but also indicates the low priority of foreign news in the media.

Another indicator considered in this respect is the placement of world news in the overall hierarchy of newspaper sections or within the main TV news editions. More often than not, foreign news is found on the last pages of newspapers and at the end of news editions, even when there are events that shake the world. For example, in the case of Charlie Hebdo killings, only a couple of Albanian daily newspapers devoted the first page or main news on the front page to the terrorist attack, while others preferred to focus on the current ongoing political battle in the country[12].

In the context of this report, both Brexit and the US elections were global events, bearing great importance not only for Britain and the USA, but, in many aspects, for the whole world, including for our region. The Albanian media monitored in these cases followed different paths.

For example, the daily newspaper, *Panorama*, on the day of the Brexit referendum, on June 23, carried no news on it, but only an editorial. The editorial, written by an Albanian journalist, while clearly supporting the stay vote, tried to provide an overview of the status and arguments of both sides in Britain. Other than that, there was no other mentioning of this major event in the newspaper. The day after, on June 24, on the page before the last one, the newspaper devoted the whole page to the referendum, the voting process, the expectations, etc. While in fact, in the morning of June 24, the world had already learned of the referendum result, the newspapers clearly could not keep up to date with the news, sending the newspaper to print a bit after midnight. The coverage also continued during the week, with the news on the attempts to have another referendum, on the reaction of world leaders, the effect on financial markets, the future of Scotland, and so on. In addition, in the days following the referendum, there were several editorials published in the newspaper, related to economy, the global world order, the meaning for democracy, etc.

A similar coverage was also noticed in national *TV Klan* news editions. On June 24, the main news edition of this channel ranked the story on Brexit fifth in its program, after news on the murder of an Albanian businessman killed in Cyprus, the kidnapping of an Albanian sailor, a report on the requests of prisoners and a piece on economic crime. So, isolated events coming mainly from crime reporting were considered more important than the Brexit referendum outcome.

The other TV station, *Top Channel*, in a very unusual move for Albanian media, devoted the whole main news edition of June 24 to the reporting and analysis of the referendum, from voting, to economics, and even to the expected effects on sports. Even on the other day, on June 25, Brexit, the shock and its aftermath, was still the first news that started the main

11 Circulation and sale figures of print media are not public and there is much speculation surrounding them, however, the media community seems to agree that this is the top selling newspaper.
12 Freedom of Expression Report: Charlie Hebdo effect in Albania, 2015.

news edition on this channel. While this might be related to the newsroom judgment on the importance of the event, that was a rare occasion when the Albanian media covered foreign affairs.

Regarding US Elections, a similar practice was followed, but this time the coverage of the two TV stations was more homogenous than in the case of Brexit. The daily newspaper devoted the world section to the elections, in the few days preceding the election, reporting the polls, the campaign, and the expectations, sometimes even with great detail on the polls and percentages for each state. The only exception was November 8, the very day of election, when there was no world section at all and no mentioning of US elections. The coverage continued with news on the aftermath of elections, as well as with editorials on what might be expected from Trump presidency.

The two televisions considered in this respect had a relatively similar approach to covering the US elections. On the day of the elections, the news was the fifth in the main news edition of *Top Channel* and the 8th one for *Klan TV*. The same is true for a day before, where routine political meetings or other news were covered, and then followed the news on perhaps the most dramatic campaign in the US elections, with wide ramifications worldwide.

November 9, the day after elections, when the result was already known, sending shock waves through the world, was also the day of publication of the progress reports of the EU Commission on enlargement countries, including Albania. Both TV stations devoted extensive stories to this event and the political interpretations and struggles in the country following its publication first, and then the second story was on the shocking result of the US elections. Both stations devoted at least 10 minutes to the news.

Overall, it can be said that while Albanian media are more attentive when there are important events, foreign affairs' coverage - in terms of space and priority - is on the last place when it comes to newsroom decisions. Space devoted to foreign news is small and is of least importance, and often even sports news is given more space than other developments. Journalists and experts also seem to agree on this point: "When compared to the importance and space devoted to political news and crime reporting in the country, world news has always been considered as secondary news and in everyday practice is not considered important, apart from cases when there are big events, such as US presidential elections or the terrorist attack in Paris."[13] Another observer of media in the country said: "Another problem is that the geography of international news is relatively limited. Usually you find reports on important events that take place in Western Europe, in neighboring countries and in USA, while the rest of the world is covered in a very limited way."[14]

QUALITY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS REPORTING AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

As noted above, it is difficult to speak of genuine foreign affairs reporting, as the news in the Albanian media comes almost exclusively from foreign media. In this context, the main media used are credible international sources, which mean that the news quality is good, but you tend to find copy-paste information all over the media. For example, when comparing the coverage of US elections of the two TV stations considered for this report, the nature of the news was the same, the order of information was almost the same and the duration of news was very similar. More specifically, these included the reaction of Clinton to defeat, an extended profile of Trump, the event organized by the US Embassy in Tirana waiting for the results of the election, the Albanian political figures' reaction to the outcome of the election, and so on. What made the difference when comparing the two reports was an interview made by the information director of Top Channel in Washington on the day of election, which put together two voters, one supporting Trump, and the other supporting Clinton, aiming to showcase the differences and dilemmas existing among the people in the election day. This difference also highlights the importance of having people reporting on the ground and correspondents, who are slowly disappearing from news editions. Instead, foreign news reports are almost all translations from foreign agencies and media. "In Albania, apart from the main TV channels, there are no correspondents from other countries, even in neighboring countries, and journalists often translate or adapt news from foreign sources, and often do not even cite the source of information." [15]
Apart from copyright protection, which is an old, and unresolved problem of the Albanian media, another problem identified in this respect is the failure to provide sufficient context for the Albanian public to understand developments beyond their

13 Interview with Erjona Rusi, journalist, Report TV.
14 Interview with Rrapo Zguri, professor of journalism, University of Tirana.
15 Ibid.

border. "In my opinion there is a big handicap when reporting (or rather, translating, in order to be accurate) news from the world. The journalists forget about the context and do not give importance to historical background or to the great need to give some more explanations to a public that perhaps is not aware of what Intifada is, for example. So, the big handicap is that the most part foreign news reporting consists of translations from prestigious global media, forgetting that the audience in Albania is completely different from the public of BBC or CNN."[16]

Considering that reporting of foreign news seems to have little difference from one media to another, it is the choice of editorials that would make the difference. This is especially true for newspapers, since their form of publication would particularly encourage the publication of editorials, compared to a talk or an opinion expressed on air. In fact, viewing the Panorama coverage of Brexit and US elections, the events were accompanied by several editorials. Editorials appearing in Albanian media are either republications of editorials from foreign media or comments of Albanian personalities. However, even the field of comments seems to have less of an Albanian nature. "Comments on news are generally taken from an analysis that is published in international media,"[17] said a journalist working on foreign news reporting. Another media expert said that professional commentators of world events have decreased and often the media analyses are translations from foreign media or authors. "Albanian editorialists are very few and most of them retaining this profile since the dictatorship era."[18]

On the other hand, it should also be mentioned that there are numerous and almost daily current affairs programs in almost all general TV stations or news channels in Albania. While most of the time they cover political events in the country, they also tend to often touch on important world developments, or events in the region. However, even though these discussions are relatively frequent, the problem of expertise and sources of information remains, since there is a tendency for the same persons to cover a variety of topics, often in the same media, at the same time. So, while there are discussions and opinions in the media regarding global events, the persons who talk about them are not necessarily the most knowledgeable, even though TV stations make attempts to diversify the pool of experts they invite to these shows.

Another problem noticed regarding foreign news is the occasional tendency to try to put an Albanian spin on them, as if the news in itself is not important unless it concerns Albanians in some way. For example, when reporting on Brexit, there were reports on the ads that the Leave side of the campaign used, saying that Britain risked to become like Albania, and other similar news. While these were part of the campaign and particularly interesting to Albanians, the reporting sometimes tended to focus so much on this part, that it overshadowed the rest of what was going on and what was expected. Similarly, even though refugees in the Calais camp had been staying there for months, the news became especially important to the Albanian media when a group of Albanian emigrants successfully crossed to the other side, prompting Farage's reaction.

Similarly, on the day that Trump was elected president of the US, media places specific importance to previous statements and interviews of the Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, who had said publicly and strongly a few months earlier, in an entirely undiplomatic way, that the election of Trump would be a disaster. Not only did the media focus on that, but the statement was also used by the two political camps to transfer their political fight also on the results of the US elections, with the opposition blaming the Prime Minister for carelessness towards relations with US, and with Rama attempting to explain his stance in this respect.

Another problem that seems to surface, especially with current developments, is that of the emergence of propaganda, in different shapes, in Albanian media. When speaking of mainstream media, it is difficult to speak of any particular influence and coverage tends to be careful and more professional. However, editorials are not always immune to such influences. A clear propaganda trait is not visible, but particular influences could be the Turkish ones, more rarely anti-Western, and recently, especially after Trump's winning the elections, an anti-Soros attitude has also emerged in some media.

Interviews also confirmed that sometimes media are under pressure of direct propaganda efforts. "I believe that in the last years there has been an increase of foreign influence in Albania. Press offices in some foreign embassies here often bombard the media with e-mails on international events. This is not a surprise and it is up to the journalist to verify the sources. For example, all media receive e-mails with news from the Russian embassy, based mainly on Russian agencies, such as Sputnik and Russia Today."[19] Another media expert indicated that there are also other sources of influence. "One of the countries that

16 Interview with Erjona Rusi, journalist, Report TV.
17 Interview with ErionKacorri, host of Diplomaticus TV program.
18 Interview with Rrapo Zguri, professor of journalism, University of Tirana.
19 Interview with ErionKacorri, host of Diplomaticus TV program

has used Albanian media for propaganda has been Turkey, especially under Erdogan government. The press has published articles that glorify the Ottoman conquest of Albania and which find positive sides to Albania being under Ottoman yoke for 500 years. In addition, online media sometimes also publish Islamist messages or propaganda."[20] However, the general opinion is that since Albanian media tend to rely mostly on credible Western media, the propaganda effect is still small, though not negligible. "There are influences on Albanian media, but they are not strong, since Western media continue to prevail. However, this is about the public opinion in general, this does not exclude the possibility that certain groups might exert propaganda through their own information channels; for example, there have been reports on websites in Arab language or even in Albanian, which spread propaganda for ISIS."[21]

In this respect, what tends to be the most free and uncontrolled part at the same time, is the online media and especially social media. While for the most part social media tend to focus on gossip and soft news, rather than international news, the risk of misusing the information from these sources is real, especially in the post-truth era. "A big problem recently in social networks is fake news. News should be verified and taken from credible sources, but still, sensational topics can be tempting; they should nevertheless be verified."[22] Reporting world news from social networks is not a widespread practice, but especially in the case of Syria, there was frequent sharing of articles and images to raise awareness, especially those concerning children.[23]

CONCLUSIONS

The coverage of foreign affairs tends to be the least consolidated section of Albanian media, even in the case of bigger, more respected national media. Human resources are scarce and correspondents are lacking in most cases. The Albanian media tend to rely on foreign sources mostly, making the coverage of foreign news usually professional, but identical in all media and sometimes not providing enough contextualization for the Albanian public. On the other hand, there are also cases when Albanian in-house political fighting transfers to foreign developments, reducing the meaning that a specific development has for the world and Albania to yet another political battle. While mainstream Albanian media is generally correct and professional, relying mostly on well-known Western media, there are efforts to influence it through propaganda or through information coming from social networks.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Author: Radenko Udovičić

INTRODUCTION

International politics and world affairs are not a dominant topic in Bosnian and Herzegovinian media. Surveys analyzing the various topics covered by the overall content are rare. In 2011, Media Plan Institute carried out a comprehensive survey of daily newspapers and prime time news programs on public services, where one of the variables was the topic of news content[24]. Dnevniavaz and Glas Srpskein the two top spots had the topics world and sport (Avaz 16% and 14%; Glas 24% and 18%). However, the statistical results show that the topics of internal politics and social affairs had pronounced dominance on the **first six pages**, including cover pages.

When one looks at a table that shows content on all three public TV services in B&H on a 14-day sample, it is clear that internal politics is the dominant topic, while world content takes up a total of 10 percent of news program content. Sport scored higher, as we also monitored the sports segments of the news program, as they form an integral part[25]. A virtually identical result on the

20 Interview with Rrapo Zguri, professor of journalism, University of Tirana.
21 Interview with Erjona Rusi, journalist, Report TV.
22 Interview with ErionKacorri, host of Diplomaticus TV program.
23 Interview with Rrapo Zguri, professor of journalism, University of Tirana.
24 Udovicic, R (2012), VJERODOSTOJNOST MEDIJA, teorijske i praktičnedileme (MEDIA CREDIBILITY, Theoretical and Practical Dilemmas), Media Plan Institute, Sarajevo
25 Ibid

representation of topics was revealed by a 2013 monitoring, also carried out by Media Plan Institute[26].

	Topic – TV news programs	Percentage by number of units
1	Internal politics	19%
2	Sport	18%
3	Social affairs	12%
4	**World**	**10%**
5	Other	10%
6	Crime	7%
7	Economy	7%
8	War crimes	6%
9	**International activities of the country**	**3%**
10	Culture	3%
11	Accidents and extraordinary events	3%
12	Human stories	2%
13	Entertainment	0%

The small number of articles on international activities of the country shows how much Bosnia and Herzegovina is preoccupied with the internal problems and how incapable it is of carrying out international activities. Shuttle diplomacy, so characteristic of Serbia and Croatia, does not exist in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For example, for years in a row, the topic of international activities of the country has had the biggest presence on the Serbian public service, in line with the country's efforts to preserve at least the status quo regarding Kosovo and approach the European Union. In Croatia too, according to surveys by agencies, international diplomacy takes third place in reports. On the other hand, in B&H the state bodies are totally submissive to the demands of the international community.

AMERICAN ELECTIONS ALWAYS TOP ISSUE

Right after the recent elections in the United States, Fena news agency analysed the domestic print media coverage of various presidential elections. A review of the press published in B&H in the 1960's shows that news related to US elections captured front pages and top positions, that correspondents from the United States reported about them, that reports from foreign press were carried and special items and analyses were published.

It stands out in particular that the 1960 presidential election was covered in detail, given the narrow race between Democrat John F. Kennedy and Republican Richard Nixon. "Moment of truth has arrived" and "Average serious American vs. young man" were among headlines in B&H press on the eve of these elections.

Due to the time difference, the actual results were not known the day after the elections and headlines saying that Nixon had an advantage were featured in B&H media, but on 10 November 1960 the headline "John Kennedy new US president" appeared in Oslobodjenje, with the message: "With Kennedy, young generation of American politicians takes helm".

It was followed by the inevitable publication of President of the Republic Josip Broz Tito's message congratulating the election winner, as well as President Kennedy's first message: "The achievement of fair and lasting peace must be the primary task of the United States". The public in B&H was also informed about the new charming First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, whose photographs were published in B&H press.

We can find some similarities with the 2016 elections. It had been believed that Hillary Clinton would win and public and online media from Sarajevo had been predicting her victory until midnight. However, as soon as the preliminary results were known, all

26 Analysis of the program on three public TV services in prime time – PRESENTATION OF PUBLIC ROLE – FORM, CONTENT, STANDS http://www.mediaonline.ba/ba/?ID=540

online and print media reported on their front pages that Trump was the new president. The state leadership instantly sent their congratulations, with the hope that good cooperation and stability in the region would continue. Media focused a lot of attention on future First Lady Melania Trump, especially as she comes from the former Yugoslavia. It is interesting to look at the daily Oslobodjenje's front pages from 10 November, but with a 56-year difference.

Oslobodjenje, 10 November **1960**



OSLOBO

DŽON KENEDI NOVI PREDSJEDNIK SAD

S Kenedijem dolazi na kormilo mlada generacija američkih političara

Sva prva reagovanja sadrže očekivanje da će američka spoljna politika postati dinamičnija

(Od stalnog dopisnika »Oslobođenja« Pavla Lukača)

Njujork, 9. novembra (telefonom)

Odluka je pala. Senator Džon Fičdžeral Kenedi, 43-godišnji politi-
milionar iz Bostona, izabran je za novog 35. predsjednika Sjedinje-
ničke Države. Osmi novembar postao je na taj način vjerovatno
od istorijskih datuma koji će se pamtiti u Americi i, po svoj pri-
Širim svjetskim razmjerima. Mladi, hladnokrvni, rječiti i uporni
ratski lider, koji stoji na čelu nove generacije američkih politi-
nislilaca, postigao je pobjedu u neobičnom stilu savladavši pri tome

Oslobodjenje, 10 November **2016**



OSLOBOĐENJE NOVINE ZA BiH

Link Sarajevo 2016

ČETVRTAK, 10. NOVEMBAR/STUDENI 2016.

Pozitivan izvještaj EU: nagrada i obaveza

Godišnji izvještaj o napretku pohvalio napore bh. vlasti, ali i istakao nedostatke

Piše: MAJA ABADŽIJA

Kako odabrati pravi kanal za promociju

U organizaciji Oslobođenja danas počinje konferencija o digitalnom marketingu: Link 2016.

Piše: ALEMA PENDEK

Ešef Radeljaš uhapšen zbog pranja novca

Pripadnici SIPA jučer ujutro uhapsili su i troje bivših uposlenika Općine Novi Grad

Piše: JELENA MILANOVIĆ

TRUMP PENCE New York, New York MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!

kun

Leonard Cohen: Zlatna krila

KUN

Pobjednička priča konkursa za kratku priču Oslobođenja

Razgovor sa Belmom Bakrač-Čečo

Dokumentarac o kurdskim ratnicama večeras na Pravo Ljudski

Roberto Gatto u Ateljeu Figure predstavlja novi album

Otvaranje 11.11.2016. Bingo City centar Tuzla

Bingo

POSITION ON INTERNATIONAL POLITICS IN LINE WITH DOMESTIC DIVISIONS

The year 2016 was one of major international events. The several-year war in Syria resulted in a massive influx of refugees in Europe via the Balkan route and in ruthless terrorist attacks in Europe and Turkey; Great Britain voted to leave the European Union; and in the United States Donald Trump won the elections, as a candidate announcing big changes in American foreign policy. Although no one has made a precise analysis of media content on these topics, it is evident from careful insight into media from different parts of B&H that the number of items related to international politics has not increased in terms of quantity; in terms of journalistic forms and qualitative coverage of these events, what has grown is the so-called analytical opus,

i.e. correlation with B&H's international position.

The position on these events taken by the different ethnic and political options in B&H was in line with earlier political stands. We will look at the main patterns of divergences on the example of US elections and Brexit, which were particularly visible between the Serb side, on one hand, and the Bosniak and so-called Bosnian side[27], on the other:

- Serb politicians, like most Serbs in the Republika Srpska, wished for a Donald Trump victory. The main reasons are that candidate Hillary Clinton personified the policy that was behind NATO strikes and recognition of independent Kosovo. It is true that these events are from a neighboring country, but B&H Serbs heavily identify with Serbia. Further, Trump kept announcing the improvement of relations with Russia that, as an Orthodox and Slav country, enjoys a lot of sympathy among Serbs. What concerns B&H directly is the expectation that Trump's announced foreign policy change would mean a more positive stand with regard to the Republika Srpska and its aspirations for greater decentralization of B&H. Most ruling politicians, as well as a portion of citizens, maintain that the United States have been conducting an anti-Serb policy since 1991, with the presidential candidate's husband being the main personification of that behavior. Serbs also had a positive view of the Brexit vote because it was interpreted as a "blow" to Europe, which has cherished "Clinton and Obama values", including the position on B&H.
- Bosniak policy, as well as the informal policy of the NGO sector which is mostly funded from American and European sources, was on the side of the defeated candidate Hillary Clinton. The main reason is the fear that Donald Trump might abandon support for an integral B&H and perhaps even leave it in Russia's interest zone, which has evidently been the goal of RS President Milorad Dodik and his ruling party for the past two years. The second important reason is Trump's announcement that he would ban Muslim immigration to the United States. Although this may not effectively concern B&H and therefore Bosniaks, such stands are interpreted among Bosnian Muslims, like in the whole Islamic world, as discriminatory and anti-Islamic.
- The main constant of Croat policy in B&H is unreserved commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration, but without specific positions or statements favoring any options. The position of the "new world order" on Croats' desire to create a Croat territorial unit is also awaited.

Media behaved in line with these patterns. True, there were some exceptions, which we will describe further in the article. This was mostly noticeable in selecting the information and giving space to people who agree with the majority group, rather than in journalists' by-lined commentaries.

SUPPORT RALLIES FOR CLINTON AND TRUMP

Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of few countries that had rallies in support of the American presidential candidates, which only confirmed the deep political and ethnic divide on this issue. Although the rallies did not have many attendees, especially the one in Istocno Sarajevo, most media covered these events.

On October 22, 2016, the organizers of the campaign "Sarajevo votes for Hillary Clinton" said that "all of us together, with our symbolic signatures, send a message of love and a message of friendship into the world." As media reported, the booth where signatures of support were being collected especially amused tourists. After giving their signatures of support for the Democratic Party candidate for US president, citizens were given a T-shirt depicting the former First Lady and US Secretary of State. "Let us remember when not so long ago, in 1996, Hillary together with her daughter Chelsea and several other public figures organized a good will visit to B&H. Hillary came to B&H as a senator, as US Secretary of State, as a citizen and as the First Lady of the United States and B&H was the first stop in her official visits to the Balkans," said one of the rally's organizers.

The next day, a rally of support for Donald Trump was organized in Istocno Sarajevo, from which a smaller group of citizens sent the message that they expect changes in the position on the Balkans, with hopes of peace and stability in the region.

Although all mainstream media reported on that, there were no specific comments of either support or condemnation. Only in November, journalism lecturer from the University of Istocno Sarajevo, Vuk Vucetic, made an interesting statement on *TVBiH* news, saying that these two rallies reminded him of the Top listanadrealista (The Surrealists' Top Chart). This was a mega popular comedy show in the former Yugoslavia, featuring sketches ridiculing the political situation in the country at the time.

27 „Bosnian side" includes the so-called civic option that sets state interests before the ethnic.

There were also many posts on social networks criticizing these rallies, considering this form of support inappropriate for elections in a foreign country.

DIFFERENT COMMENTATORS, DIFFERENT IDEAS

One of the best known foreign affairs commentators and long-time journalist **Mufid Memija** said in an interview on Klix.ba, the most popular web portal from Sarajevo, on the eve of US elections that if Clinton won it would carry a lot of weight that a woman became the president of the United States[28]." After America with Barack Obama crossed the 'Rubicon' of racial prejudice, let's hope now that a precedent will be set with a woman leading the United States. In a country which, among other things, remembers horrific episodes of violence against human rights, especially misogyny (Witches of Salem, Ku-Klux-Clan...), the election of Hillary Clinton would mean a new American epochal achievement. May the world finally experience a 'woman's hand-writing' in the political sphere. Her convincing victories in all three presidential debates are an encouraging indication of a new, feminine sensibility in American politics," said Mufid Memija.

When asked how he sees America and the world in case of Donald Trump's victory, Memija shortly answered: "I honestly hope that on Wednesday morning neither you nor I will see that." On the other hand, he believes that the Balkans and Bosnia and Herzegovina in American foreign policy "have the importance of a decimal in a calculation."

"Therefore, even after 8 November we will be where we are now. Whoever wins the American presidential elections will conduct policy in line with the interests of the military and industrial complex, oil and pharmaceutical transnational companies, GMO lobby... In that regard, the new tenant of the White House will follow to the detail the same paradigm as her/his predecessors: Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barrack Obama... mutatis mutandis, like all previous presidents of the United States of America," said Mufid Memija.

Ensar Zgodic, former foreign affairs journalist of *Dnevniavaz* and now freelancer known for his critical posts on social networks about American foreign policy, commented for this report on B&H media conduct in relation to international affairs. He believes that media follow political patterns of their respective communities and that their content is also conditioned by foreign donations.
"In most of B&H, except for the Republika Srpska, on the public service RTRS, the overall public – analysts, politicians, journalists, hence everyone who presents themselves in the media as relevant and expert, current and competent for giving some information and views to the public – every single one of them openly and without reservation favored the candidate Clinton, including media in the Republika Srpska which are financially supported by American money in order to topple RS President Dodik," said Zgodic.

Zgodic also believes that foreign media broadcasting in B&H in the local languages basically represents the West's political propaganda: Balkan version of CNN – Television *N1, Al Jazeera* and *Free Europe*.

"There are some Turkish media in B&H too, but due to well-known events after the attempted coup d'état in Turkey, we can expect and wealready feela decline in Turkey's media presence in B&H, reduced activity and change in reporting on certain issues. There are no Russian media in B&H and Serbian and English editions of these media are certainly followed in the Republika Srpska more than in the BiH Federation, that lives in a parallel reality created over decades by globalist NGOs and media which have been drilled into believing that spreading the ideology of Euro-Atlantic integration is the foremost duty and obligation," said Zgodic.

However, Media Plan Institute's research shows that Free Europe, N1 and Al Jazeera have very high professional standards and often give space to views that are not always available in B&H media. Nevertheless, it is evident that all three media outlets are politically constant, that is they support an integral B&H whose protagonists are pro-Bosnian and Bosniak forces, as well as current pro-Western democratic values generally personified in the incumbent political regimes.

On the other hand, President of BH Journalists Association **Borka Rudic** gave support to Hillary Clinton multiple times in her posts on Facebook. The main arguments were that she is a woman who has high awareness of human rights, particularly the rights of various minority groups, and that she is politically moderate. Similar views were posted by Aida Sljamo Daguda,

28 Retrieved at https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/mufid-memija-balkan-i-bih-su-decimala-u-racunu-vanjske-politike-sad-a/161107037

director of one of the largest NGOs, and Ivana Maric, currently the most exposed analyst from Sarajevo.

On the most popular TV station in B&H, one of the three public services – Federal Television-, there is a show called "**Paralele**" (Parallels) edited by foreign affairs journalist **Mladen Maric**. Unlike mainstream media from the capital and even the general tone of this media outlet itself, the show has a so-called anti-globalist character. It is expressly against the official American foreign policy and official policy of the European Union, i.e. policies of most of its members. Through selection of information in TV items and editor's comments, western policy is accused of provoking the war in Ukraine and the so-called Arab Spring, which is claimed to be an "American project". On several occasions over the last few years, Barack Obama has been for the deaths of tens of thousands of people in Libya, Tunisia and Syria with the goal of appointing pro-American regimes and for oil and interests of big corporations. Throughout the election campaign, the show looked at Donald Trump with sympathy. After the elections, that was even more open. The show of 13 November 2016[29] opened with an extensive item on demonstrations in the United States against Donald Trump's election victory. The item shows demonstrators who claim they will never recognize his victory, that Trump is not their president... Footage shows destruction of property in cities and reports on torched American flags. Then, in his first appearance, the show's editor says: "We suggest repeating the elections until Hillary Clinton wins. I don't know what the problem is and why her supporters are complaining in the streets. Trump was legally elected; it's a different matter that the unhealthily ambitious Hillary Clinton cannot accept defeat. She is an ex in every regard and her time is irrevocably gone. Good evening."

After Trump's victory, in media which had not been in his favor, articles started coming out showing that the future American president was far from being an eccentric and that he had strategically outwitted his opponents. Especially striking is an article of 11 November from Dnevniavaz, "Establishment, media and Clinton stood no chance: New York Times will never decide elections again".[30]

In an article published as a newsroom commentary[31], although it is clear that it is also based on foreign media analyses, it is stated, among other things: "Trump simply started a savage tweetatis using brutal and direct language which old distributors would never have allowed and then he applied this model to traditional forms of communication: rallies, debates, forums and various official dinners. He insulted minorities, praised his own penis, terrorized former beauty pageant winners and military veterans, announced walls and deportations, called for dictatorial powers and political persecutions, implied Hillary's assassination, ridiculed disabled people, proudly displayed utter ignorance on all important issues, and bragged about imposing himself on women. We relied on filters which no longer exist. While we all saw scandalous, infantile and creepy behavior in that, Trump saw an authentic product that resonates. And while we were sure that such a product had a very limited audience, Trump realized its evident massiveness from the number of tweets, shares and comments."

Brexit attracted a lot of attention from B&H media, although for just a few days. Newsroom commentaries were rare, but the selection of interviewees and outside commentators, especially in Sarajevo-based media, showed B&H's support to Great Britain remaining in the EU, as well as the disappointment after the decision was made to start the exit process.

Right before the referendum, the web portal Klixbrought an interview with political analyst **Adnan Huskic**, who publicly expressed his fear: "What happens when the organization that is in this case the only real guiding force for B&H – European Union – is left without a country such as Great Britain and sustains a tremor of this kind?" His opinion is that it would be a precedent, since it had never happened that a country walked out of the EU, especially one like Great Britain. "It would be an absolute catastrophe because the EU would have a hard time summoning the strength and capacity to continue to be seriously involved in our country. When Americans do not have an important role in B&H and Europeans have an insufficient one, then there might be more interferencefrom Russia, Turkey and countries that do not contribute to the general security and to the creation of an environment conducive to the development of democracy in B&H," added Huskic[32].

However, the "catastrophe" did happen. After the British referendum, Dnevniavaz brought an interview with French philosopher **Bernard-Henri Levi**, who had given a lot of support to B&H and besieged Sarajevo during the war. He characterized the British vote without mincing his words. He said that those who won through Brexit are "people with clouded minds, drunken skinheads, hooligans, illiterate rebels, neo-Nazis with bull heads." - a tragicomic comparison, but also insulting to more than half of Britain's

29 http://www.federalna.ba/bhs/vijest/183929/13112016
30 http://m.avaz.ba/clanak/261630/establishment-mediji-i-clinton-nisu-imali-nikakve-sanse-evo-ko-je-doveo-trumpa-u-bijelu-kucu#sthash.SP6rm4us.dpuf
31 Idem 7.
32 https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/analiticari-brexit-bi-kocio-put-bih-u-eu/160623061

citizens who voted in favor of the decision.

"It is a victory of fiery sovereigns, stupidest nationalism and, I would even say, of a decaying England over an England that is open to the world. It is a defeat of complexity by dictatorial simplicity. I consider this above all a victory of Donald Trump, one of the first to enthusiastically welcome the historic vote, but also, of course, of Vladimir Putin, whose dream, which cannot be emphasized enough, is the disintegration of the EU," said the French philosopher[33].

ISIS AS A CATALYST OF POLITICAL CLASHES

As elsewhere in the world, B&H media focused a lot of attention on the war in Syria, the Balkan route used by refugees from Turkey to get to Germany, ISIS terrorist attacks, and battle of the American-Russian coalition against this extremist group. Common to virtually all mainstream media is abhorrence at the brutality of the war in Syria and condemnation of terrorist attacks both in the Middle East and Iraq as well as in Turkey and Europe. Media unmistakably condemned terrorism, but to a lesser extent they accused American and European governments of generating the creation of extremist groups by their policies on Arab countries and military interventions. In quite a lot of media outlets in the B&H Federation as well as in Republika Srpska, it was implied that the war on terrorism must be based on the change of western policy concerningIslamic countries. However, an obvious difference between Serb and Bosniak media was the difference in their stands on Russia's role in the world, including in the war in Syria. Serb media had a positive view of Russia's engagement and interpreted it as a reaction to the "hegemonic policy" and military intervention of the United States. On the other hand, Bosniak media condemned Russia's interference, which they claimed, additionally, deepened the plight of the people in Syria.

Like the government in B&H, most media were in a way pleased that the so-called Balkan route used by refugees did not cross B&H and that the country did not have that problem for the moment. There were occasional items and articles reporting on possible changes in refugee movements in terms of the government having a plan for that situation, but always emphasizing that it was rather unlikely due to B&H's geographic position.

ISIS was often a catalyst of internal political skirmishing in B&H. Serb media in B&H particularly persisted in that; referring to foreign intelligence sources as well as some domestic information, they reported that the ruling Bosniak party was tolerating extreme Islamists, both domestic and foreign ones, who were residing in B&H and allegedly planning terrorist acts. However, this issue especially exploded with regard to media when Croatian President Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic said that thousands of volunteers fighting on the side of ISIS had returned to B&H from Islamic battlefields.

"Radicalization of Islam is happening in B&H. We must look the truth in the eye and face the trends that are coming, including returnees from the so-called Islamic State, from battles in Iraq and Syria. There are already several thousand of them. I want B&H to become a member of the NATO alliance and European Union as soon as possible," Grabar Kitarovic told Croatian media on 3 November.

All media from Sarajevo condemned the statement, calling it an exaggeration. They quoted data from the B&H security agency SIPA, according to which 226 people from B&H had been on the Syrian front, not thousands. Some other data claimed that ony 115 people were there, 65 were killed and 45 had returned. They also carried statements by numerous other security officials from B&H who said that a maximum of a couple of hundred people from B&H might have been on foreign battlefields in different stages.

B&H Presidency member Bakir Izetbegovic said in his reaction to the media: "President Grabar-Kitarovic demonstrated disrespect toward Bosnia and Herzegovina and its leadership. It is not good to call B&H an unemancipated country, to comment on how Bosniak men and women dress, to exaggerate the problem of so-called Islamic extremism in B&H, for example to add two zeroes to the number of returnees from foreign battlefields... Our security agencies are addressing this problem actively and successfully, exchanging data and experience with relevant agencies, including the ones in Croatia. In Croatia too, Ustasha extremism is flourishing, Croats are also going to foreign battlefields such as Ukraine, a memorial plaque with a Nazi salute was unveiled in Jasenovac, the public was puzzled by some photographs with extremist flags, but we from B&H avoided commenting on such occurrences... I hope, in future, President Grabar-Kitarovic will worry about her own yard and leave worry for ours to

33 http://www.avaz.ba/clanak/243528/bernard-henry-levy-o-brexitu-pobjeda-najglupljeg-nacionalizma?url=clanak/243528/bernard-henry-levy-o-brexitu-pobjeda-najglupljeg-nacionalizma#sthash.6btgd2qY.dpuf

us," said Izetbegovic.

However, the owner of FACE TV from Sarajevo, Senad Hadzifejzovic, had the fiercest reaction, which was also sexist and insulting[34]. The once popular journalist uttered this comment in the news program: "With regard to us Bosnians, you are a fatal lady, moreover an ideal lady. Don't hurt our feelings, although (they are) manly oriented toward you. Comrade President, for me an interview with you would be an incredible satisfaction... You are under stress. You need physical therapy and a very radical one," he said. The public in both B&H and Croatia interpreted this as the Croatian president needing some hard sex to calm down.

CONCLUSIONS

International affairs in B&H are not a dominant topic in B&H media, although they are covered every day. Sources of such information are news agencies (mainly from western countries) and international television exchange. So-called added value is given to news by various domestic and foreign commentators who explain situations and events. Few media have their own correspondents; only the most powerful media outlets have them selectively. They are primarily in Washington, Istanbul and Brussels.

With just a few exceptions, the main media outlets generally did not provide newsroom commentaries on world affairs. However, selection of commentators or analysts reflected biasly, primarily with regard to US presidential elections. Although some of the commentators had never been to America or their continuous pursuit of foreign affairs was dubious, especially on public TV services in Sarajevo they were given airtime to list the advantages of Hillary Clinton and to assess the consequences of Brexit and the Syrian crisis. On the other hand, the selection of interviewees on the Serb side of B&H leaned toward Donald Trump and was relatively indifferent to Brexit.

International affairs in B&H media are obviously a mirror of domestic political developments. The majority positions of the political public in each ethnic community on Russia, Europe, United States, Turkey, terrorism and ISIS were reactions to the positions of these countries or international events with regard to domestic political actors.

Conduct of public figures on social networks (journalists, NGO activists, politicians and artists) was based on their personal political preferences. As Facebook and Twitter are selective means of information and depend on interest circles (established friendships), it is hard to draw valid conclusions on their activities. However, what is clear is that individuals shared and commented on what they liked. Thus, numerous NGO activists from Sarajevo and Banja Luka who are supported by European and American donations favored Hillary Clinton and opposition to Brexit in their posts and emphasized the importance of human rights of minorities.

MACEDONIA

Author: Sanja Vasic

INTRODUCTION

False news is the only direct link between the American presidential elections and Macedonia. The headlines such as "The Pope endorsed Donald Trump for President", "Hillary Clinton will be arrested on paedophilia charges", "Michelle Obama is a man" and much more absurd news was created by false websites from the small Macedonian town Veles, mostly by anonymous teenagers. With thousands of shares on the social media, it flooded mostly the American media, but it was also published by the Macedonian media, mostly portals, without checking the facts. One 16 year old owner of such a website stated for the British Channel 4 that his main motive was profit, but he also realised that: "People are hungry for news".

The public in Macedonia is hungry for news on the presidential elections in the USA and their geopolitical impact; it received sketchy information that is often not properly framed, and there was no thorough analysis in the domestic media. Stories

34 Video retrieved at https://youtu.be/ZiRkzEqKOMs

taken over from the American and other foreign media were published without being contextualised for the domestic public. Such articles, as well as all other news items on foreign policy, unless it is a very big event, are usuallyaired at the end of the TV news or published on the last pages of the newspapers, while there is no specialised foreign policy show in the traditional media.

International reporting is practically omitted or minimised in the media which leaves space for sketchy information, as well as speculations and manipulations.

SKETCHY INFORMATION

The US presidential elections are the best example in this respect. "The media covered the American election campaign at the level of a phenomenon rather than offering a serious overview of what was promised by the candidates. Trump's announcement for US isolationism, turning towards itself and becoming dissolved of some of its planetary "duties"- such as the promotion of the democracy –remain at the level of ordinary information. It is his women and tax related scandals that have enjoyed attention. While there was a failure to convey Trump's aspirations, there was also a failure to convey the details of Hillary Clinton's programme or her vision pertaining to the future of America. In principle, all information was sketchy, in line with the fact that in Macedonia there are sketchy reports regarding all worldwide events, unless a direct correlation can be made with the interests of a local party, where upon all of a sudden a certain 'analysis' appears", says Ljupco Popovski, foreign policy editor at *Utrinski Vesnik*[35].

For many years back, the Macedonian media have not had any reporters abroad, with the exception of the national television, whose rating is low and their reports go unnoticed. Three television stations sent special reporters several days before the voting, as well as one television station that had a reporter as a participant in the programme financed by the US Embassy in Skopje. These television teams portrayed only moments of the elections atmosphere in New York and on Election Day. This is considered an exception, because the Macedonian media very rarely finance news reports from abroad, even in the case of the neighbouring countries which are only a few hours away from Skopje.

The political analyst and former OSCE Ambassador, Arsim Zekolli, estimated that the Macedonian media mainly followed the dominating statements in the US media, with all their accompanying inclinations and features. "In my opinion, this is the reason for, what I dare to call, the one-dimensional coverage of the elections, wherein the information was mainly based on daily-political events related to the two candidates, with very little consideration of the social, cultural and spiritual dynamics in the background, which in the end determined the final outcome. The domestic media missed the opportunity for a thorough analysis of the major socio-cultural upheaval taking place in the western world, its roots and future development", said Zekolli.[36]

The reason for such media coverage lies also in the absence of news analysts who report on major geo-strategic events, considers Aleksandar Comovski, a journalist with many years of experience: "A thesis is being developed that Macedonia is a small country incapable of making an impact, while on the other hand, there is a general tendency to push a topical issue stating that Macedonia is at the crossroads of the strategic and tectonic movements that might occur, from the Balkans, from the intersection of the Russian influence from old Yalta to the "green transversal"."[37]

News analysts should open such issues unless they are under the influence of the players in the domestic foreign policy. There is a lack of a distance of the journalists from any governmental foreign policy unless it is based upon the stereotypes such as EU, NATO and the name, concludes Comovski.

The Macedonian politicians themselves neither made any analyses whatsoever nor stated their own position regarding the US elections. Being stuck in their own serious political crisis for two years now, they have been preparing for the early elections. It is a poor excuse having regard to the fact that foreign policy constitutes an articulation of the state priorities at an international level, which are formed through a correlation of the obstacles and limitations, which the country and its national interests face to face. However, all politicians, without any exceptions, estimated that foreign policy will not bring

35 Interview with LjupcoPopovski, Editor in Utrinskivesnik daily, November 20 2016, Skopje.
36 Interview with ArsimZekoli, political analyst, former Macedonian ambassador at OSCE, November 27 2016, Skopje.
37 Interview with AleksandarChomovski, Host od political TV show Top Tema at national broadcaster TV Telma, December 12 2016, Skopje.

them any votes at the elections, so they deliberately omitted it. For years now, there have been no debates on the televisions in Macedonia, a condition imposed by the ruling parties which reject any media encounters with their political rivals. How critical is the condition has also been indicated by the fact that there was no political debate of the main political players on the crisis of migrants either, one of the most important foreign policy issues, in which Macedonia had an exceptionally important role.

TRUMP AND CLINTON SUPPORTERS

This division was reflected both in the block division between the pro-government and the neutrally critical televisions, as well as in the coverage of the US elections.

The usual belief is that the outcome in the USA will determine the outcome of the Macedonian elections and the aftermath. However, just like in many other spheres, things are becoming simplified and there was a cheering atmosphere for the US elections as if they were a football match.

These cheering positions were dominant in a part of the media close to the right-wing Government which favoured Trump and often criticised the US media for supporting one of the candidates, in the efforts to identify the problematic media sphere in Macedonia and to find a justification for their own bias in the editing policy. The Macedonian media whose objective is to attack the opposition, the civic organizations, the media that criticize the Government, as well as the western countries which they blame for interfering with the country's internal affairs, used the US elections to once again accuse Soros of backing up not only the ones that they attack on a daily basis, but also of having a much grimmer role in the US elections. Articles and TV reports have been published that proved that "the credibility of the American democracy, legal order and state policy is being undermined". They also urged for people to support Trump, hoping that by electing him the obsolescence of the US democratic model will be demonstrated and that it would be proven that the right-wing parties were right to seek a new one. The analysts have also discerned a Russian impact in these pro-government media, after the opening of several Russian portals and establishing correspondents of Russian media, while in the recent years also Russian capital started entering Macedonia.

"A trend has appeared in our country for the right-wing party to favour Trump and the left-wing party to favour Hillary, even though we are discussing values that are impossible to compare, since the US left-wing party actually equals the European right-wing party. The fact that the anti-American citizens in our country favour the Republican candidate is motivated by the identification with his pro-Russian positions, which echoed significantly throughout the campaign", said Nano Ruzin, former Ambassador and a former presidential candidate himself.[38]

Some analysts consider that not only in Macedonia, but also in several Balkan countries, leaders have "identified" themselves with Trump's political style and that electing him is sufficient encouragement for the populists in the region who have recognized a powerful ally in him in terms of style.

Very few comments have appeared in the other media. The most radical was the thesis that Trump's victory is an introduction to another cold war, with consequences which are just shy of catastrophic for Macedonia and for the world. The political communication expert Petar Arsovski estimated that the sole thesis worth analyzing is "whether Trump's victory would mean a cessation of the US policy applied thus far in terms of democracy export". According to Arsovski, it would most probably be an introduction into a new era: an agreed division between the USA and Russia, without too much attention being paid to the internal condition of the countries.
Even though, according to the worldwide research conducted by Gallup[39], a prevailing majority of the Macedonians would vote for Hillary, still in the media and the social networks more space has been left for the events related to Trump.

The foreign policy editor Popovski explained this by the local dissatisfaction with the political elites in Europe and the USA, "especially due to the dispute with the name, wherein subconsciously many people think that a new person in the White House could bring a dramatic turn of events to our benefit".

38 Interview with Nano Ruzin, Professor of political and social sciences, Former Macedonian Ambassador to NATO, November 6, 2016, Skopje.
39 Gallup International, Global Poll on the American Election, WIN Gallup International, 2016. Available at: http://www.wingia.com/web/files/richeditor/filemanager/WINGIA_Global_Poll_on_US_Election_-_FINALIZED_Revised_Global_Press_Release.pdf.

"Of course, it is an illusion, but propaganda thrives the most on illusions. Regardless of the fact that suddenly such a great number of Trump fans appeared here, the Macedonian citizens would have preferred a safe reliability (Clinton) which they could curse or label as historic injustice, rather than not knowing at all what to expect from the billionaire's administration, whose future plans are known to no one. It is very realistic that, by means of a single political step which might leave an impression here of an inclination to the Greeks, orchestrated hate speech and manipulation of facts could be triggered", Popovski said.

According to Zekolli, the division between pro and con camps for Clinton and Trump, projected upon the local left-wing and right-wing sentiments was also due to the established scheme of ethnical differences in the support for Clinton by the Albanians, and the support for Trump by the Macedonians.

WHO MAKES THE STRONGEST IMPACT – JOURNALISTS OR ANALYSTS?

Who could be considered an opinion maker on foreign policy in Macedonia, also regarding the American presidential elections? The comments that have appeared, except for the ones aired by foreign media, were primarily made by the journalists covering these issues. They disagree that they are the ones to be considered opinion makers.

According to Ljupco Popovski, the chiefs of Macedonian diplomacy are certainly not opinion makers, whom he describes as "extremely bureaucratic, completely void of ideas, charisma and power to make an impact on the public"; thence, their activity is considered insignificant, since they do not have the power to create anything.[40]

"This amateur world also comprises the analysts dealing with the world and our foreign policy. Their theories are so superficial and biased that they are not even worth listening to. The same refers to the non-governmental activists. Certainly, there are always exceptions in every sphere, including this one. But sometimes it seems astonishing how just a few journalists can know much more, think much deeper and analyze in much broader terms than the ones who get paid and hold positions precisely for that kind of work. In the realm of the Macedonian superficiality, foreign policy is among the dullest spheres and no one even bothers to give it an interesting hint", Popovski estimated.[41]

Unlike him, Aleksandar Comovski gave priority to the former diplomats as opinion makers. "The political analysts are the most influential ones since they cover current processes, the perspective geo-strategic development and are capable of a background assessment in terms of continuity or discontinuity. For the politicians, foreign policy does not constitute an issue of interest that brings votes; on the contrary, it leads to losing votes because in Macedonia, even after 25 years, there are still pending and unresolved relations with the neighbours, while the pillar of foreign policy is primarily the relation with the neighbours", Comovski said.[42]

INFORMATION REVOLUTION ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

The presidential elections in USA and the conditions in Macedonia overlapped in yet another segment, in addition to the block division and bias with some of the traditional media. It is the domination of the social networks in the information regarding the US presidential elections.

The analyst Arsim Zekolli concludes that it means that the citizens have less and less confidence in the traditional media. However, the negative consequence is that more and more people sharing the same line of thinking get connected on the social networks, where everything is allowed.

"In a situation when curiosity is based on the need to find information that confirms your inclination and prejudice in advance, space is created for the proliferation of false information, semi-truths, spinning, all the way to verbal aggression against the

40 Interview with LjupcoPopovski, editor ofUtrinskivesnik daily, November 20 2016, Skopje.
41 Ibid.
42 Interview with AleksandarChomovski, Host of political TV show Top Tema at the national broadcaster TV Telma, December 12 2016, Skopje.

opponent. I even think that from that perspective we are quite on the same level with the US public, due to a series of similarities in our realities, problems and political events. Yet, the most dangerous thing both here and in the USA, which is going to result in severe consequences, is the promotion of a distorted line of thinking according to which at a time of electoral campaigns almost everything is allowed - racism, chauvinism, misogyny, insults, hate speech– without any or with only minor consequences", Zekolli said.[43]

Even though he estimated that in our case it is reflected on the already built balance between the classic media which are controlled by the parties, the state institutions and the commerce on the one hand, and the social media in which the competition is better since it offersan opportunity for having clashing political arguments and individual analyses and stances, on the other hand. Therefore, Facebook and Twitter are so popular since in their free space there is zero tolerance for imaginary authorities and spinning propagandas which are still protected against open criticism in the classic media.

If we also take into consideration the huge supply of information from foreign media, it becomes clear that we have a situation of an absolute lack of sovereignty in terms of information, beyond the control of the usually applied methods. This trend is reminiscent of the liberal spirit explosion at the end of the sixties with the appearance of television, and then also with satellite coverage of events. Social networks appear to be the new age.

The political science expert Nano Ruzin thinks that on the social networks there are not only supporting teams, but also very serious debates: "They are creating a new political culture, young generations which are much more open to the developments worldwide, such as the US presidential elections. We are witnessing the birth of a new generation, a new world in which there is zero tolerance for violence, the myth of authorities is destroyed, while a critical way of thinking and new value system are being established."[44] Both Ruzin and Zekolli concluded that the closed character and the inertness of the establishment in terms of these new phenomena only make it easier for the populists to dominate the advantages provided by them, at least for the time being.

The false websites from Veles mentioned at the beginning of this text also point to the flaws of the social networks and the lack of control in that sphere, where reading headlines, information without stating sources and their fast dispersion without verifying the facts ensure only sketchy information. Nevertheless, these are the dilemmas that have generally appeared in the world media sphere. No official investigation was launched in the Veles case.

In Macedonia, according to the latest market research conducted by the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, almost 75% of the citizens in 2015 obtained information regarding the domestic and the foreign policy from television, while the Internet is in the second position with 48%.[45] Thence, it is upon the television stations to adjust to the new demands on the market when it comes to providing information on the foreign policy developments. If they create a distance from the domestic foreign policy players who have been avoiding these issues, it is possible for them to have a much stronger impact on the public opinion, with deeper analyses, access to more sources of information and more frequent live reports. Furthermore, they should also adjust fast to the new trend and become multimedial, with developed Internet platforms and contents that will rapidly spread on the social networks.

On the other hand, the countries must put more efforts and resources to introduce and implement media literacy in all segments of the society, especially educating the audience. In this way the audience would be able to compare, critically assess and analyze the information it receives and thus better understand how and why some news was produced. The media literate public, idealy, would be the one that could differentiate between true and false, credible and propagandistic news; the literate public would be able to resist possible media manipulation that the centers of power sometimes use for fulfilling their own interest.

43 Interview with ArsimZekoli, political analyst, former Macedonian ambassador at OSCE, November 27 2016, Skopje.
44 Interview with Nano Ruzin, Professor of political and social sciences, Former Macedonian Ambassador to NATO, November 6, 2016, Skopje.
45 Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, Analizanapazarotna audio I audiovizuelnimediumskiuslugi 2015, Skopje, 2016, p. 9-10. Available at: http://www.avmu.mk/images/Analiza_na_pazarot_na_audio_i_audiovizuelni_mediumski_uslugi_za_2015_godina.pdf.

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LIST OF INTERVIEVEWS:

Interview with Arsim Zekoli, political analyst, former Macedonian ambassador at OSCE, November 27 2016, Skopje.
Interview with Ljupco Popovski, editor of Utrinskivesnik daily, November 20 2016, Skopje.
Interview with Aleksandar Chomovski, Host of political TV show Top Tema at the national broadcaster TV Telma, December 12, 2016, Skopje.
Interview with Nano Ruzin, Professor of political and social sciences, Former Macedonian Ambassador to NATO, November 6, 2016, Skopje.

MONTENEGRO

Author: Milena Perovic Korac

INTRODUCTION

Media in Montenegro cover international stories rather superficially, without much analytical articles and reports, and without sufficient explanation of the causes of world or regional events that are covered and the effects such events have on global processes and Montenegro as well.

Certain traditional media exceed in capacities compared to others, some have bigger foreign desks, while others have smaller ones (if any at all) and the number and the quality of news items and reports on international topics strongly depend on these facilities. Reporting also depends on the type of media. The majority of articles covering international stories can be found in electronic media, especially on news sites, but very often these articles lack analytical views, under the pressure of time as imposed by the speedy nature of the medium itself.

In Montenegro there are six television channels with national coverage, 56 radio stations, four national dailies, one political weekly and several local editions of Serbian daily papers and tabloids that cover a population of less than 650,000 [46].

More space and analytical approach can be found in weekly newspapers. They, however, as well as other Montenegrin media, most commonly convey foreign media and analysis of world's media, since they do not have their own correspondents in countries in which the event that is subject of the report occurred. Also, the public service, which has one of the largest foreign editorial offices in the country, provides slightly more broadcasting space to certain international topics. However, given that the public service is still under the political influence of the ruling structures, very often such reports and topics are adjusted to the needs of local political elites.

According to the research of NGO Centre for civic education (CCE) about the reporting of public service (RTCG) during the last three years, which was published in July 2016, „the most imbalanced was the show *The challenge*, dealing with Euro-Atlantic integration. Out of 106 guests during 2014 and 2015, CCE's analysts identified only eight (8) interlocutors who advocated the stance that Montenegro should not join the NATO alliance or 7.55%".[47] The Democratic Party of Socialist (DPS), the ruling party in Montenegro led by an ex prime minister, Milo Đukanovic, advocated the accession of Montenegro

46 http://www.mminstitute.org/files/Media%20Ownership%20and%20Finances%20in%20Montenegro.pdf
47 http://cgo-cce.org/en/2016/07/19/kroz-cije-poglede-nam-rtcg-predstavlja-crnogorsku-realnost/#.WJympdlrJ0s

to NATO. On the other side the most of the published research show that Montenegro is polarized about NATO issue. According to the research of NGO CEDEM published last year, for example, 50.5 % citizens of Montenegro support the country's NATO accession, while 49.5 are against it.

US ELECTIONS

The US presidential elections are an event that was probably most covered in the Montenegrin media, when it comes to world events that have marked the past few months. However, according to media experts, this event was often used for domestic political purposes.

"The polarization of the US presidential campaign was rather interesting as well. Those media that favoured the ruling party, and the government itself, supported Hillary Clinton and were not particularly enthusiastic about Trump, while those who favoured the opposition with national Serbian connotation supported Trump. On the other hand, liberal, independent media seem to be without a candidate, they were in some way closest to Sanders, but after the elections, it is these media that distinguished themselves with critical articles about Trump policy and his first moves, "said Milka Tadic Mijovic, Director of the Center for Investigative Reporting in Montenegro (CIN CG).[48]

"Montenegrin media generally report on international news scarcely and give them very little space. World events are covered in a superficial or telegraphic manner. There are not enough comprehensive, analytical articles about the region, not to mention key events in the world. As if we perceive only ourselves, often there are no adequate newsrooms that would cover really pressing issues, such as the war in Syria, BREXIT or migrant issue", said Tadic Mijovic. She says there are several reasons for this, as she calls it, "autism towards others."

"Firstly, Montenegro is perhaps one of the few countries in Europe that does not have a permanent correspondent anywhere in the world. Media in Montenegro have no funds to purchase the services of serious foreign agencies, which were once used to report on international affairs. This, of course, affects the contents. And another thing, the foreign contents are not appreciated on our market, the public is not interested in them and media, on the other hand, must increasingly think about these market factors as well, "said the director of CIN CG.
Donald Trump' victory was published on the cover pages of numerous Montenegrin print and electronic media. However, few of them have analytically tackled Trump's victory and have discussed its the consequences for the whole world, or at least for Montenegro.
The campaign itself was reported without a critical review of both candidates.

The cover of daily papers *Dan* brings the news of the day: "Trump's triumph, Clinton's defeat"[49]. The article that does not deal with the implications of Trump's victory, mentions Melania, Trump's wife, and how she "often during the election campaign proudly talked about her Balkan origin and how she on one occasion raised three fingers during her speech". The three fingers salute is a sign of belonging to the Serbian people. The daily paper *Dan*, one of the two largest circulation newspapers, is an opposition, pro-Serb oriented newspaper.

However daily papers *Vijesti*,[50] which is next to daily papers *Dan* – the daily with highest circulation, did not convey Trump's victory as news of the day even though it is on the cover page, among important news section. Their approach is more analytical and articles also convey opinions of experts.

The daily *Pobjeda*, which supports the government and Milo Djukanovic, also highlighted Trump's victory on the front page: "The triumph of conservative populist Donald Trump, defeat for the tired liberal Hillary Clinton."[51] The article analyses Trump's victory, and what it can mean for international politics, but lacks the same treatment for the defeated candidate. This supports the thesis that pro-regime media were inclined towards Clinton and opposition media towards Trump.

48 Interview for this report
49 http://www.dan.co.me/?nivo=3&rubrika=Vijest%20dana&datum=2016-11-10&clanak=572476
50 http://www.novinarnica.net/novine/vijesti_cg/2016-11-10/33596
51 http://www.pobjeda.net/protected/listalica/2016-11-10/#4/z

The weekly *Monitor* has dedicated its cover page to Trump' victory with the question *Where is world headed*.[52] The weekly had previously conveyed the analysis of the Western media, raising the issue of and analyzing the campaigns and political offer of both candidates for president of the United States.

Two internet portals, Cdm and Analitika, covered the elections in a mainly informative manner, telegraphically short. The Internet portal Vijesti has more releases, and almost day by day reports about the campaign, but due to the nature of the media these releases are less analytical, but rather informative. Also, in most cases we are talking about re-run news pieces, articles and video clips.

"Online media cover international stories in more detail because they are not limited with space and hence world issues such as BREXIT or the US elections were among the most widely read topics, mainly due to availability of a large number of articles on these topics, which are eligible for publication in online outlets" said editor of portal Vijesti, Srdan Kosovic.[53]

"The audience is very interested in these topics and they are often debated on social networks even more than domestic issues, not so in the context of the impact of these developments on the situation in Montenegro, but rather in terms of geopolitical reviews and how the social actors in Montenegro are set in relation to these events, "said Kosović.

The situation is similar with reporting on the decision of Great Britain to leave the EU.

BREXIT

"BREXIT is a topic of much concern to Montenegro and the process of EU integration. And yet again, very few analytical articles were written explaining what Britain leaving EU could mean for the EU enlargement process. Or what it means for EU and rise of nationalist, right wing forces. So, articles covering world events have been short and scantily written, even when they concern us.

Radio and television of Montenegro (RTCG), as a public service, rather than providing information that citizens could find important and that could clarify what BREXIT actually means, report that "NATO is even more important for security now that Britain is leaving EU," which was advantageous for the ruling party. As in the case of the US elections, analysis of what it means for the concept of EU and Montenegro were very rare.

Particular lack of empathy for the most part of Montenegrin media was observed when reporting on the refugee crisis. In this reporting Montenegrin media have largely relied on news agencies and foreign media. Statements of world and European officials were, as well as information about the victims were the topics most frequently covered. There was hardly any analytical approach to this important international topic, except in weekly editions, but rarely these were most important news.

On the other hand, this issue, perhaps more than any other, has sparked a national and religious hatred on social networks and Internet portals. Often comments on news sites and portals called for the closure of borders for refugees, but for local intolerance.

"Domestic media report on the crisis mainly at the level of figures and filling in world news and with sensationalism," it was stated on a panel on the subject organized by the Centre for Democratic Transition (CDT) and the Center for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM) in September 2015.[54]

"There is no empathy for people in war zones, refugees, children, many of whom never cross to the safe side on these terrible roads in the Mediterranean," said director of CIN CG Milka Tadic Mijovic.

52 http://www.monitor.co.me/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7247:donalnd-tramp-novi-predsjednik-sad-bez-plana-u-novo-sjutra&catid=5034:broj-1360&Itemid=6402
53 Interview for this report
54 http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/cg-spremni-za-prihvat-izbjeglica/27269827.html

SERBIA

Author: Mladen Velojic

INTRODUCTION

Serbia is on its way to the European Union. The integration process has been ongoing for 16 years already, since the overthrowing of Slobodan Milosevic and the democratic changes that followed. During all these years, almost every Government has emphasized progress towards EU integration as one of its top priorities. However, citizens' support to Serbian EU accession is decreasing year after year. The latest poll conducted last December showed that 48% of Serbian citizens supported accession to EU[55]. If compared to 2004, the percentage of support decreased by 25%. This may be influenced by the new circumstances, i.e. current migration crisis and terrorist attacks all over Europe, more frequent than last year, the increase of nationalistic ideology that has led to disintegration processes such as the Brexit case and the strengthened positions of some leaders whose rhetoric errs from the values that constitute the fundament of a democratic society.

How did this happen? Why have our viewpoints changed? Was the development of a consumer's society responsible for the lack of tolerance and sensitivity to general welfare? What are the media/journalists doing under such circumstances - helping or making things more difficult? One may say that the last question is of crucial importance. One may justifiably suggest that media reports are equally causes and consequences of the current events. Technological development and the appearance of new communication platforms resulted in the increase of the population exposure to information, that is thus hard to control. With almost 1800 media outlets and 65% of Internet users among the general public - out of which 80% use social networks - as well as a large number of functionally illiterate individuals (estimated to more than 50%), Serbia is facing numerous challenges posed by the new evolutions and new social circumstances in Europe and worldwide. Additionally, one should take into consideration the still fresh memories of the period 25 years ago, during which Serbia, led by non-democratic government, faced wars on the territory of ex-Yugoslavia (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina), economic sanctions by UN, NATO bombing and the murder of Zoran Djindjic - first democratically elected Serbian Prime Minister. Should Serbia go East or West? It seems that this question has never been so frequently asked as it is nowadays. On one hand, EU integration is an integral part of the official policy of Serbian Government. On the other hand, the same Government does not want to renounce "Mother Russia" and leans toward better cooperation with "Orthodox brothers and sisters". Moreover, it is important to note that, regardless of the fact that EU is the biggest donor in Serbia, citizens believe that Russia and Japan are bigger donors than EU, while USA is not on the list of top five donors[56].

RESEARCH DATA:

The research that the oldest newspapers in Serbia, Politika, conducted in correlation with Faktor plus Agency proved increased Euroscepticism[57]. Namely, the results of the "New Year" research - conducted in the period 16th to 26th December 2016 - showed that 30% of Serbian citizens believed that Serbia should never join EU, which was by 16% more than the year before. Additionally, only 3% of the citizens did not answer the question, as compared to 11% the year before. This issue may be connected to citizens' attitude towards migrants. More precisely, the citizens are now less compassionate. Last year, 36% of the population stated that Serbia could permanently admit several hundred migrants, 19% said that Serbia could admit several thousand, 4% stated that Serbia could admit "as many as necessary", 18% stated that they did not know, while 23% stated that

Serbia could not permanently admit migrants at all. Now, the percentage is rather different as no one said "I do not know".

"Perhaps this is the result of Berlin tragedy that has occurred during the research. Generally speaking, this attitude is connected to migrant-related incidents in the previous year, both worldwide and in Serbia. Fear is a dominant feeling and has obviously had effect on population's perception of migrants. They no longer see migrants as some unhappy people, but as problematic people" said Vladimir Pejic, Director of Faktor plus Agency.

Within the same research conducted by daily *Politika* and *Faktor Plus Agency,* it is worth mentioning that Serbians were asked "Which worldwide event has made the strongest impact in 2016?". The "absolute winner" was the election of Donald Trump for

55 http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/istrazivanje-za-ulazak-u-eu-48-odsto-gradana-srbije/k7tekn8
56 http://europa.rs/files/02.12.%20istrazivanje%20pp%20s.pdf
57 http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/371321/Veca-plata-najveca-zelja

USA President, with 61% of votes, then Brexit, with 61%, Fidel Castro's death, with 43%, while terrorist attacks in Belgium and France took fourth place with only 23%. NATO missile shield activation in Romania had only 1% and was on the last position. "The answers show that many people have "sobered up" after the euphoria over Trump's victory over Hillary Clinton, so 46% of them believe that the relation between USA and Serbia shall remain the same. When it comes to the change of presidential election system in Serbia, which has been considered in the public regarding announced amendments to Serbian Constitution[58], it seems that the interviewees do not know what it is all about and actually do not really care. Additionally, they do not care much about the possibility of introducing some kind of visas for EU countries" says Pejic.



"When hard times come, a man remembers his mother, Serbia remembers Russia" - Official twitter account of Serbian President

Is the Serbian public ready to understand the context of international events, as well as the way international events may affect the events in our country?

Even though there are specific viewpoints, all experts we interviewed, professionals who face these questions daily, both in theory and practice, agree that the Serbian public does not show great interest in international topics, as well as that a large percentage of the Serbian audience is functionally illiterate in terms of media.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS IN SERBIAN MEDIA

Traditional media find it hard to "cope with" the international information scene and the reason for that is routine information practice, declared Vladeta Radovic, Professor at Faculty of Philosophy in Nis, Head of Department for Journalism and Communication. Most of the TV programs grids are general and thus the content is broad and generally intended for a wide, inclusive targeted audience. He also added that in-depth analysis has been replaced with the "best-selling" sensationalistic approach to information. Ivan Protic, Belgrade Center for Human Rights' activist, former editor-in-chief at TV B92Info and former EFE correspondent from Yugoslavia, agrees with professor Radovic, and added that media frequently use translations from foreign media, domestic analytics and rarely reporters on the field, and that one of the basic reasons for that is the poverty of domestic media. "Media in Serbia barely deal with international topics, unless they refer to Serbia. Newspapers and TV, except for the newspaper Politika, RTS and cable channel N1 which is CNN affiliated, do not have clearly defined foreign policy editorial staff, and only a few media, such as weekly magazine Vreme, NIN or daily Danas, do in-depth analysis of international topics" he said. Dejan Tasic, a Radio Television of Serbia (public broadcaster) journalist with many years of professional experience, stated that TVs, radio and newspapers in Serbia almost always report on world news at the level of daily events, primarily in terms of natural disasters, crime news, terrorism, presidential and parliament elections in specific countries. Communication expert Staletovi Srdjan, who is working currently as a team leader of the project "Media Trips to EU" media program of Delegation of EU in Serbia, said that when it comes to genre, it is very hard to determine "whether the news is truly news (latest events which are relevant for a specific part of the world) or units that editors select using several other criteria". In his opinion, such criteria include: "breaking news " (which could be seen in the media of other countries), "exotic news" (whale stranded on the coast, vessel from WWII discovered, Hitler's letters revealed, etc.) or "shocking news"/"attention grabbing"

58 http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/promena-ustava-pred-srbijom-pitanje-svih-pitanja-sta-ce-biti-sa-preambulom-o-kosovu/8qg3dwg

(child born with two heads, new crime of life-sentenced convicts revealed, etc.)

When it comes to international news in domestic media, foreign agencies, such as Reuters, AP and FP are often used as sources and the cost of the content depends on the purpose and the number of subscribers to the media. The price for this kind of services goes from 150 to 600 eur for one month. Serbian reporters are rarely on the spot, unless important national politicians participate in the event. The reason why most channels use mostly the same sources is "information inertia", concluded prof. Radovic. In terms of reports from foreign countries, sources are predominantly information agencies, correspondents or outsourced networks. Ivan Protic also added biased reports from EU headquarters in Brussels, related to the Serbian candidacy to the EU membership[59], as well as from Russia, where Putin and his regime are often glorified by Serbian media[60].

Another problem in the Serbian media is information contextualization for the national readership. Contextual reporting, i.e. news from the world which are put in adequate context, is present in a few domestic media. Our interviewees agreed with that and stated that the audience is rarely explained the background of an event, dispute or statement. Viewers and readers do not have a clear picture of the position of a country and most probably very few of them could explain who has participated in Afghanistan or Syrian war, how the president of USA is elected or where the Council of Europe or European Council are located and what is their purpose.

Profesor Radovic stated that the international information market in Serbia, as in other countries in the Balkans, primarily refers to the relevant international actors, i.e. influential countries, as well as to influential European circles. Any information outside this scope is, in the majority of cases, irrelevant for most Serbian media. He also explained that, in his opinion, the reason for that may be the intensive share of information from the developed part of the world, which can easily and quickly create the illusion for the Serbian public that they too live in a developed society. The importance of news in Serbia is mostly determined in relation with the political forces which are considered relevant within the editorial policy of a certain the media. Naturally, news from American and Russian political scene has its place, as well as news within the scope of EU structure and the neighboring countries. For traditional Serbian media, America and Russia are clear benchmarks on the world scene, so when it comes to political news from these countries (mainly about activities of the countries' presidents), editors look for follow-up reporting on a daily basis (even though it often does not make much sense to the domestic audience), or they analyze statements, actions and decisions of American and Russian politicians to see how they would affect Serbia. Russia, EU, USA and the countries in the region are in the focus of the reports, as their attitude has dominant impact on our domestic policy. In terms of EU countries, Germany and France are in the focus of attention, as well as Brussels as EU headquarters. "Does anyone remember reports about common people living in neighboring Romania, Czech Republic or Austria?" Dejan Tasic, RTS's reporter, asked rethorically. There are no reports and texts which compare Serbia and countries which have undergone the process of transition and accession. There are no stories about privatization, fight against corruption, judicial reform and environmental protection in the above stated countries. Ivan Protic stated that media report about neighbors - Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina - mainly in terms of negative news, which is the result of some kind of propaganda war. Reports focus on Montenegro and Macedonia only sporadically, i.e. only in cases of elections or possible crisis.
Protic also noticed that the majority of media are pro-government, and thus often offer "partial information" from around the world, i.e. only the part which supports the Government. All major worldwide events, such as the election of US president or Brexit are given large number of pages in the press, but again from the national perspective, i.e. by analyzing whether that is good or bad for Serbia.[61]



Vojislav Seselj, leader of ultra right-wing Serbian Radical Party, during the meeting of support to Donald Trump in August 2016

The obvious drawback of the majority of traditional media in Serbia started 15 years ago, when the media stopped cultivating

59 http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/vol-strit-dzornal-srbija-zasluzila-da-napreduje-ka-eu/bb2mt37
60 http://informer.rs/vesti/politika/114125/GRMLJAVINA-KREMLJA-PUTIN-PORUCIO-ZAPADU-napadne-Srbe-napao-Ruse
61 http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/tramp-efekat-da-li-oluja-stize-u-srbiju/28k17nr

"foreign policy journalism" and diminished their editorial staff dedicated to world events, which could suggest relevance, give comments and determine the level of news importance, said Srdjan Staletovic. The media in Serbia do not have a problem with publishing news around the world, but they definitely have a problem of selection (insufficient knowledge of occurrences on the world scene in order to set up unanimously accepted criteria), a problem of context (not enough information on why the news is relevant and what the consequences of related occurrences are) and definitely a problem of understanding (editors select news based on their ratings in other media which editors find relevant, without the author's approach and clear understanding of the event relevance), explained Staletovic.

OPINION, OPINION LEADERS AND INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Commentaries related to world news are very rare in traditional media information programs. The world news segment in electronic media is reduced to minimum (only basic information, usually directly translated from the original sources). Even if there is a comment, it is usually "borrowed or copied" from some international sources (agencies, TV stations). Discussing this topic, prof. Radovic raises the question of media literacy. He states that even when comments are based on facts, the facts are not in the focus of attention, because on this level of media literacy, the function of comment is rather to influence, than to provide an expert interpretation, as the nature of this journalistic genre would require.

Protic said that commentaries are rarely present, and that they are not based on facts, but on the author's preferences. He also adds that in the tabloid media, which are predominant in Serbia, commentaries are either glorification or hate speech. Traditional media in Serbia have the habit of using expressions from the previous journalism era when freedom of speech and diversity of opinions were not appreciated as nowadays. Also, comments related to Croatian right-wing movements (Ustasha, etc.), attempts to connect them with official politics and commentaries without any solid evidence can be found in the newspapers Informer and Vecernje novosti. And could be treated as engaged journalism, which is publicly supported by political structures in Serbia, including the Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic. Except for the parts of the world that are interesting for Serbia (Kosovo, Croatia, Bosnia, occasionally Montenegro and Macedonia), there is no hate speech in the international news reports and comments, Staletovic declared. However, he said, when it comes to regions which are within the scope of Serbian interest, hate speech and public instigations are predominant. Prof. Radovic, on the other hand, said that in terms of tolerance and suppression of hate speech, significant improvements are visible. However, he added, "tolerance in information field, as well as any other long-term process, is to be nurtured, encouraged and, let's say - rewarded".

In terms of EU and EU policy topics, Serbian media refrain from commenting decisions, procedures and statements of EU officials (except in cases of direct disagreement with the policy of the Serbian Government). Numerous comments of pro-government media from Serbia attributed to some EU officials (commissioners, PRs, various officials) personal features and esoteric reasons for being in favor of solutions which are contrary to the solutions the media favoured by the media. By such actions, part of pro-government media in Serbia has strengthened hate speech, depicted resolutions of international factors (especially EU officials) as premature and suggested that personal decisions are motivated by favoring the side which is opposed to Serbia and supporting the interests which are against Serbia, Staletovic thought. These comments often have an insulting note (Informer: "the cow of Croatian president", Vecernje novosti "proved Ustasha promoter", etc.). Also, there are many comments on Brussels actions, especially in terms of negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo. In the majority of cases, the texts look like cheering writing which includes statements from Serbian participants, so the audience often does not understand what is really happening.

As for the most influential voices in public space, the journalists' influence in Serbia is decreasing, especially for those journalists who are not specialized in a specific area. Academic public can only act ad hoc, while politicians have impact on targeted public. Political analysists could maintain their influence only if they are "omnipresent in the media, as "analysts of general practice", i.e. "analysts" of specific interest groups. Politicians, analysts of questionable credibility and tabloid journalists have the greatest impact on public opinion in Serbia, said prof. Radovic, and Protic agreed saying that naturally, politicians are most influential, then a group of analysts who are close to the authorities. He also adds that real analysts and experts for specific fields appear rarely in few critically oriented media. Communication expert Srdjan Staletovic partially agrees, and adds that in Serbian media there are no journalists who know foreign policy as a discipline or follow regularly world news. Additionally, the number of

commentators and authentic professionals who know all about journalistic approach to international events is negligible. Except for two journalists of newspaper Politika (Bosko Jaksic and Miroslav Lazanski) and editor of Svet at RTS (Branka Kerkez), said Staletovic, Serbian traditional media do not employ editors who are qualified commentators. Independent analysts, those supported by political elite or scientists from social institutes comment on political events around the world. Their knowledge about world events is either too professional (a too large number of details narrows the picture, not the opposite) or subjective (clear pro-Russian or pro-West attitudes, or isolated political views as starting point for commenting world politics), he concluded.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS IN SOCIAL MEDIA

When it comes to the international political scene and importance of the events, social media (Internet in general) have made a large number of Serbian citizens believe in the phrase "information is power" and put the level of trust in the media on its real position without becoming an easy target like several years ago. Citizens and political activists are very active on social media, primarily in commenting domestic news, i.e. criticizing or offering complete support to Government and its activities. There is few international news and foreign sources are used, but not so often. Radovic explained that regardless of the origin, the flow of information has become more and more important in the social media. Such trend is becoming more visible and "is threatening" to re-shape the entire information environment. Social and Internet media in Serbia are becoming more relevant, especially having in mind their natural two-way feature (direct and fast communication with audience). When it comes to world news, i.e. the news which is relevant on international scale, its credibility is largely supported by the fact that many Serbian speak English and know how to find authentic information and compare it with the information which has been placed in traditional media, said Staletovic.

Prof. Radovic said that local and international sources are increasing and naturally the inflow of foreign sources is much more important. On the other hand, Dejan Tasic stated that users of social media frequently share the link from domestic media and add their opinion about the news; he also added that we can often see the opinion of the profile owner's through his status or link to his blog. The trend of connecting one's views with specialized sources has become recognizable, and predicts that even though it cannot be relevant on this level, essential changes shall occur very soon, prof. Radovic believed.

Discussing trends, virtual pro et contra EU debate is not so prevailing, even though the positions and participants' division are no longer so strong. The opinion of the majority of the audience about migration crisis depends on the reports obtained from EU countries, regardless of the fact that Serbia is itself on the migration path, prof. Radovic said, and added that several previous attitudes (from the first and second set of answers) may confirm or additionally argument this attitude and its truthfulness. Ivan Protic explained there were two clearly separated blocks, the so called patriotic block which is against EU and migrants, and a smaller civil block which believes in EU future and wishes to help migrants. One must say that part of pro-government media reports about migrants objectively, even with elements of sympathy. Their influence is hard to measure, but it is not negligible, he added.

Social media are becoming ground and channel for everything, claimed prof. Radovic and added that hate speech, as well as the total discourse of discrimination and intolerance have received a certain freedom in e-environment. However, it should not be forgotten that it has received much more "filters", i.e. catalysts. Domestic and foreign media posts on the Internet frequently disrespect the basic rules of journalism because their main goal is to get more likes and shares, not to show essence and send a message. They are often full of hate speech, nationalistic, anti-European and pro-Russian attitudes. Unlike Facebook, Twitter offers discussions with much more arguments and information which is somewhat more reliable. Ivan Protic partialy agreed with this, and explains that social media are channels for discrimination, spreading prejudice and hate speech, especially when it comes to the "patriotic block", as well as governing party activists who constantly accuse those who criticize the government and state that they are foreign agents, traitors and enemies of the state and nation. Staletovic had a positive attitude towards social media, and said that Twitter has contributed to spreading freedom of speech and reducing the degree of falling into the trap of propaganda, especially after several hundred world leaders, politicians, journalists have started using them. By following authentic information from the source and comparing comments and contextual reporting of Serbian media, a part of the audience becomes resistant to spinning and creating public opinion in accordance with the interests of media owners.

When it comes to world news, social media have become the major source of information, especially for young people. Social networks are open to all topics, which is much more than we can say about traditional media. However, Dejan Tasic warned there

is much inaccurate and unchecked information. Unlike traditional media, social media do not stick to professional journalism standards. They stick to standards even less than tabloids where journalistic standards are visible only in traces. It should be mentioned that printed tabloids cover 70 percent of this market, as well as that no national TV frequency, which resists to government pressure, has become stronger and stronger, said Ivan Protic. Staletovic added that social networks and Internet media have brought novelty of innovation and enhanced debates in Serbia (in the past several years), but they still cannot win over the way traditional media follow such information. Essentially, in terms of world news, the majority of Serbian citizens believes traditional media much more than Internet search or forums. "The reason for that is that the habit of mistrust and critique (in terms of analysis) is still a new discipline in Serbia", he thinks. Discussing this, prof. Radovic said that another problem in Serbian media is that those who have the largest resources are slowly becoming most influential. It is just a matter of time until they recognize the information capacities, as well as the possibility to influence, he says.

Considering how social media is different from traditional media, the targeted public in new information space is much more diverse, the population structure is more complex and the diverging points of view are recognizable. Aside from numerous quantitative and qualitative differences among these types of media, the scientific theory of media identifies another outmost important element - the age of the users of these two types of media. The difference between "older" and "younger" audience has never been as big as it is now. According to the laws of nature, social media users will be adults in a few years, while users of traditional media will soon retire. If his prediction turns out to be true, all other differences will be less significant. Srdjan Staletovic mentioned the age of the users as relevant, saying that younger generations and educated population often compares information from domestic media with worldwide media or even more with attitudes and information sent officially by the organizations which are in the focus of attention.

There is a critical mass in Serbia which is hard to delude and which checks and upgrades the basic level of information offered via traditional media by knowledge based on texts and other media content which derives from worldwide media. The possibility of commenting and discussing below texts/publications on social media, especially the possibility of commenting on official mainstream media texts offers the opportunity to debate and check information, which a part of Serbian audience uses.

FAKE NEWS AND PROPAGANDA

According to Branko Cecen, director at Center for Investigative Journalism in Serbia, foreign propaganda has been present in Serbia for decades without a pause. At the moment, Russian propaganda is very active, countered by weaker and less crude attempts by the USA. However, all this is minuscule compared to the domestic propaganda, warned Cecen, explaining that the party in power had subdued and put under its control all media with significant reach and influence, relentlessly brainwashing the citizens. As a consequence, according to the interest of the Serbian government, whatever foreign factor is favored by the political option in power at a particular moment in time, it will receive large space for uncritical coverage in Serbian media. At this time, it is mostly Russia. Ivan Protic also thought that foreign propaganda is a bugbear that tabloids and pro-government media use to frighten citizens. Staletovic agreed with Cecen and Protic, and also said that propaganda is a problem in Serbia. There are minimum three schools, the first one believes that strong "West or pro-West propaganda" is present in Serbia, the second one heats up "pro-Russian" propaganda, while the third one, who often uses false data, emphasizes "paid Soros or political propaganda which has a clear goal", he explained.

As for "Soros propaganda", Cecen said that there were no attempts to influence the editorial policy of his media from that side. Quite to the contrary, he said they were free to do whatever they saw fit exactly because they had received grants for investigative reporting. Advertisement market is the first thing any political party in Serbia takes over as soon as it is in power, and uses to control commercial media by allocating the revenue according to the interests of the government, explained Cecen. He also added that he was not aware of any kind of "propaganda" of that sort, and it puzzled him to understand that "Soros propaganda" became an accepted phrase, like something that undoubtedly exists.

It is obvious that some local political players are sided with big powers and whatever channel they control, will be used in political propaganda. They all crave for TV networks with national coverage, since the nation is illiterate (50% of the population is functionally illiterate) and not interested in world news, said Cecen, and added that networks sell their time for favors by powerful figures, or just to stay on good terms with them and not aggravate them. Of course, there are media with direct connections or even open ownership connections to Russia, USA or some European and Arab countries, he added and explained

that those often report in an obviously biased way, but their reach, as well as influence, is comparatively small. However, their content is sometimes used by other media, in accordance with the interest of whoever controls them.

There is no much discussion about fighting propaganda and definitely not in mass media, unless the government does not start a paranoia-campaign about a foreign conspiracy to overthrow them. At such times, a relentless and deliberately untruthful smear campaign against independent, especially investigative journalists starts. It can become quite unbelievable at times, with accusations of journalists being "sadomasochists", "spies" or "criminals", always without a shred of evidence or any ethics of professional standards in a way of a good smear, stated Branko Cecen. At that point, journalists are accused of being "foreign mercenaries", which is "proven" by the fact that their organizations win grants at calls for project proposals by EU and other donors. Cecen also added that it is never discussed if the published facts are correct, complete or important for the life of citizens of Serbia, because they most often are, unlike the smear campaign dirt thrown at them. A very small circle of citizens are interested in the real question of improper influence on media by foreign factors outside the government propaganda. Media literacy is quite undeveloped, so most citizens of Serbia are mere unconscious consumers of propaganda, Cecen agreed with Radovic. Attempts of serious discussion are almost always smothered by government controlled media, usually by loud distraction (a high profile murder case, strong official rhetoric towards one or the other neighbor country, stellar success of the government, act.). In this atmosphere of paranoia and constant state of alert, the Serbian citizens have lost all interest in foreign events, unless some very bizarre, bloody or in another way "tabloid" event has occurred somewhere in the world, Cecen concluded.

The story of propaganda jeopardizes the freedom of speech and economic survival of the media as the authorities control everything - from the economic position of the media to determining forbidden topics which mainly refer to domestic politics. The problem of false news is present as such news is mainly produced by tabloid media. The effects of such operation are hard to annul because the tabloid media prevails and such behavior is normal for them.

There are several initiatives that show the public the measurement of truthfulness of published information. Unfortunately, their authors form smaller groups of civil society organizations and their results are not sufficiently visible/present for the public. This refers to Isitnomer and several professional organizations such as KRIK[62] and BIRN[63], but the governing elite and their media have satanized them and deprived them from the possibility of publishing the results of their research. Branko Cecen, CINS' director, agreed and stated that only civil sector organizations do it on regular basis, on their own online media, sometimes republished by cable news TV with a very modest reach. Apart from that, he added, almost an entire media scene is a distorted, dysfunctional front which pretends to be news media.

Serbian public space constantly heats up (spin) stories that interest groups control the media, while money (usually from the West) controls interest groups. This type of public spin is not so new, unusual or specific for Serbia only, he added. It is very important as there is insufficient media freedom, transparency of ownership and editorial policy in Serbia. Thus, such approach (that the governing elite supports) results in the decrease of trust in the media, general repletion with media content and treating the media as extended arms of those who have power. When given a chance to state its opinion, the public in Serbia believes that it is possible to buy any type of information with EUR 100, i.e. that there is a "semi-legal way" (if such thing exists) to buy or order publicity, added Staletovic. Some internal researches of international organizations, such as research within the project Partnership for Media Development in SE Europe[64], unfortunately show that the level of journalist economic security is very low and that the lack of clear understanding of the real owner of the media really enables rich people to buy publicity, order a scandal, even a scandal with international consequences. However, the Serbian public is not primarily concerned with the state of media. With the help of elite that heat up one of the three schools that elaborate on the existence and strengthening of propaganda in Serbia, the public believes that Soros propaganda machinery is becoming stronger in Serbia, and that the aim of Soros propaganda is to weaken the current government and make way for future puppet government.

"Most precise assessment of current state of facts and their professional placement in the media could be described as cacophony", stated Staletovic. Large number of information and denials, statements which annul each other while actually blurring reality, show interest, people and groups the way they are not. In such circumstances, due to intensive behavior of majority of traditional media in Serbia, the public in Serbia cannot differentiate between propaganda and the truth.

62 https://www.krik.rs/en/
63 http://birn.eu.com/en/network/birn-serbia-home
64 http://mirc.rs/en/uslovi-zaposljavanja-novinara-u-albaniji-bih-bjrm-crnoj-gori-i-srbiji/

Professor Radovic said that the phenomenon of propaganda is more than present in the Serbian public space. He declared that foreign propaganda, as any other type of propaganda, represents a combination of three components: interest, amount of invested assets, and functional, especially media (il)literacy. So far, these three variables have had a large degree of influence, and thus fear from the stated appearance. Having in mind that the expression "foreign propaganda" is always related to non-domiciled population, its origin is completely irrelevant, he said. Therefore, the debate on possible levels of protection, as a completely legitimate category, directly depends on the transfer of scientific knowledge in the media field. But it barely exists. On the other hand, each type of protection implies control, which does not completely exclude the possibility of conditional specific freedom limitation. Red herrings are often present in these types of debates. For example, if the control of information space is a priori harmful, then forbidding hate speech, nominally speaking, is jeopardizing the freedom of speech, which cannot be an acceptable thesis, explained Radovic. The items which are harmful, and hate speech is definitely harmful, are to be controlled. This is exactly the thing that returns the debate to the beginning, i.e. to three key components: interest, amount of invested assets and media literacy, that is, the ability of critical thinking of those who are in the focus of manipulation.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the rich arguments and expert opinions of our interviwees, one can conclude a couple of things.

Firstly, media in Serbia are dependent on political elite and centers of power, which control editorial policies of most of Serbian media. Also, the financial aspect affects the position of the journalistic profession. This further implies the production of "copy-past" news, a lot of agency news without context, but at the same time the lack of investigative approach too.

On the other hand, social networks have positive and negative sides. In one way, the Internet accelerates citizens' journalism and the democratization of media, but at the same time it is a space for propaganda and hate speech.

Attempts at regulating and monitoring may turn out to be poisonous gifts, as they may open the door to unnecessary limitations to freedom of speech and abusive usage of control leverage to silence critical voices.

All that shows that the only systematic solution in combating censorship and other types of media control, is continuous media education: educating the public in the spirit and values of good journalism, exercising critical thinking, inviting them to practice responsible use of powerful media tools that they have so easily at hand.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The current report is part of a series of similar works produced from November 2016 to January 2017.

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Radenko Udovičić – Bosnia-Herzegovina
Sanja Vasic - Macedonia
Milena Perovic Korac - Montenegro
Mladen Velojic - Serbia

On behalf of the Center for Independent Journalism in Bucharest, we would like to thank the following partners for their support and cooperation:

Albanian Media Institute (Albania), Mediacenter for Media and Civil Society Development - (BiH), Media Initiatives – Association for Media Development and Promotion of Professional Journalism (BiH), Macedonian Institute for Media (Macedonia), Montenegro Media Institute (Montenegro), Media Center (Serbia), Media and Reform Centre Nis (Serbia), Media Development Center (Bulgaria).

A World The Size Of A Saucer - International news reporting in SEE countries

















