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# Deconstructive journalism:

Disciplinary power affecting journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina



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# Declaration by the candidate

I hereby declare that this thesis, “DECONSTRUCTIVE JOURNALISM; DISCIPLINARY POWER AFFECTING JOURNALISTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA”, is my own work and by my own effort and that it has not been accepted anywhere else for the award of any other degree or diploma. Where sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

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# Abstract

Journalists' safety is decreasing world-wide (RSF, 2022). The components of polarization and global crises over the last years, fueled by the opportunities the internet provides has made the work of journalists more challenging. The country of Bosnia and Herzegovina is no exception. However, the working conditions of Bosnian journalists might be even more difficult, adding to the domestic political polarized situation, complicating their duty to serve the public interest (KAS, 2021). It is within the core of the profession to have no other interests than those of one's public. Despite all good intentions and the key element journalism is within a healthy democracy, journalists are targeted by smear campaigns, threats, strategic lawsuits and socio-economic challenges. With a load of perseverance active journalists hold on to their duty, albeit the consequences it brings along.

**Keywords:** Disciplinary power, journalism, identity, conflict, Bosnia, framing, media, biopolitics

# Preface

During the 1980's, a young American journalist named Robert Kaplan traveled through the Balkans. During that period, the Balkans were in the shadows of the global cold war, which dominated the daily newspapers. Kaplan, however, merged all of his travels, interviews and anecdotes into the book *'Balkan Ghosts, a journey through history'* (1993). At first, he almost could not get his book published. But once the 42nd president of the United States of America Bill Clinton was spotted with the book tucked under his arm and it is believed that the former president was so astonished by Kaplans coverages, it made Clinton decide not to intervene in Bosnia, *Balkan Ghosts* (1993) became a bestseller.

The eventual intervention of the UN, United States and / or international community resulted in the Dayton Peace Agreement, to end the brutal war in Bosnia. As a guideline, The Dayton Peace Agreement and *Balkan Ghosts* (1993) will lead the way through this master thesis. Not as a sole source of truth, or anything like it, but since it is a good starting point as it lies on the crossroads of my thesis; Journalism and identity conflicts. This monograph will touch upon journalism, narratives, conflicts, territories and identity stirred onto the geographical location, which is now Bosnia and Herzegovina.

When Kaplan starts his journey through the Balkans in Vienna, he brings up former Austrian Bundeskanzler Klaus von Metternich, but only to disagree. Von Metternich ruled over the Austrian part of the Habsburg Empire during the 18th century and claimed that the Balkans started at the Viennese *Rennweg*. The road that left Vienna Eastbound. Kaplan rejects this territorial ordering. For him, the Balkans start once he crosses the Austrian border to Slovenia. From that moment on, drunk mine workers reading pornographic magazines, loudly arguing with one another enter the train Kaplan is on. According to the American, this marks the start of the Balkans.

More than 30 years after Kaplan discovered the Balkans, I would argue that the Balkans do start in Vienna, once again. Not because that is where alcoholics fight each other, or any other orientalist thought provided by Kaplan, but because of its linguistic, historical and cultural ties it reproduces. Two ages after Von Metternich declared Vienna as the port of the Balkans, I had a chance to discover the

mountainous area of South East Europe myself. And I came to the conclusion that not the *Rennweg*, as Von Metternich said 170 years ago, but in the Viennese neighborhoods *Favoriten*, *Brigittenau* and *Meidling* the Balkans starts. The youth speaks a fine mixture of Slavic expletives as “*Pa brate*” (*Hey, man!*) , followed by the Austrian dialect “*geh ma cevapcici essen oida vos?!*” (Let’s eat some cevapcici)<sup>1</sup>

The street shops offer a wide range of Austrian sausages and Balkan meals, since most of the inhabitants of these neighborhoods have their roots from the South-Eastern European peninsula. As they fled for the devastating war of the 90’s, which broke out after Kaplan wrote down his memoirs.

Of course, Vienna is not the only place that people sought refuge from the Yugoslavian wars. So, one could argue that there are many more small Balkan spheres, and there probably are, but that is not the point. The nexus between identity and geography is what made me tick, combined with how and why identity influences the spread of content, frames and narratives.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is undoubtedly connected with the larger history of the Balkans. Therefore, in order to understand the context of this research, I sometimes need to explain a bit of the past, to understand the current disputes.

On the other hand there are current events, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine that trigger certain cases within the Balkans, and especially, Bosnia and Herzegovina. This will again be explained to understand this research in a wider context.

It is time to let the research speak for itself and to thank those that helped me on my way. First and foremost my colleagues at the Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung Media Programme South East Europe in Sofia. Благодаря<sup>2</sup> und vielen Dank<sup>3</sup>, for the opportunities and help provided. Secondly, a warm hvala<sup>4</sup> to those that were willing to speak to me on their personal experiences. Thirty years after Kaplan went to Yugoslavia, this research will travel to Bosnia and Herzegovina wherever it is located on the map, on the internet, in literature and in the media.

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<sup>1</sup> Cevapcici are sausages from the Balkans.

<sup>2</sup> Thank you in Bulgarian.

<sup>3</sup> Thank you in German.

<sup>4</sup> Thank you in Bosnian.

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*Figure on the front page; made by the author.*

# Abbreviations

SLAPP	Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation
PSM	Public Service Media
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
UN	United Nations
Dayton	Dayton Peace Agreements
US	United States of America
EU	European Union
KAS	Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

# 1. The key to journalism

More than twenty five years have passed since the Dayton Peace Agreement made an end to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>5</sup>. Since then, every former Yugoslavian state has sailed its own route towards the future. The former conflict territory had relative but delicate peace since the Dayton accords of 1995 (Perry, 2018). However, it is that same Dayton agreement that has been criticized for its awkward framework (Campbell, 1998). Disciplinary, nationalism and xenophobia were instrumentalized during the war and are still haunting the Balkans (Oberschall, 2000). The Dayton peace agreement did bring relative negative peace, but was not able to create a space and a process towards a situation of positive peace in all of the former Yugoslavian Republics (Campbell, 1998).

Although sovereign borders were drawn more than 27 years ago, it did not magically end the nationalist rhetoric and all the tensions within the region of South East Europe. Nationalist politicians still utilize their nationalism for their own authoritarian agenda's (Mujanovic, 2018. p.10). As a result, Bosnia's society does not benefit from its current political framework and space (Perry, 2018). One could issue that the Dayton Peace Agreement left a window of opportunity for nationalist to thrive and block any forms of progression (Perry, 2018; Campbell, 1998).

Especially Bosnia, where the three major ethnic identities live under the same Bosnian roof, found itself in a space where nationalism, xenophobia and resentful narratives retain to thrive, instead of development through cooperation and tolerance (Mujanovic, 2018).

One the eve of the war, the media was instrumentalized to internalize certain narratives (Oberschall, 2000). Through hateful analogies and antagonism, mass media spread fear, feeding the nationalist electorate (Lake and Rothchild, 1996). Propaganda and controlling the channelisation of information is argued to be the most powerful weapon (Foucault, 1979). It is for that reason that within democracies, press freedom, safety of journalists and independent media are key pillars for tolerant democratic societies (Hargreaves, 2014; KAS, 2021).

A pillar of democracy, that is how free and independent media ought to be experienced in democracies. In Bosnia, however, the freedom of the press and

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<sup>5</sup>Hereafter referred to as Bosnia.

working environment of journalists is under pressure (KAS, 2019; KAS, 2021; IREX, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2015).

Before the start and during the Bosnian war, propaganda had been the cornerstone of the spread of hate and fear (Oberschall, 2000). The platforms of television and radio became an instrument to internalize the narrative of antagonist ethnic identities and eventually to mobilize ethnic identity towards identity turning violent (Oberschall, 2000).

One of the most famous examples is how Montenegrins were frightened that an army of 30.000 Ustase<sup>6</sup> was about to invade Montenegro, because of the propaganda that was presented to the public. As a response to the created fear, the Yugoslav People's Army 'defended' the Montenegrins and besieged the Croatian town of Dubrovnik (Pavlovic, 2005). The historic center of the town was shelled, whilst in reality, there were no armed forces, heavy weaponry, plans to invade Montenegro or whatsoever. Just a wounded Unesco World Heritage Site.

Today, the media in the Balkans and certainly in Bosnia, are still influenced by powers that impede the job of the journalists; serving the public interest by providing balanced and independent information (KAS, 2021). Journalists face (death) threats, SLAPPS<sup>7</sup> and are hardly able to employ their profession (Human Rights Watch, 2015; IREX, 2019; KAS, 2019; KAS, 2021, RSF, 2022).

In times of pandemics, elections, wars or any politically relevant situation, one needs to be able to rely on what information one is receiving from journalists (Hargreaves, 2014; KAS, 2021). With ongoing political tension in Bosnia and its region and national elections within the country, will journalists be able to serve the public with their coverage, or are they submissive to different powers?

In this research, it is not the quantity of the threats, nor the failing authorities that will be scrutinized. Those aspects were widely researched before and verifiable problematic for the media landscape in Bosnia (KAS, 2019; KAS, 2021). Moreover,

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<sup>6</sup> Hardline Croat fascists and ultranationalist

<sup>7</sup> Strategic lawsuit against public participation

this research dives deeper into the experience of the journalist themselves, since journalism or any public relation is handcraft and made by actual people and how it affects their work. What are the methodologies of pressure? How and when do they experience these external pressures, or are they even aware of the powers that push them towards certain perspectives? These are the questions that this research will answer.



*Figure 1.1 The burning city of Dubrovnik during Yugoslav People's Army attacks in 1991. Photo: EPA/PETER NORTHALL.*

## 1.1 Societal relevance

One may wonder, after almost three decades, enough should have been said about the Dayton Peace Agreements and which aspects it is lacking. However, Bosnia has become a place of concern once again (European Commission, 2022). And therefore, all the critique on the Dayton Agreement and how it reflects on today's society is relevant once again. Another factor that has changed since Dayton was applied, are the changes in the media landscape. Still, political influence, self-censorship and instrumentalizing for propaganda reasons is happening within Bosnia's media landscape (KAS, 2021). But what has changed over time are the technological advances such as social media, smartphones and how the internet has become an even more hybrid tool (KAS, 2021). Fallacious narratives, hate speech and other mechanisms to instrumentalize, as Oberschall (2000) describes during the Bosnian war -such as radio and television stations, newspapers- are not necessary anymore to get a certain message out. A few clicks on a smartphone and one's reach is endless.

During times of political essence, in a healthy democracy, journalism needs to thrive (Hargreaves, 2014). This means that one is able to produce balanced good journalism without any external pressure. On the structural level, good independent journalism can be crafted if it is surrounded by checks and balances, ethics and self-regulation (Hargreaves, 2014; KAS, 2019).

The journalism code of practice is in some countries self-regulated, in some one can actually be sentenced for breaking the code. Though, whether it is in court or not, the one thing that is most important is to serve the public interest (Hargreaves, 2014). A journalist is able to break multiple laws such as invasion of privacy, harassment, the use of listening devices and so on, only if it serves the public interest (Hargreaves, 2014). Serving the public interest is key within this research, as it is for journalists. Since the job of a journalist; serving the public interests, by producing relevant information, it represents something greater. The societal struggle of Bosnia, towards a future without problematic political influence.

### 1.1.2 Public service media

In most democracies, the public service media is a key provider of independent, factual information (KAS, 2021). Whereas the independence is safeguarded by its framework. The current state of the public service media in Bosnia and Herzegovina

is atrocious, if one is even able to speak of an established public service media (KAS, 2019; KAS, 2021). After the Balkan wars and the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina was established with the Dayton Agreement, voices rose to create a state-wide public broadcasting service for Bosnia and Herzegovina that would overcome ethnic division. It would provide coverage for all citizens, thus construct public interest journalism (KAS, 2019).

Sadly, it was never established due to lack of political will and the public broadcasting is therefore separated by ethnic lines. The public broadcasting service is nowadays separated into three broadcasting services, divided by the ethno-political lines. These broadcasting services rather compete with each other, instead of complementing (KAS, 2019).

Furthermore, the public broadcasting service is under direct political influence. As a result of all the above, it is highly dysfunctional, divided and distrusted (KAS, 2019; KAS, 2021).

### **1.1.3 Market-based journalism**

Journalists working for market-based news outlets are not better off. Making a living is hard, since the wages are fairly low and the working conditions are hard (KAS, 2021). Because of the delicate position, independent journalists are vulnerable to external powers. Furthermore, alike journalists working for public service media, market-based journalists are targeted by threats and SLAPPS (KAS, 2021).

Journalists in general are not well-protected by the law or strong unions (KAS, 2021). Altogether, working as a journalist is, especially in Bosnia and all over the Balkans, is not just a profession, it is a calling.

With national elections in October 2022, Bosnia is heading towards a time where the information available for public interest is even more urgent, as one is writing. Furthermore, it had become a place of concern over the last year, according to the European Union (EEAS 2022; European Commission, 2022; European Commission, 2021). This is mainly caused by the political leader of the Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik. With its nationalist rhetoric and threats of secession, it is endangering the political framework of the Dayton Peace Agreement (EEAS 2022).

The question rises if journalists are able to fulfill the core duty, especially during election times. Are journalists able to report, issue and inform for the interest of the public, or are they hindered by the political situation? And does the fast travel

of news, due to the internet, in combination with social media change the playfield in terms of the freedom of the press?

## 1.2 Scientific relevance

The main narrative of the war in Bosnia describes how within multi-ethnic state Yugoslavia, the three major ethnic identities created civil war. The ethnic war was fought most heavily in spaces where the ethnic identities would live the most densely mixed. This geographical location, where Croats, Bosniaks and Serbs were all fairly equally distributed, is the current state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The attempts to explain the 'sudden' violence can be brought down to a couple schools of thought; The primordial view of three ethnicities which have ancient hatred towards another is one of those (Kaplan, 1993). It aligns with Huntington's Clash of Civilisation (1996), as Bosnia is the geographic location whereas the Western (Croats), Orthodox (Serbs) and Islamic (Bosniaks) worlds come together. Therefore, borders which separate these three ethnic identities should be established (Mearsheimer, 1993).

However, Bosnia has also been described as a peaceful place, where different religious groups were living together, bonded by the same language and culture (Campbell, 1998; Oberschall, 2000). So, if three antagonist ethnic identity groups have not been there at every given time, how did it become the main narrative. Or, as Campbell (1998) and many other scholars issue; is the narrative and the construction of three antagonist ethnic identities the actual problem? Since one is 'entering an inescapable realm of pre-given problems and ready-made solutions, when one notes that the three ethnicities are solely the problem' (Campbell, 1998, p.20). Others rather draw upon the instrumentalization of the ethnic identities by elites (Fearon & Laitin, 2000; Oberschall, 2000) and therefore note the creation and manipulation of latent primordialism.

Essential in the debate are the questions how, and if, groups of ethnic identity are created, why they do follow and when they do turn violent. In order to contribute to this debate, I will delve deeper into the mechanisms of the construction of ethnic identities, methods of disciplinary power, and the instrumentalization of the ethnic identities in the media landscape.

### **1.2.2 The role of the media**

Multiple scholars point out the role of the media during the Balkan wars. It is eminently a tool that could possibly construct fear among groups and oppose that there is a fight between an 'us' and a 'them' (Oberschall, 2000). Today's media landscape in Bosnia is politically influenced (KAS, 2019; KAS 2021). Especially in (pre-)election times, the media serves the interests of political elites, rather than the public interest (KAS, 2019; KAS, 2021). This is what this research will be about: How, why and how much are individual journalists influenced politically, through ethnic identity and disciplinary power? Do they work with clear order from elites, or do they, since they are internalized with the narrative of ethnic ancient hatred, believe they are serving the public interest? And lastly, how does it impact their profession?

According to many reports, the political elite's influence on the public media service and the market-based media outlets is evident and therefore not serving the public interest (KAS, 2019; KAS, 2021; IREX, 2017). However, one could ask oneself who the public is? It could reveal how one is experiencing the space of Bosnia, the imagined geography and the Foucauldian (1979) internalization of the problem. Thus, on one hand a journalist can be influenced by the internalization of the problematization, whilst on the other hand could be a major factor of forming the problematic narratives as described by Campbell (1998), without being aware of it.

Furthermore, Oberschall (2000) and Fearon & Laitin (2000), describe how the 'moderate' middle ground had become a dangerous space during the Bosnian war. One would be harassed by both its own ethnic identity as the 'other.' Therefore, committing to one or the other radicalized side would inevitably be the safest for the individual (Oberschall, 2000; Fearon & Laitin, 2000). Could it be that for journalists it is nearly impossible to serve the public interest, when speaking about the established state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, since they are targets of disciplinary power too?

### **1.3 Research objective and research questions**

If a criminal is convicted, a journalist is able to name one a criminal. Before one is convicted, one is simply a suspect, or accused. Those are the rules of journalism, the court decides, the journalist will write it down (Hargreaves, 2014). But what if a journalist is threatened for bringing that message?

In 2016, war criminal Radovan Karadžić was convicted for crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes in Bosnia (Balkan Insight, 2020). Therefore, it is ethical and correct for journalists to name Karadžić a war criminal. However, the conviction split Bosnia and its media landscape along ethnic lines, whereas one side was rooting for the conviction and the other was not acknowledging the verdict (IREX, 2017). On top of that, the Bosnian-Serb president at the time, Milorad Dodik revealed a mural honoring Karadžić (Balkan Insight, 2020).

The media had a large part in fueling the tensions that came from the verdict (IREX, 2017). It reveals the role the media plays and the ethnicization of the political field. Today, on the other hand, journalists are being threatened and intimidated as Bosnia is not a safe place for journalists (Human Rights Watch, 2015; KAS, 2019; KAS, 2021; Reporters without Borders, 2020). Especially covering delicate topics such as politics, corruption and history (Udovičić, 2010). As a result of this, journalists exploit a certain self-censorship (IREX, 2014; KAS, 2019; KAS, 2021). Therefore, I raise the research question:

*To what extent is disciplinary power affecting journalists in Bosnia in election times?*

In order to answer the main research question, it is substantiated with the following sub-questions:

*To what extent do journalists feel a sense of self-censorship?*

*How does one's own ethnic identity influence one's journalism?*

*Does it differ from non-election times?*

## 2. Balkans exposed

This chapter will give an overview of the literature regarding Identity, conflict and violence, applied in the case of Bosnia. Furthermore, this chapter will provide a synopsis of the history of conflict of Bosnia, up till today and the different approaches of its history. A key aspect within this chapter is the role of the media in the framework of creating the notion of fear and eventual violence on one hand as well as being affected by external powers as violence, identity or politics too.

### 2.1 Conflict in Bosnia

How the war in the 90's in Bosnia is experienced, can be understood through different lenses. Without going off-topic and being too detailed, the next paragraph introduces Bosnia's history concerning important theories of the academic debate and different relevant views. The acknowledgment that should be made is the irony that presenting certain parts of history and ignoring others, is framing by itself in a way that both Tewksbury (1999) and Campbell (1998) touch upon as essential. Essential for the understanding and the complexity, but in addition as a factor of the whole phenomenon. However, describing every factual thing that had happened since forever is impossible and again, according to Campbell (1998), drawing up every relevant incident is still a manner of framing. Because, who decides what is relevant and what is not? This research therefore presents Tewksbury (1999) previously posed theory that framing is not a deliberate attempt to mislead, but rather an approach to make the audience understand this research.

#### 2.1.2 Kaplans history

Kaplan's book *Balkan Ghosts a journey through history* (1993) is a bundle of stories, interviews and anecdotes written down by the American journalist Kaplan, as one could read in the preface. The acknowledgement that should be made and Kaplan makes himself as well, is the little to no coverage on the geographic location of Bosnia. Though his ontological views on the war are not expressed in the book, the general concept of primordialism is. When one thinks of a primordial perspective of the war in Bosnia, one starts with describing former Yugoslavia as a multi-ethnic state, with nationalist tensions oppressed by a communist regime. All ethnic

identities have their scars through history, as they have fought bloody wars in the past against each other and still live in a delicate form of peace, with ethnic tensions close to the surface. When Yugoslavia starts to break down, a combination of fear, media and nationalist rhetoric of politicians fuel the ancient antagonism, smash the delicate peace between neighbors and turn people violent. In the most densely mixed part of Yugoslavia, the bloodiest war is fought, which would be Bosnia.

Furthermore, Kaplan's book has been linked with Bosnia and its war a bunch, since it is believed that it convinced president Bill Clinton not to intervene. Kaplan later reflects on the possible political influence his book has had, by stressing that the decision is of no matter and Clinton sought every sort of excuse to escape any blame. What mattered to Kaplan (1993) is the regional geopolitically steeped ancient hatred, provided by a long and broad history. He issues foremost the question if Bosnians were a peaceful and tolerant society through history as completely irrelevant. Adding that the ethnic harmony had always been extremely delicate. "The Bosnian muslims were not killed by aliens or president Clinton, but by other Bosnians (Kaplan, 1993. P. 11)."

In his later work '*Revenge Of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate*' (2013), Kaplan again stresses the importance of the ontological assumption of geography and its consequences. Concerning South East Europe, Kaplan (2013, p. 6-7) notes the economic underdevelopment of the Balkan peninsula, compared to North and West Europe, linking it to the Prussian, Habsburg and Carolingian Empire. He stresses the spatial inequality of fertile soil, accessible harbor and abundant forests between those parts of Europe as a factor of importance, which leads to the situation of today and mostly tomorrow (Kaplan, 2013).

Kaplan (2013) argues the regions with less developed institutions through history are indicated by its geography. In the case of South East Europe this means that Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia have a stronger sense of identity, a stronger civil society and civilized institutions, compared to Serbia, Romania, Bosnia and Bulgaria for example, since the first were a structural part of the Habsburg empire and the latter were not. Furthermore, he argues that different ethnic groups and geographical certainties as mountains hinder good governance (Kaplan, 2013).

It aligns with the ontological assumption Kaplan draws upon in *Balkan Ghosts* (1993) about the wars of the 20th century on the Balkans and the atrocities

committed by the ethnic identities against each other. The ethnic identities live segregated lives with their own completely different experience of society. For example, he makes no distinction between moderate or fascist Croats; A Croat trivializes the cruel concentration camp of Jasenovac, conducted by the Croat Ustase in the second world war. And a Serb would downplay any atrocities committed on Bosniaks. Kaplan (1993) categorizes the inhabitants of then still existing Yugoslavia into 7 fixed flavors: Croats, Serbs, Slovenes, Bosniaks, Albanians, Macedonians and Montenegrins.

For the Yugoslavian entity of Bosnia at the time does that school of thought mean the most struggle, when Yugoslavia breaks down. Following Kaplans primordialist approach, Bosniaks cannot live with Croats and Serbs and the other three ways around, because of religion, culture and history. Or as Richard Holbrooke, assistant secretary of state under the Clinton administration explained: "The sense that nothing could be done by outsiders in a region so steeped in ancient hatreds." (Holbrooke, 2011, p. 22). The Dayton Peace Agreement brought an end to the war, reproducing Bosnia into a federation with two entities, making it a country consisting of two countries with three kinds of people. Holbrooke was a key architect of the Dayton Peace Agreement and went on to win a Nobel Peace Prize for his merits. Bosnia remained to be a place of little to no progress after the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed (Mujanovic, 2018).

### **2.1.3 Campbells problematization**

As one could read in chapter one, Campbells (1998) work describes the internalization of the problematization as the actual problem and a discourse that works through time and space. Campbell takes the more epistemological approach, which is the discourse of Foucault's (1979) disciplinary power, applied on ethnic identity. Through strategies of normalization that work on people and places in order to compare, differentiate, hierarchize and homogenize in order to form mappable and manageable problems and solutions (Foucault, 1979). According to Campbell (1998), the ready-made solutions include more often than not distribution, enclosure and surveillance of people.

Campbell's concept of the Bosnian war is therefore a constructivist approach and therefore Campbell (1998) criticizes (neo-)realist thinkers as John Mearsheimer for their primordialist nature of approach and the plans they conceive; such as the

Vance-Owen Peace plan (Mearsheimer, 1993). The original Vance-Owen plan sought to shrink the territory of Bosnia, hand over land to Serbia and Croatia and distribute over 600.000 Muslims, 300.000 Serbs and 100.000 Croats. This would lead to solely homogenous states of Muslim Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. This perfectly aligns with the primordialist school of thought of Kaplan (1993). It means that ethnic identity is fixed and since the ancient hatred, conflict is inevitable, following the primordialist theory.

The concept of fixed identity, and eventual conflict, implies that societies with antagonist ethnic identities are unworkable and therefore borders need to be drawn correctly. Which is in between the ethnic identities, to create homogeneous societies, according to the fixed identities. Mearsheimer's plan *Shrink Bosnia to save it* (1993) and the later Vance Owen Plan, where he tries to draw lines between the ethnic identities, based on the space's demography are perfect examples aligning with that approach. Mearsheimer hierarchies and orders the ethnic identities and creates a nexus between ethnic identity and territory; thus through disciplinary strategies of partitioning creating a space where 'each individual gets its own place and each place its individual (Kumar, 1997).' It is a striking example of the primordialist school of thought with pre-given problems and ready-made solutions (Campbell, 1998).

Contradicting to Mearsheimer and Kaplan, Campbell (1998) argues that acknowledging primordialism is the actual problem and fuels nationalist thought, since a nexus between territory and identity is the very misunderstanding. According to Campbell (1998), this is built upon ontological assumptions, which are anthropically highly contested. Mearsheimer's Vance-Owen Peace Plan was therefore also rejected, since the international community desired Bosnia to be a restored, unified multi-ethnic country (Campbell, 1998). The concept of the Dayton Peace Agreement was therefore to call for this prosperous, unified and multi-ethnic Bosnia. The external declaration of the Dayton Peace Agreement proved that was the very idea and therefore the media rooted for the 'Dayton spirit.' Nonetheless, Campbell (1998, p. 120-123) notes, despite the repudiation of Mearsheimer's peace plan, nationalist and primordialist rhetoric within the final Dayton Peace Agreement is still present. The discourse of naming Bosnia a multi-ethnic state for example, does already imply differences between its inhabitants (Campbell, 1998). The creation of the two entities and three different presidencies based on ontological fixed ethnic identities does just that: drawing the ethnic lines,

connecting them with politics, laws and territories. It creates the pre-given problem of ancient antagonist ethnic identities and the ready-made solution of secession or power-sharing (Campbell, 1998). The problem has been made mappable through disciplinary power and the Foucauldian (1979) internalization of the problem. However, Campbell (1998, p. 116) issues that “the primordialist realist solutions form a dangerous idealism that is likely to produce the outcomes it seeks to avoid.”

The Vance Owen plan is a macro-political illustration of building policy on ontological assumptions. An example of strategies formed by the same hierarchizing policies that affect the individual directly occurred as one traveled to Sarajevo.

A woman, whom the author met, was a teenager during the war in Bosnia in the 90's. She was born and raised in Sarajevo and did not know any other place that she would refer to as home. During the siege of Sarajevo she got injured and had to escape via the famous tunnel, which was the only way out of the valley at the time. Via Zagreb, she managed to get to a safe space with friends and family, where she eventually applied for scholarships in the United States to continue her studies. Everything was settled to go overseas and pursue a degree. A host family would take her in, a donor paid for the tuition and a visa was granted, since she was a Bosnian refugee. Until the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed. Although she never entered a Mosque or read the Quran in her life, her last name was labeled as Muslim. And as a former inhabitant of the entity of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, she should return, since Dayton granted the Federation as a 'safe' place for Muslims. If she had lived five kilometers uphill Sarajevo, her case would have been labeled als an unsafe place for a Muslim and she would have had a future as a college student in the USA. For the moment, she returned to the wounded city of Sarajevo.

A striking example of a nonsensical result of building policy and (political) organizations upon ontological assumptions. In the next paragraphs, the implications of the division by the same ethnic lines are discussed, concerning the media landscape and the public media services. Thus, elaborating on the problems that ontological assumptions cause, regarding the limitations it opposes on journalism.

## 2.2 Turning violent

This leaves us with the question why and how the inhabitants of Bosnia turned violent in the 90's. In conquest to explain the violence in Bosnia, one could again turn to the primordial view on the nature of conflict. This would imply Kaplan's (1993) animosities, waiting for the right moment to burst out. However, this research focuses merely on the role of the media and what it tells us about today's society. Attempting to answer the question why masses follow and when ethnic identities become violent, both Oberschall (2000) and Fearon & Laitin (2000) seek answers in the role of the media and the usage of propaganda. Oberschall (2000) and Fearon & Laitin (2000) describe the instrumentalization and construction of ordinary primordialism through the media.

An example of how the role of the media added distributed falsified coverages and hateful narratives is described by Oberschall (2000). Oberschall (2000) emphasizes the media as an instrument, utilized by the elites to activate a crisis frame. Distributing propaganda and cutting off any other sources than the nationalist Serb rhetoric is by Oberschall (2000) explained as a planned strategy. After fear comes hate and that message of fear of extinction needs to be set out, in order to activate the crisis frame and eventually mobilize Bosnians (Oberschall, 2000; Lake & Rothschild, 1998). As an extra, no one wanted to disadvantage their own ethnicity and as a result of that, a spiral of unprofessional deconstructive journalism was formed. With the public also only being interested in news delivered by their own ethnic broadcasters, one becomes encapsulated (Oberschall, 2000). The propaganda even went so far that sports coverage was patriotic. If a match of football was played between a Serbian and a Croatian team, the Croatian broadcasters would not show the Serbian scored goals in the sports summary (Oberschall, 2000).

Oberschall (2000) presents the media, thus journalists, as an independent variable within the framework of activating the crisis frame, through the spread of propaganda. The spread of fear and later turning to violence is according to Oberschall (2000) a direct causal effect of the media's work, instrumentalized by the elites.

Fearon & Laitin (2000) are less convinced by the media as an independent cause of ethnic violence, although they do note its presence within the larger scheme. Fearon & Laitin (2000) emphasize, like Oberschall (2000), the danger of

being a moderate, instead of an extreme nationalist. This could imply the danger of being an independent journalist, since one never wants to confess sides, respecting the code of conduct (Hargreaves, 2014). However, the media is not directly addressed by Fearon & Laitin (2000) as a key facet.

Fearon & Laitin (2000) rather draw upon the labeling of ordinary violence as an ethnic dispute. War and anarchy provides socio-economic opportunities for many, according to them. An example are the 'weekend warriors' who enriched themselves by looting and smuggling on the weekends and returned to their low-paid jobs in Serbia on Monday (Woodward, 1995; Fearon & Laitin, 2000). Woodward (1995) focuses on the individuals that commit the atrocities and describes criminals that without any commands or well-orchestrated militias cross the border to do harm, justifying their deeds by the nationalist rethorics. The nationalist hate speech by politicians is noted, but not the causal cause effect of the atrocities committed, according to Woodward (1995) and Fearon & Laitin (2000). However, they do address the asymmetry of information as a factor of hostile environments and therefore indicate a role for the media. Nonetheless, the elite serving their own interest and therefore constructing latent primordialism is revealed by Fearon & Laitin (2000) as their essential conclusion.

Aligning with Campbell (1998), Fearon & Laitin (2000) do not recognize any evidence of ancient hatred as a reason for ethnic violence, if it ever existed in the first place as Kaplan (1993) issues. Both Fearon & Laitin (2000) and Oberschall (2000) acknowledge the presence of the ethnic identities, whether it is socially constructed or not, but issue that external action is needed in order for the ethnic identities to become violent, thus turning into antagonist ethnic identities. In the case of Oberschall (2000), instrumentalization of the media activates the crisis frame and turns an earlier peaceful society into polarized antagonist ethnic identities, where extreme nationalist rhetoric predominates. Thus, instrumenting latent primordialism. Within this polarized realm, there is no place for moderate 'middle ground.'

For Fearon & Laitin (2000) and Woodward (1995) it is rather the mobilization of those who have bad intentions already, by giving them the antagonist ethnic identity 'green pass' and creating a hostile atmosphere, where moderate and peaceful civilians were pressured to join the extremist sides. Although, they do note that a clear explanation of why masses turn violent remains indeterminate. Yet, they

align with the creation and instrumentalization of latent primordialism of categorizing the Bosnian society into three antagonist ethnic identities.

### **2.3 Theoretical framework**

In this research, two academic fields come together. Those of ethnic, political and identity conflicts and the sphere of journalism and media, code of practice and self-censorship within the profession. The explorative nature of this research will dive deeper into the relation of the two.

What is evident is that the journalistic product is influenced by politics in Bosnia in general (IREX, 2017; KAS, 2019; KAS, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2015; RSF, 2021). But what has not been broadly scrutinized is the effect it has on the individual, to what extent and which methods of pressure are most significant. This research seeks to describe how the journalist is struggling oneself, balancing between not getting too close to delicate topics, but trying to serve the public as correctly as possible. What is the effect of disciplinary power on the individual and what impact occurs on the product made? To answer that question, the journalist self is added into the conceptual framework as a variable. With the institutions, that should protect journalists on one side, but also demand good journalism, as an independent variable. This differs from most former research whereas the institutions, such as the public media service system and commercial editorials, were scrutinized for their general output. In this research, the relationship between (bio)political influence and the journalism produced is scrutinized. In chapter five, the previously conducted research on press freedom, self-censorship, and media plurality in Bosnia will be discussed. In the next paragraphs key concepts and approaches are discussed for a better understanding of this research and its approach to Bosnia.

#### **2.3.2 The instrumentalization of journalists**

Why masses get polarized, follow and eventually turn violent remains key insights in the conflict studies debate. This research aims to understand the effect on journalists and their eventual output. As described in chapter one, journalists are individuals that try to inform the audience, but are part of the latter as well (Scheufele, 1999). Positioning journalists in Foucault's (1979) and Campbells (1998) sphere, they are, alongside all inhabitants, both guards and prisoners of the inescapable realm.

However, as they tend to be public figures and should have a colliding profession, since journalism should question all facets of society (Hargreaves, 2014), they hold an interesting position in the face of Bosnia's by law categorized society. How the Dayton Agreement and the creation of policy, law and government on ontological assumptions reflects on the media landscape and therefore its journalist, will be presented in chapter three and five.

### **2.3.3 Conflict, Identity and politics**

To better understand the complex dynamics between the external pressure of disciplinary power on journalists, it is important to grasp certain concepts and how they relate to each other. This segment is split up in two parts; one explains the dynamics of identity and disciplinary power on individuals and the latter clarifies choices and effects of journalists on their profession.

#### **2.3.3.2 Disciplinary power**

The founding father of disciplinary power is Michel Foucault, who described this concept of ruling by discipline in prisons (1979). The concept of disciplinary power reaches far beyond prisons only, as Foucault argues (1979). It is the establishment of power through symbols, institutions, hierarchies and supervision, instead of what Foucault (1979) describes as sovereign power. The latter is a visible examination of punishment on the body, whereas the former is a subtle process of normalization. The physical punishment of torture on the body is not necessary, it is the individual that is serving the power themselves and controls its associates. Through this discourse of social control it is not solely an example of the prison that is mainly described by Foucault (1979), but hospitals, schools and societies in general.

Opposing the idea of power that is exercised by a certain class, Foucault (1979) emphasizes it is rather reproduced in gender, race and sexuality. Power is not a causal or top-down concept, but rather a continuous complex inescapable realm. Explaining the inescapable realm with Foucault's (1979) example of the prison; it is not only the inmates that were disciplined, the guards are also affected by the disciplinary power, since they serve it too. David Campbell (1998) elaborates on this concept within the space of Bosnia, which is discussed within this chapter.

### 2.3.3.3 Identity (politics)

Acknowledging that one cannot explain the full scale of literature that is available on identity and its effects, one focuses on the basic concepts that need to be understood for grasping the idea of identity politics and instrumentalization regarding Bosnia. Therefore, a couple schools of thought need to be discussed briefly and will be specified thoroughly in the following section.

The first one being the primordialist view of identity and why identity turns violent in Bosnia. Aligning with Huntington's (1996) *Clash of civilisations*, Robert Kaplan (1993) and John Mearsheimer present a concept of a given identity. This fixed ethnic identity of Croats, Bosniaks and Serbs is revealed as the actual problem by the posed writers. The concept of identity, and eventual conflict, implies that societies with antagonist ethnic identities are unworkable and therefore borders need to be drawn in between the ethnic identities. Mearsheimer's plan *Shrink Bosnia to save it* (1993), where he tries to draw lines between the ethnic identities, based on the space's demography. Mearsheimer hierarchies and orders the ethnic identities and creates a nexus between ethnic identity and territory. It is the perfect example of the primordialist school of thought, which Campbell (1998) describes as the actual problem of pre-given problems and ready-made solutions. Robert Kaplan (1993) suggests in his news journals: when born a Croat, it means that one believes in a certain view on history, is only comfortable with its own ethnic identity and holds an antagonist stance towards the other ethnic identities, Serbs and Bosniaks in the case of Bosnia. The stories Kaplan (1993) write align with the academic concepts of Mearsheimer and Huntington.

If one tries to look past the primordialist idea of a fixed identity, which is a rather structuralized positivist understanding of society, there is *constructivism*, *instrumentalism* and the *state breakdown* explanation of identity turning violent in Bosnia (Oberschall, 2001). What one needs to understand is that contrary to primordialism where identity is fixed, identity could also be socially constructed and therefore malleable (Sen, 2015). Rather than being something given, it is a concept that is formed by society and context. It changes over time and space and is therefore something situational as well (Sen, 2015). For example, Sen (2015) describes how one's identity as a vegetarian is relevant when one is in a restaurant. This concept of identity is essential for understanding ethnic identity turning violent in Bosnia by elite manipulation as described by Fearon & Laitin (2000). Fearon & Laitin

(2000) reveal how through a top-down approach antagonist ethnic identities were constructed by the political elite, thus *instrumentalizing* ethnic identity. The *instrumentalization* is associated with the *state breakdown approach* of Oberschall (2000), since both rely on a certain sentiment that has to be invoked or constructed.

In the case of the *state breakdown* approach, it is all about the security dilemma and provoking fear, in order for identity to turn violent. In the context of Bosnia, Oberschall (2000) issues the role of the media as essential for creating and provoking the crisis frame of the Bosnian citizens, resulting in violence. Furthermore, Fearon & Laitin (2000) acknowledge the role of media too. However, they emphasize the asymmetry of information and therefore install the role of the media on a different position in their conceptual framework. For Fearon & Laitin (2000), it is not the direct top-down approach, where the instrumentalized media is linked to the violence, rather is the media part of what is socially constructed as well.

In the next paragraphs concepts regarding journalism and media theories are discussed and explained. These concepts eventually connect with the theories as discussed before, which will be explained later on, in this chapter.

## **2.4 Journalism as a key pillar**

Within liberal democracies, journalism can be seen as a key pillar (KAS, 2019; KAS, 2021; Paris, 2004). It is for that reason the media is described as a powerful tool in order to control and hierarchize. The media, with its various forms such as television, newspapers, and social media, often serves as a mechanism of surveillance and control. It constantly presents information, images, and narratives that shape our perceptions, influence our behavior, and establish norms and standards. The media's ability to observe, disseminate information, and construct narratives can be compared to the panoptic mechanism of observation and control. Foucault (1979) argues that the disciplinary society operates through the internalization of the gaze, meaning individuals discipline themselves by adopting the perspectives and expectations of those who observe them, utilizing framing, wording, priming and agenda-setting. For the reasons as posed in this section, punishing hate speech within the media landscape is seen as a key facet within liberal peace building (Paris, 2004). Therefore journalism and journalists are part of the conceptual framework, not to be understood as the cause, but as an indication of the whole phenomenon. One will learn about the conceptual framework later on in this chapter.

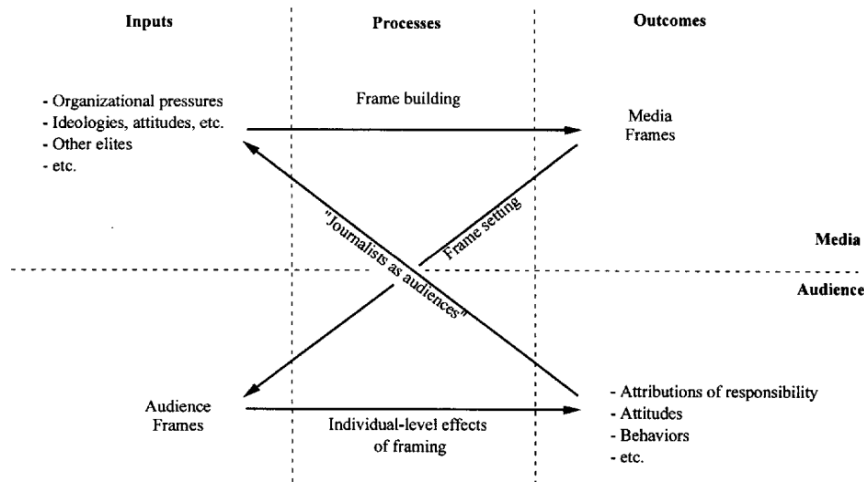
### 2.4.2 Framing

One important note on forehand is that the three essential media concepts of *framing*, *priming* and *agenda setting* are complementary to one another. Whilst they are three different independent subjects, they do overlap and affect each other. In the next paragraphs, the concepts are discussed: what do they imply, how do they align and relate to each other.

In general, *Framing* is the presentation that journalists or any media worker give, contextualizing the information they present to their audiences in a way it resonates with them (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006). For example, a foreign correspondent needs to give a little more context to his foreign audience, in order for them to get a better sense and more nuanced understanding of a certain situation. Whereas the domestic audience already grasps a certain context and therefore understands the information differently, or, in way, easier. The goal of journalists is not to mislead, moreover to make the audience comprehend through frames (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

On the other side, framing is utilized not only by professional journalists to make the audience understand certain information. Politicians and commercials apply framing as well, in order to get audiences on board with their message (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). An example of a commercial frame would be how Shell, which upholds one of the biggest CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the world, presents their commercials within a frame of a clean and green world, where birds squeak freely and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are not addressed. Therefore, framing is a widely researched topic in the sphere of political communication. With regard to this research, the literature used are those concerning journalism.

A wide-spread critique on Framing theory is the supposed ambiguity the concept upholds (Benford, 1997; Brosius & Eps, 1995). For this reason, Scheufele (1999) focused on conceptualizing framing and created a framework (figure 1.2) to strengthen a theoretical approach of framing. Scheufele (1999) describes the ongoing process of framing, whereas 'the output of processes serve as inputs for subsequent processes'. Furthermore, Scheufele (1999) makes the distinction between frames as dependent versus independent variables, plus a distinction between individual frames versus media frames. As a result, Scheufele (1999) reveals a paradigm of framing, where the journalist is a part of too. Moreover, he notes the theoretical lack of the differentiation between framing, agenda setting and



*Figure 2.1 'A process model of framing research' by Scheufele (1999)*

priming. However, Scheufele (1999) does issue the three terms as overlapping, extending and connected to one another, which will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

### 2.4.2.2 Priming

The relation of priming with framing is widely discussed. It changes within the context as well. Again, there is a distinction to be made in the theoretical literature available between priming in political communication and journalism, since the ultimate goal of priming in journalism and priming in political communication is different. It can be brought down to the goal of journalism and public relations in general. Whereas a journalist works for the public interest, herein trying to make the public comprehend what is important and what is irrelevant, public relations interests lie with the business case or the political affiliation. However, the general conception is the same: the connection or memory of the audience with certain topics and, or, people (Price & Tewksbury, 1997). For this reason, priming is sometimes understood as an extension of agenda setting (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007) argue that agenda setting by the media on a macro level shapes the judgment of the audience on political candidates, by raising certain issues which are then connected to the political candidates; thus priming. Another example would be the videos, songs and pictures displayed when one is reporting on a story. Showing

pictures of a poor and underfed Africa whenever the continent is on topic, or playing out a samba song, whenever a Caribbean country is discussed, as if it is a never ending party in those parts of the world.

Priming and repetition is a strong method when fabricating propaganda, as it could respond to negative connotations and discriminating stereotypes. In the case of the Bosnian wars in the 90's, the repetition of negative connotations is widely known. Muslims rape innocent women and want to Islamize Europe, all Serbs are chetniks and want to establish a greater-Serbia and all Croats are Ustase, who want to establish a greater Croatia. The power lies within the repetition displayed, the symbols affiliated and the tunnel vision that is constructed (Oberschall, 2000; Campbell, 1998).

#### **2.4.2.3 Agenda-setting**

Lastly, the concept of agenda setting will be discussed and where it differs from the previous media theories. As posed before, agenda setting can be seen as a part of framing, and as a distinct strategy in the way information is distributed (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). It comes down to the choice editorial rooms make on what news is covered and what is not. Within this aspect of making the choice, what to publish and what not, lies the facet priming of priming, as touched upon before (Price & Tewksbury, 1997). The difference, however, is that the decision made by journalists on the story selection, is based upon the public perception of issue importance.

Therefore, priming occurs as an indirect mechanism in the case of agenda setting (Price & Tewksbury, 1997). In the case of framing, however, where editors decide how they will present the information they want to distribute, priming occurs in that way directly (Price & Tewksbury, 1997). Cohen's (1963) statement on agenda setting explains the strength of the concept: *"The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about."*

The ambiguity of the three concepts and how they relate is clear. However, scholars reveal that, although they relate, align and complement, there is a clear distinction to be made (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). It might be because various studies have inconsistently referred to framing, priming and agenda setting, without making a clear distinction, the ambiguity is one of the most used critiques (Scheufele

& Tewksbury, 2007). Nonetheless, all three are to be understood differently and essential to grasp this research.

A last brief example of interesting choices made regarding framing, priming and agenda setting is revealed by the Dutch TV show *Argos Medialogica* (2022) on the topic of the Srebrenica Genocide.

In the series, the choices of journalists and their effects on the public opinion are discussed. In this specific segment, the role of the media regarding the failed mission of Dutchbat III and their forfeit on the enclave of Srebrenica is discussed. A journalist who made a documentary on the failed UN peacekeeping mission, gives a former commander the opportunity to sum up what misinformation was spread about him and his corps at the time. However, a few of the allegations the commander labels as misinformation, are actually proven to be factual. For example, a Bosniak was run over -unintentionally- by a Dutch vehicle, whilst the commander labels it as disinformation. The journalist who made the documentary does not interfere, nor does he provide the information that a few allegations made are actually factual. He later reveals in *Argos Medialogica* (2022): "I knew it (the accident) happened and I have discussed this ... with the commander. Still, I chose not to provide the viewer with that scene and information." The journalist in this case framed the Dutchbat III story as wishful thinking and a 'no chance' mission. The priming lies within the agenda setting of withholding certain information, thus contributing to the overall frame of a powerless battalion. It is not without reason that the documentary is named 'The powerless mission of Dutchbat.' A frame strengthened by the concealing of relevant information.

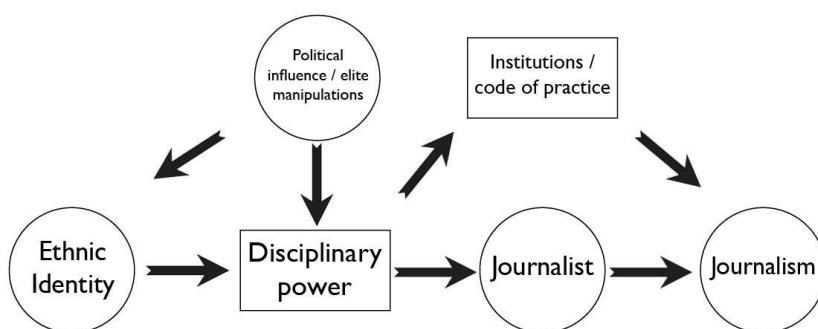
## 2.5 Conceptual Framework

All of the discussed theories and concepts bring this research to its conceptual framework. Keeping in mind the conceptual model of Scheufele (1999), where the ongoing process of framing and all the aspects that affect that process are located. Where does one place the journalist within the conceptual model for this research?

For this research, one tries to uncover the political, cultural and disciplinary power affecting journalists and their eventual product they produce. Within *figure 1.3* the direct political influence is combined with the effect of the individual's own ethnic

identity into disciplinary power (Foucault, 1979). Both the ethnic identity and the political influence are in that way independent variables, with disciplinary power and the eventual produced journalism as dependent variables.

Aligning with Scheufele's (1999) model, framing is an ongoing process. In this research, however, we delve into the output of journalists and all the influence it finds on its way to be distributed. Therefore, the conceptual model ends with the journalism that is being sent into the world. The disciplinary power that is described in Bosnia's society by Campbell (1998) is central within this framework. What will be discussed are the methods used by political elites to uphold the disciplinary power up till today and the role the individuals own ethnic identity plays within the framework. Not only the journalist's self is affected by the disciplinary power, just as Foucault (1979) describes, the guards internalized their role as well. Converting this concept to journalism, the editor's in chief, the advertisers, the audience and therefore the code of practice is affected as well by the same process of normalization. It corresponds with Scheufele's (1999) concept of the journalists as an audience within the model of frame building. The effects on journalists individually are explained by the phenomenological approach of this research, which will be discussed in chapter three. Subsequently, the possible effects of the journalistic output is analyzed within the framework of Scheufele (2007) and the concepts as posed before of framing, priming and agenda setting. This seeks to uncover the



(in)direct

*Figure 2.2: Conceptual model of disciplinary power affecting journalists*

influence on the produced journalism. Lastly, the last checks and balances before journalism being published, as the code of practices and editorial regulation, are discussed as well and how they are affected and part of the disciplined paradigm.

## **2.6 Thesis structure**

The previous segments introduced the themes and important concepts to grasp the context and eventual analysis of this research. The next chapters will provide an even wider context to understand the complexity of the Bosnian society, the political framework and the space within which this research operates. In chapter three, the academic debate and literature that has been mentioned briefly before, will be discussed in the wider context. In this regard, this research issues the loose ends of the academic debate and seeks to position itself in the larger context of Bosnia, conflict, identity and framing in the 21st century.

Chapter four provides a greater view on the media landscape of Bosnia today, substantiated by recent research on its current state. The challenges journalists face, presented within this segment, will underpin the societal relevance, which eventually leads back to answering the research question. Moreover, it also seeks to give insights on what is already known, to answer the sub questions of this research partly and establish a framework for the methodology and eventual analysis. In order to validate the eventual answers of the research question, the methodology is described in chapter three. The choices made on the methodology will be specified, which will lead to the analysis in chapter five. Within chapter five, all relevant outcomes from the research, framed by its applicable context will be discussed and united within a conclusion. The last chapter is a brief meta-research on all relevant limitations and implications of the results. Thereafter chapter six reflects briefly on recommendations for further research.

## 3. Methodology

The upcoming chapter will provide an overview of the methodology utilized for this research. All of the considerations are explained in the following paragraphs, whereas the choice of a qualitative research design is issued firstly. Afterwards the phenomenological approach will be described and the analysis of the results will be discussed in the adjoining chapters.

### 3.1 Qualitative research

As briefly outlined before, the media is separated by ethnic lines and the political influence on boards is significant (KAS, 2019; IREX, 2019; KAS, 2021). In order to answer the research questions, one needs to delve deeper into the experience of journalists in Bosnia. The phenomenological approach is rooted in a qualitative type of research and since this research tries to grasp the experience of the individual, it is important to have long and detailed interviews with the participants (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

This research will conduct qualitative research, analyzing the journalistic participations of individuals. Therefore, one will interview a handful of journalists and media workers from Bosnia. It is essential to involve a diverse group of participants, considering their personal dispossessions could differentiate significantly. Furthermore, I will interview experts on the media circumstances in Bosnia and Herzegovina, unaffiliated with the editorial rooms.

Lastly, I delve into reports on the public media services written previously, as a content analysis, since it is important for the data collection to possess certain general knowledge of the participants' personal and social world, which I will explain later on in this chapter. Multiple organizations as the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), Human Rights Watch, the OSCE mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Reporters without Borders (RSF) and International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) published reports on press freedom, media plurality and the duty of serving the public interest in general.

The organization which provides a major contribution is the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Media Programme South East Europe. The foundation published multiple reports on the subjects, mostly concerning the structural causes

of the insufficient broadcasting services, due to the direct political influence, the low-paid employment and the poor education in all of the Balkans.

### **3.2 Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis**

Within one's interviews one needs to aim to understand the experience and the space of the journalist. It involves trying to understand the essence of being a journalist in Bosnia, getting to the core of the phenomenon (Husserl, 1970). How are they making sense of their duties and social world (Smith & Osborn, 2003)? Which consequences need to be accepted, as one chooses to be a journalist? The objective is to reveal those with semi-structured interviews, whereas the interviewees will be exposed to questions and cases that link directly to their personal views and feelings. In that manner, the aim is to let the interviewees describe the phenomenon of being a journalist in post-war, election-time Bosnia.

The interviewees will be asked how they get to certain subjects to report on, which is named agenda-setting in journalism (Hargreaves, 2014; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006) and if certain subjects are supposedly 'off-topic.' What brings them to certain decision-making such as wording and perspective of their coverages, ergo: framing (Scheufele, 1999). How do they view their own discourses, when it comes to serving the public?

Do they have intentional blind spots, when it comes to their own ethnic identity, as Oberschall (2000) revealed during the Bosnian war? And if so, is it actually intentional, since one is pressured to be heavenly? Or are the intentional blind spots, in fact, real blind spots?

With the Bosnian general elections held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 2022, interesting and important times are coming up for journalism. It raises the societal and academic relevance of this research. The time period conducting my research however, will be during and closely after the elections. During election-times one will monitor the public service media broadcasters with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. Afterwards one aims to reflect with journalists how they experienced this period of time. Will it differ from non-election times? Will they experience this time span more intensely?

All of the questions and topics raised above will be discussed and will eventually lead to answering the research questions. As explained before, the interviews will be conducted in a semi-structured manner, but the analysis needs to

be conducted in a structured way, in the case of interpretive research (Giorgi, 2009). The interviews will be recorded and transcribed in Atlas TI. Afterwards the interviews will be analyzed through Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as initiated by Smith & Osborn (2003). The framework of a semi-structured interview is preferred for its convenience to modify questions in the light of the participants answers (Smith & Osborn, 2003). In the case of journalists in Bosnia during election times, it might differ which topicalities they are informed well with.

In order to get to the core of the phenomenon of being a journalist in Bosnia, during election-times. It delves deeper into how the participants, journalists in this case, make sense of their personal and social world. IPA tries to uncover the personal perception of a certain object or event, instead of producing a clear statement about the object itself (Smith & Osborn, 2003). What is important with this type of research, is the researchers' knowledge and conceptions of the situation of the participant. The researcher aims to get as close as possible to the personal world of the participant, which could also be described as the insiders' perspective (Conrad, 1987). A very important aspect is the researcher himself, since one needs to interpret the answers embedded in the sphere of the profession, which is journalism in this case. Smith & Osborn (2003) stress the importance of researcher reflexivity, which I will elaborate later on.

The questions as posed before, are part of the so-called two-staged participation process (Smith & Osborn, 2003). With cases and questions, one seeks to make sense of what effect the external pressure produces on the bodily and the journalism it produces. The effect it has on the bodily is directly connected to the disciplinary power of Foucault (1979). Do they experience the direct effect of being a journalist in Bosnia on their livelihood, their family, their health or any other effect from repercussions? And secondly, how does this affect their work? Do they feel a sense of self-censorship because of this? Are they extra cautious when it comes to political delicate topics? What do they experience from the process of normalization? That is the methodological bridge between IPA on journalists, conducted in Bosnia and disciplinary power affecting journalists in Bosnia.

### **3.3 Data collection**

When it comes to participants, there is no magic number, as long as it makes sense how the phenomenon calls for it to be studied (Vaglé, 2018). However, IPA studies

are conducted on small sample sizes, because of the in-depth interviews and the descriptive nature of phenomenology, instead of sampling a larger group in order to seek for generalizations. “The detailed case-by-case analysis of individual transcripts takes a long time, and the aim of the study is to say something in detail about the perceptions and understandings of this particular group rather than prematurely make more general claims (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 54).”

In the case of this research, naturally, it is important to get a grip of the journalists by speaking to themselves. Nonetheless, experts on the topic that are not - or less - influenced by the same external powers might be just as important. Since the answers of the participants themselves are not exact and definitive, their answers should be weighted and judged, thus interpreted, as a part of the IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Previously, one has touched upon the dynamic that the journalists themselves could possibly not be even aware of their blind spots (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Within the framework of Bosnia, this could relate to what Campbell (1998) describes as the inescapable realm, where one cannot see, nor is aware of the bias one has entered. It would prove the Foucauldian (1979) disciplinary power effect on journalists, which they interestingly reproduce in their journalism, as they are subject to the process of normalization. Experts on the topic of the media landscape in Bosnia, apart from the research subjects themselves, are as compelling and include a different but essential view, in order to interpret the answers of the journalists. ‘The power of IPA studies is judged by the light it sheds within the broader context’ (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

### **3.3.2 Interviewees**

Concluding what has been said previously about data collection and applying it to this research, now, one will explain the choices made on the interviewees. Since IPA is a time-consuming methodology, one should be aware not to take on too many interviews, Smith & Osborn (2003) would even advise to stick with a number of three. However, in order to get a broader and balanced picture, one needs to pick-up an extensive and diverse sample group of journalists. On top of that, it is important to get information not only from the journalists themselves, but also, from external experts. Furthermore, diversity is very important. Diversity in ethnic identity, employer, gender and position within the media-landscape or media outlet. The latter is essential since the possible impact one has on the final product is relevant.

Difference in ethnic identity in the sampled group of journalists is an essential distinction to be made, in order to get the broader context. There is a paradox in stressing the different ethnicities, since it is exactly the problematization of the inescapable realm of Campbell (1998). However, one cannot simply shut one's eyes for the whether or not created ethnic identities. For the reasons as posed above, it is important to have, within the group of journalists, different ethnic identities.

Alongside with a handful of journalists, from different ethnic identities, gender and position in the media, expert interviews will provide the theoretical context (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Experts in this research are those not involved within the process of producing journalism. Thus, it is not (directly) involved within the priming, framing and agenda-setting of journalism (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006). Nevertheless it is one who works closely and has a broader view on the Bosnian media landscape.

The distinction is made between journalists and experts. This does not imply that the journalists are not experts of their profession, nor does it mean that the experts lack any skills of journalism. It is solely a label within this research. The label 'journalists' reaches further than the ones that publish. Chiefs of editors also count as journalists, since they take part in the process of agenda setting, framing and priming (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006).

Since this research is built upon Campbell's (1998) inescapable realm of thinking in ethnicity, participants have the opportunity to describe their own identity in a broader context. In that way they could get past the three fixed ethnic identities of a Bosnian, a Croat and a Serb.

## Interviewees

### *Journalists and media workers*

- Belmin Karamemedović, General Director, BHRT, Sarajevo.
- Elvir Padalović, journalists, Buka, Banja Luka.
- Senad Hadžifejzović, Founder, Face TV, Sarajevo.
- Leila Bičakčić, Director, Center for Investigative Journalism (CIN), Sarajevo.
- Dalija Hasanbegović, well-known journalist, AL Jazeera, Sarajevo.
- Vanja Stokić, eTrafika, Banja Luka.

### *Experts and experiences*

- Borka Rudić, Secretary-General, Association of BH Journalists, Sarajevo.
- Lejla Turčilo, Professor, University of Sarajevo, head of the journalism department..

In the case of Karamehmedović, Padalović, Hadžifejzović and Rudić, these have been changing thoughts about the media landscape in Bosnia at the South Eastern Europe Media Forum 2022 in Sarajevo. In the case of Bičakčić, Hasanbegović, Stokić and Turčilo, in-depth interviews were conducted.

### **3.4 Researcher reflexivity**

As one is conducting all these interviews, one should take in account the presence of the oneself. Secondly, the knowledge of one regarding the interpretation of the data is something to be aware of (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

With regard to the researcher oneself, one should be aware of one's own view of the world and personal dispossessions; thus post-reflexivity (Vaglé, 2018). In order to encounter misjudgements, one tries to stick with an understanding and epistemological approach as much as possible. The researcher oneself has experience with working in journalism and knows the tricks of the trade within the editorial room. However, this is within the context of a Dutch and German editorial room and one should recognize that the Bosnian context is a completely different one. Therefore, one should not compare every aspect with the one that the researcher is familiar with, but stick with the theoretical criterions of priming, framing and agenda-setting as posed before by Scheufele & Tewksbury (2006). Setting aside all the personal views as it is a first time experience is the bracketing or Husserl's *epoche* that is fundamental for phenomenological research (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). Though, this would assume a more *transcendental* analysis, whereas this research is merely focused on interpreting and understanding, which means that the researcher's knowledge and experience with journalism is also essential for an accurate IPA, since it requires a basic understanding (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Lastly, the researcher should be aware of the presence of oneself conducting the interviews. One should be aware that interviewees could have other interests than answering the sole truth (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Furthermore, interviewees could not even be aware of the frame they give to their answers. That strikes to the

core of this research, to what extent is the content produced affected by disciplinary power, thus be affected unconsciously (Foucault, 1979; Smith & Osborn, 2003). For the essential within the methodology to have this diversity of interviewees, with different expertises and to scrutinize how the answers relate to one another.

### **3.5 Method of data analysis**

Doing IPA, one aims to get a grip of the psychological world of the respondent. This means understanding the paradigm of the journalists, rather than quantifying the topics or wordings that have been used (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Eventually it leads to combining the experiences of the journalists to draw a certain general phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

First the researcher reduces the information retrieved from the interviews into statements and general quotes, whereafter they are divided into different themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There is a distinction to be made between the *textural description* and the *structural description*, whereas the former means the transcendent experience of the participant and the latter is the phenomenon of the participant in the wider context (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). For this reason, one stresses again the importance of not only retrieving information from journalists who experience the phenomenon of being a journalist in Bosnia, as well as the experts who are not part -or partly are- of the lived experience.

#### **3.5.2 Connecting the dots**

In the next section one will explain the themes and general statements that are retrieved from the interviews and how they are connected. As mentioned before, this research works two-staged and needs to dive into the phenomenon of the experience of the journalist and the later journalism it produces. Therefore, this phenomenon of being a journalist in Bosnia is divided into three main elements. First, the 'effects on the individual', where one aims to uncover the personal experience, the consequences and the attitude of the individual. This might imply the effect on the bodily, the mental health or ones personal decisions in the private life.

Secondly, to what extent the individual's circumstances affect the journalism produced. What does one reproduce, when one's more cautious of its own health? Does one change its wording, or the topics one wants to write about? But first and foremost, is one aware of one's own reproduced framing, selection of topics and

priming, regarding their personal dispositions. Dispositions are to be understood as a personal frame of mind and is a key factor to be aware of, when one is conducting journalism (Hargreaves, 2014). If one is deliberately adapting to external pressure, therefore ignoring certain topicality or molding a particular frame, a phenomenon described as self-censorship occurs (Hargreaves, 2014; KAS, 2021). Though, is it self-censorship when one does not intentionally reproduce frames rejecting journalistic standards, since one believes one is serving the public? If journalists in Bosnia are aware of the circumstances they employ their profession in and, most importantly, the awareness of the journalism that is produced, possibly due those circumstances, is the essential distinction to be scrutinized in this research.

At last are the sources of disciplinary methods, since it can be established that external pressure on journalists is happening. What are the reasons for one to threaten, or to start a strategic lawsuit against journalists? Where do these measures come from? Is it solely individuals or are these actions taken more politically planned? What is the purpose of deliberately harming someone's life?

All of the three posed stages in disciplinary power are discussed in chapter five, where one will read the outcome of the by IPA conducted interviews with the interviewees, underpinned with previously research data, one will find in chapter four.

### **3.5.3 Limitations**

This research has a few limitations. First off, all the interviews are conducted in English, which is not the mother tongue of the interviewees, nor of the researcher. A minor language barrier could therefore occur. The panel with Karamehmedović, Padalović, Rudić and Hadžifejzović was held in Bosnian, but made accessible through an interpreter. The transcriptions can be found in the attachments of this research.

As posed before on the essential elements of IPA, the goal is to describe the personal environment of the interviewees. One should note that these descriptions of the experience are personal interpretations and not solely factual. The stories one receives could be adjusted (intentionally or unintentionally) for the public one is presenting them. In the case of the in-depth interviews, this phenomenon is named the Hawthorne effect (McCarney, et al., 2007). It is therefore crucial to establish the answers of the interviewees noting the theoretical framework and the other data collected by the interviews.

The researcher's own opinions, environment, knowledge and personal beliefs could also hinder the research process. The researchers' bias could, however, also be played out as an advantage, especially for IPA. In the first place, it is important to retrieve data as 'blank' as possible, in order for successful bracketing or *epoche* (Moustakas, 1994). Nonetheless, retrieving data without the researcher's own semantic knowledge is impossible. Instead of rejecting all knowledge, "we try to come to terms with our assumptions, not in order to forget them again, but rather to hold them deliberately at bay and even to turn this knowledge against itself, as it were, thereby exposing its shallow or concealing character (Van Maanen, 2016, p. 47)." The research is therefore a product of the interaction between the researcher and its interviewees (Willig, 2013).

Establishing a clear and robust theoretical framework and collection of data on forehand is essential for the reasons posed above. Simultaneously, the previously acquired data that one could find in the first two chapters, could also lead to the observer bias, where one tends to observe solely the information that one wants to recognize.

Lastly, the interviewees are in no way perfectly representative for the whole group of journalists in Bosnia. Since this is a merely explorative research and IPA is a more in-depth research, focusing on a possible phenomenon extensively, this research is not aiming to find more general claims (Smith & Osborn, 2003). If one's goal is to establish a representative phenomenon, one could set-up a survey and conduct research on a larger and more representative scale, with the results of this research inducing the surveys framework.

## 4. The bordered landscape

In this chapter, one will learn about today's media landscape and the influence practiced on the media. Furthermore, recent research and figures are highlighted to reveal the present-day working circumstances of journalists in Bosnia. Most data is retrieved from *Media in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Pluralism and Professionalisation Between Political Influences and a Divided Society* (2021), by Lejla Turčilo, that appeared in the book *Three Decades Later, The Media in South East Europe after 1989*, which is cited as (KAS, 2021).

The main take-away that one will read within this chapter is, apart from Bosnia being bordered into different federations, three presidencies and other by law established frontiers that categorize its inhabitants, the digital landscape is just as demarcated by ethnic identity. The following paragraphs will give an overview of how the media system is (dis)functional and how elites and other powers aim to grasp influence on the media landscape.

### 4.1 The creation of Bosnia's media landscape

Before Bosnia's independence in 1991, the media's landscape was a part of the larger Yugoslav Media System, which was completely controlled by the state (KAS, 2021). It consisted of decentralized broadcasting services for every Republic (Turčilo, 2019). During the Yugoslav period, especially Bosnia's content was harshly censored from any nationalist rhetoric, because of the heterogeneous society. It was feared that any nationalist indication could fuel tensions among its inhabitants (KAS, 2021).

This changed during the first half of the 1990's. Media workers started to work as extensions of political figures, echoing their nationalist rhetoric (KAS, 2021). The different public media services started to work with different political agendas for their respective republics, instead of working together for one country's public interest. The media space was flooded with revisionist historians and politicians reminiscing cruelties of the second world war, linking it to the ethnic identities (KAS, 2021). The notion of fear spread among the inhabitants, through these strategies (Oberschall, 2000; Thompson, 1999; KAS, 2021). A culture of being a spokesperson for the ruling

political figures was established, ‘ignoring all journalist standards (KAS, 2021, p. 40).’ Aligning with Oberschall (2000), Thompson (1999) and Lejla Turčilo (KAS, 2021), Radojkovic (2007, p. 344) issues that the first half of the 90’s in Yugoslavia ‘confirms once again that McLuhan was right when he wrote that mass media are stronger weapons than cannons and tanks. From Vietnam to the current war in Iraq, mass media have been announcing, explaining, and summarizing all modern wars, exerting their influence on results and the final definition of victors and losers.’

After a period of the media being *de facto* instrumentalized, during the war from 1992-1995, many news outlets were officially deployed as instruments for war propaganda (Udovičić et al., 2001). Occupied territories were cut off from any other broadcasting services, then of those services that belonged to the occupier of the seized area’s (Oberschall, 2000; KAS, 2021). The war eventually destroyed most infrastructure, which hindered any form of development and set-back the media landscape’s groundwork (Udovičić et al., 2001).

#### **4.1.2 Public Service Media**

After the war and the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed in 1995, the public service media was established as a reflection of the agreements itself, thus divided by ethnic-political lines (Turčilo, 2019). Bosnia's public media services were closely monitored by the international community, as a public service media system rose out of the war, with each federation and ethnicity having their own broadcasting services. The three broadcasting services were not cooperating at all, since the Dayton Peace Agreement provided the power of the media system and distribution of the media to the federations (Turčilo, 2019). The federations broadcasting services’, heavenly connected to the ethno-political field, could not be legally forced to cooperate, since the Dayton Peace Agreement lacked any kind of supervision of the central state bodies (Udovičić et al., 2001). “The international community later gave a more flexible interpretation of the spirit of the Dayton Constitution, but the incomplete, compromised and illogical media solutions created in Dayton for a long time impeded integral media development in Bosnia-Herzegovina.” (Udovičić et al., 2001, p. 7)

Over the years, the international community in the form of the Office of the High Representative and the European Commission invested to create a legal framework for the public service media to become a functional and trans-ethnic and plural media landscape. (Brunwasser, et al., 2016, p. 15-16). Donors invested

heavily to establish a friendly environment for the media. From the establishment of the state Bosnia and Herzegovina up till the first years of the new age, an interventionist method was applied to turn the donations into results (Gromes, 2009). “But there is a large gray area. For example, how should newspapers or TV stations react to inflammatory statements by prominent politicians? If they do not report them, they fail to inform the public. If they report them, they convey the hate speech, even when they criticize it. The guidelines of the Independent Media Commission underlined an approach which demonstrates that the dilemma cannot be easily resolved: if a statement inciting violence is made, the broadcaster shall immediately provide additional factual context or an opposing view” (Gromes, 2019. p. 107). Adding the fact that it was too much of a ‘blueprint’ of Western public media services and not enough cooperation with local actors (Brunnwasser, et al., 2016, p. 15-16). Donors withdrew too early and sustainable success in the form of a feasible public media broadcasting service, was therefore never established (Turčilo, 2019). Furthermore, the political pressure was underestimated by the international community, who eventually decreased their involvement in the media service in the second half of the first century of the current age (Brunnwasser et al., 2016). Because of the lack of political will, a viable and functional public broadcasting service was never established (Turčilo, 2019).

The illogical media presence of Bosnia is a direct result of the same policy-building of the Dayton Agreement upon ontological assumptions as revealed in chapter two. As of today, several broadcasting services, who are actually meant to be complementary, compete on a geographical diminutive area.

The public broadcasting service today is labeled as discriminating, unbalanced, non-diverse, subservient, ergo: not following any journalistic standards and not serving the public (Turčilo, 2019). “It is in fact debatable whether there is such a thing as public service media at all (Turčilo, 2019, p. 49).”

#### **4.2.3 Market-based journalism**

Besides the complex, ambiguous and dysfunctional public media service, the media market experiences face comparable challenges. It is almost completely divided by the ethno-political lines of Bosnia (KAS, 2021). Besides, since every village, ethnic identity and political entity demands to have their own media outlets, there is a huge number of media outlets. For that reason, Bosnia holds a disproportionate number of

media outlets in comparison to its population (KAS, 2021, p. 43). Despite the variety, the media landscape in Bosnia is not to be understood as a healthy media landscape because of the plurality, since it does not convert into pluralism of content (KAS, 2021).

The quality of journalism that is produced by most outlets is, from a code of conduct standpoint, rather poor. It is known that many of those platforms are financed by wealthy individuals and political elites, with a political agenda, in exchange for their instrumentalization (KAS, 2021). Another concern is the rise of copy and paste journalism, or 'churnalism' (Hargreaves, 2014), reverberating propaganda as if the media outlets are the spokespersons themselves. Especially online and print media are, sometimes naively - sometimes not, instrumentalized by the doing of echoing propaganda. Notably dealing with delicate topics as ethnicity, the war, or any event with a high political interest. "Many (web portals) are set up for the purpose of influencing the public opinion during specific events (elections, etc.) and then closed down afterwards (KAS, 2021, p.45)."

Lastly, attempts to provide any transparency of ownership of media outlets are politically blocked (KAS, 2021). Despite efforts of the professional community, the current juridical framework does not provide any legislation for media outlets to provide transparency of the media outlet ownership. As a result there is, naturally, little to no transparency of media ownership (KAS, 2021).

#### **4.3 High level of interests, low level of reporting**

The intertwined relations of media and politics traverse the public media service and the market-based media outlets and produce the same low-quality journalism. The acknowledgement that must be made is that there are actual independent journalistic platforms and professional journalists (KAS, 2021). However, the tabloid media and political spokespersons disguised as journalists are also present in concerning numbers. As posed before, in the case of Serbian-Orthodox Bosnian media outlets, churnalising Russia's State propaganda during the Russian occupation of Ukraine is of no exception, as one is writing. "Analysts agree that media in the country have become ethno-sectarian media empires, mainly promoting ethnic and political mainstream agenda's" (KAS, 2021, p. 46). An example of churnalism would be how media outlets from Republika Srpska and its political affiliates, reproduce the

disinformation of the Russian State propaganda from RT (Russia Today) or Sputnik<sup>8</sup>. Without any checks or embedding from any other information, the Russian state propaganda, ergo: Putin's rhetoric, is distributed.

The unethical execution of the profession of journalism can be traced back to the goal of political figures trying to discredit their political opponents (KAS, 2021). It is known that especially regarding sensitive situations and processes the two public broadcasting services RTRS and RTVBiH provide less quality reports and conform to the political elite's narratives (KAS, 2021). One could link the Bosnian political sphere to the current situation of the Russian aggression in Ukraine, as one writes.

In an attempt to explain the unethical reporting, research shows “part of the responsibility for suppressing and silencing the alternative voices in the public space lies with media and journalists, who put the particular interest of owners before the public interest, accept censorship and self-censorship, earning money by maintaining good relations with political and economic elites, among which only a few have the sensitivity to alternative opinions, attitudes and views (Turčilo, 2017, p 84.)” On the other hand, the working conditions where journalists have to work in Bosnia are challenging, to say the least. Political and economic elites consider journalists as tools for their own interests. Those who do not comply and do cover delicate topicalities are attacked and harassed. The elites execute various strategies to pressure the journalists ‘in line’ with their interest (Turčilo, 2017). Journalists are targets of harassment, smear campaigns and Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP) (RSF, 2022, Human Rights Watch, 2015; IREX, 2019). Journalists in Bosnia do not feel safe whilst reporting (RSF, 2022). The legal framework ought to be good enough to protect journalists, however, legal-decision makers often reject their duty to obey the law and therefore do not execute their responsibility to protect journalists, when they are harassed (RSF, 2022; Turčilo, 2017).

As almost every profession, journalists unite in associations, which fight for the rights of the profession. However, as in almost every case in Bosnia, these associations are divided by ethnic lines. Bosnia possesses six different associations of journalists. Some are divided by ethnicity, some by entity. The fragmentation of the

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.rtrs.tv/vijesti/vijest.php?id=500980>

unions, again subservient to the ethnic-political strategy of *divide et impere*, makes them less powerful (KAS, 2021).

#### **4.4 Socio-economic deprive**

In a healthy democracy, a union would also make a case for the professions' economic sustainability. For the current state of the financial conditions of journalists in Bosnia, this would be very welcoming. Turčilo (2017) notes the economic dependence and the collateral effect of political influence as the biggest threat to independent journalism. In spite of the massive media outlets and industry, making a living out of quality journalism is rather challenging (RSF, 2022). As a result of the weak socio-economic position, journalists are vulnerable to political influences that make them turn to journalism that rejects all ethical standards (Turčilo, 2017).

There have been, however, positive initiatives entering Bosnia's media space. Foreign broadcasters and major donors have been reintroduced in Bosnia's media space again in the last ten years (KAS, 2021). Examples are AL Jazeera and the US donors financed Centre for Investigative Reporting Sarajevo. These platforms have been able to establish viable working conditions for their journalist, which has contributed to qualitative journalism within Bosnia's media space.

#### **4.5 To report or not to report**

Journalism is -as one is writing- still a handmade craft. It is made by individuals that are a part of a society on which they reflect as well. It is an ongoing process where journalists are a part of too, since apart from reflecting on the society, they are a reflection of the society themselves as well. As one could read in the sections on framing in chapter one, it is described in Scheufele's (1998) figure 1.2, as the journalist as an audience, whereas framing is a matter of a continuous process. Journalists are dependent variables and independent variables simultaneously, as they are subject to the frames of society and reproduce them too (Scheufele, 1998). Foucault (1979) would argue this ongoing process concerning journalists as being a guard at the same time as the prisoner. Journalists are in that way no different than any other individual of a society, they are subservient to the same process of normalization in Bosnia, as Campbell (1998) issues.

That process of normalization, as described by Campbell (1998) and Foucault (1979), as issued in chapter two is the core element within this research. In chapter

five one will dive deeper into the methods and the exact mechanisms of the process of normalization in Bosnia, regarding journalists. First one will illustrate the working conditions of journalists with a small anecdote of one the interviewees.

Vanja Stokić decided she wanted to focus on covering human rights, after she obtained her degree in journalism. Together with other young comrades she set-up the online journalism platform of eTrafika, wishing to shed light on marginalized groups and human interest stories. As human rights do not acknowledge any borders, she wrote many stories on people seeking refuge, crossing the balkan route towards Western Europe. As a by society labeled orthodox-serb, Stokić already experienced online slanders of her being named a 'Muslim whore' by other Bosnian-Serbs, which was fueled by her putting the spotlight on refugees, who are not from Orthodox descent, in horrific situations within Bosnia. One day, a man with a history of convicted theft, directly threatened her online that he would beheading her and the two men who were seeking refuge, whom she did a story on. The man, Goran Živanović, used his own name online, but was not arrested at first. After pressure from the media, Živanović was eventually arrested after three days, giving him the time to keep threatening Stokić and immediately released after taking his statement. The prosecutor of Republika Srpska later dropped all charges against Živanović. The threats he made "were against an unspecified person", which meant that they were not a crime against public safety, nor inciting hatred. Reporters without Borders and several other journalistic advocates have condemned the incident.<sup>9</sup>

This research made clear in this chapter that being a journalist in Bosnia is challenging for various reasons. Depriving socio-economic opportunities, being a target of harassment and smear campaigns make journalists experience self-censorship, censorship and fear for their lives, resulting in unprofessional reporting and the decline of investigative reporting (KAS, 2021). The only way to escape those harsh conditions, seems to be to reject the journalistic standards and turn into spokespersons of the political in disguise.

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<sup>9</sup> For more see: <https://rsf.org/en/bosnia-death-threat-against-journalist-goes-unpunished>

These circumstances are the foundation of this research and reveal why journalists are especially targets of disciplinary power. A SLAPP is a method to attack the individual and as journalists are fiercely interfered by it, it can be considered a disciplinary punishment. A well-known quote on journalism by British publishing magnate William Randolph and later famously reproduced by George Orwell: “Journalism is printing what someone else does not want printed; everything else is public relations.” It is still seen as the essence of the profession of journalism (Hargreaves, 2014). Adding famous publisher Katharine Graham's remark: “The power is to set the agenda. What we print and what we don't print matter a lot.” In the case of Bosnia, those that do not want journalism to be printed will use everything in their powers to silence the truth, of which one will learn the mechanics in chapter five.

Gender, race, sexuality and ethnicity are the elements that reproduce power, as Foucault (1979) issues. Within Bosnia's society, these things seem to matter more than in other societies. Hence, the established policies of Dayton that hierarchize Bosnia's citizens and reflect on its media landscape. The life of journalists, whose duty it is to aim to transcend those ontological narratives, are therefore indicators of Bosnia's state, captured by disciplinary power.

When those events of disciplinary intervention occur, how it is conducted and where it comes from, are the core questions of this research. Are these powers that are affecting journalists completely built upon ontological assumptions as Kaplan (1994) would suggest, whereas the ancient hatred is reproduced by the ethnicity of the individual crafting the journalism? Or is it rather a matter of journalists being affected by a power that is reproducing the ethnic ancient hatred, aligning the concept of instrumentalizing latent primordialism of Oberschall (2000) and Fearon & Laitin (2000)? These questions will be answered in chapter five and eventually answer the research questions.

## 5. More than a profession

Within this chapter, the research conducted comes to fruition defined by all the information one could read in earlier chapters on the theoretical framework, history and former research on the current working conditions. As outlined before, the analysis consists of paragraphs defined by codes retrieved from the interviews. As the interviews were in-depth and long-winded, relevant quotes and general claims are revealed to induce a general description of certain phenomena. These phenomena serve to answer the research question and describe the experience of being a journalist - or pursuing to be a journalist - within the space of Bosnia.

### 5.1 Interviewees

As posed before, the person that is interviewed matters. It matters how they see themselves and how the world perceives them. Identity is a key facet within this research and since this is perceived two-sided, they are presented by their ontological, or biological, identity and by their own description. Again, this is of great importance since this research seeks to reveal the effect of disciplinary power and biopolitics (Foucault, 1979) and the effect it has on one's personal life and working conditions and ultimately, the work they reproduce.

The acknowledgement that should be made is that all interviewees are still working within the space of journalism. As one will read further on, many individuals have left journalism as a response to all the effects previously discussed and analyzed later on. The interviewees represent a group of journalists that are brave enough to stick to journalism, where many former colleagues decided to leave journalism and seek a more comfortable life. Reasons and numbers for dropping-out of journalism have been looked into thoroughly by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and are discussed in chapter four.

The next paragraphs will present a brief introduction to the interviewees, to contextualize the data retrieved from the respective interviews. Again, both an explanation of their profession and a description of themselves.

### *Vanja Stokić*

Stokić is the editor-in-chief at eTrafika, an online journalism portal that focuses on human rights in Bosnia. She is based in Banja Luka, the capital of Republika Srpska, the Serb-dominated entity of Bosnia. Stokić grew up in a “traditional Serbian-Orthodox family”, as she describes it. Online threats and hatred and even death threats have been second-nature to her. Stokić is very much aware of the reaction and violent responses her stories on human rights invoke.

### *Leila Bičakčić*

As one of the founders and CEO of the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN), Bičakčić is at the forefront of investigative journalism in the Balkans. CIN is the first independent investigative center to be established in South East Europe, which is dedicated to report on corruption, organized crime and nexus between political elites and criminal circles.<sup>10</sup> Bičakčić identifies herself as ‘simply’ Bosnian. Not as a member of one of the three groups of ethnic identity.

### *Lejla Turčilo*

As the head of the journalism department at the University of Sarajevo, Turčilo is positioned in between all aspects of the phenomenon of being a journalist in Bosnia. Before going into academia she was a journalist herself, whereas she is guiding the next generation into successful journalism careers, which is combined with researching the media landscape of Bosnia. Turčilo describes herself as a Bosnian muslim.

### *Dalija Hasanbegović*

Hasanbegović is the face of Al Jazeera Balkans and if it was not for the international broadcaster to land in Sarajevo, Hasanbegović would not have returned to journalism. Wrapped up her career als a reporter once already for the lack of independence and the weak socio-economic livelihood, but is very happy with the current professional working conditions at Al Jazeera. Apart from being a journalist, Hasanbegović' husband is the foreign minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Elmedin

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<sup>10</sup> [https://resonantvoices.info/team\\_mf/leila-bicakcic/](https://resonantvoices.info/team_mf/leila-bicakcic/)

Konaković. Hasanbegović survived the siege of Sarajevo as a child and identifies herself as a Bosnian muslim.

## 5.2 Additional data

In addition to the interviews, a discussion panel at the South East Europe Media Forum concerning the media landscape in Bosnia is part of the data. The participants are mentioned previously and their contributions are an extra contextualization of the whole.

## 5.3 Labeling the process

The semi-structured interviews were conducted by passing certain themes and topics, with key questions as the core. Unlike a fixed survey, the interviews were flexible and so were the codes on the forehand of conducting the interviews. As one could read in chapter three, the phenomenon of being a journalist in Bosnia and the possible external power, can be brought down to three general sections. First, the methods and sources of disciplinary power. Secondly, the effect on the individual and lastly the effect on the profession.

Combining the research methodology with the previously retrieved data, as posed in chapter four, on the current media landscape of Bosnia and known surveys, this research brings the general statements and themes down to codes (Smith & Osborn, 2003). These codes align with the three-step breakdown of the research objective and the theoretical framework as presented in *figure 1.3*. Within this chapter, a slightly adapted model, compared to the initial, is given. Since this research focuses solely on the three-parted phenomenon, the relevant aspects are highlighted in *figure 5.1*, alongside with the utilized codes.

### 5.3.2 codes

An overview over the codes and how they relate to each other is provided in this segment. *Figure 5.1* displays the model, adapted from *figure 1.3*, regarding the coding of the conducted interviews.

## Codes

### Frame of pressure

- Political pressure
- Corruption (buying silence)
- Biopolitical (Ethno-political/sexist)

### Methodology of pressure

- Online threats
- Character assassination
- Direct threats
- Indirect threats
- Socio-economic pressure

### Effect on oneself

- Family
- Health / mental health
- Fear
- Losing hope
- Being cautious

### Effect on profession

- Wording
- Framing
- Agenda-setting
- Dropping-out of journalism
- Self-censorship

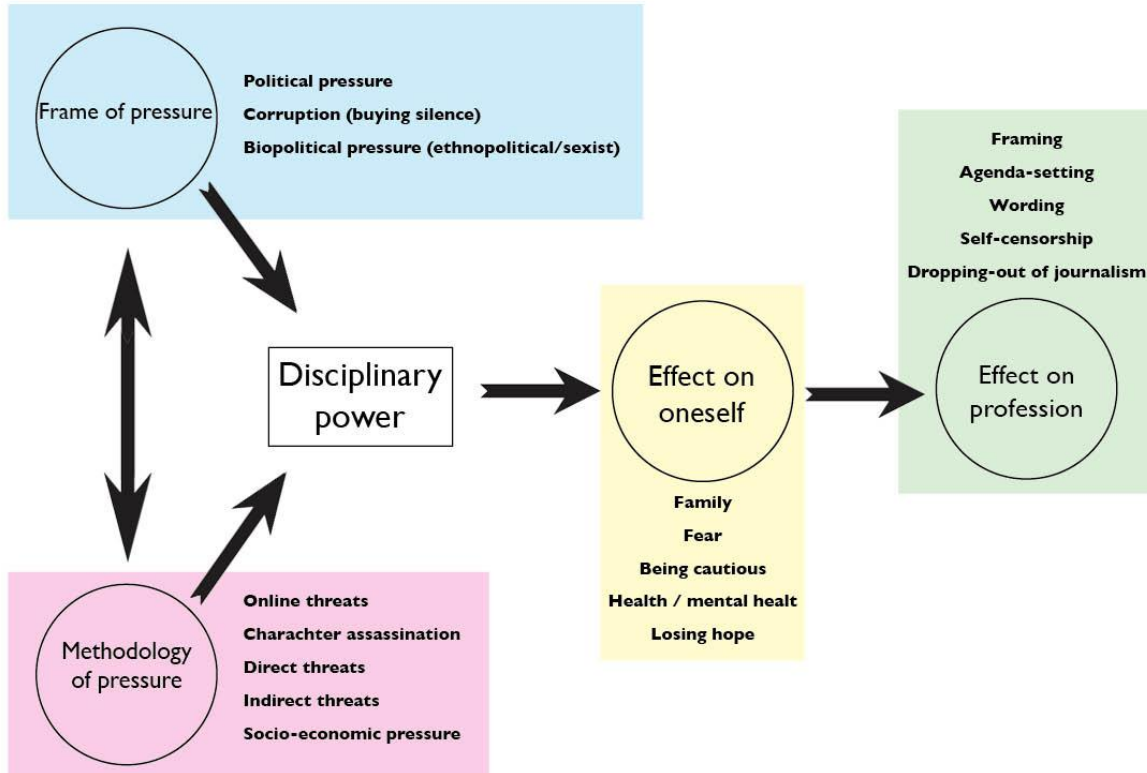


Figure 5.1 Disciplinary affecting journalist in Bosnia power decomposed

### 5.4 The experience

In chapter four, one could read how independent journalists that do not comply with political interference are targets of harassment and threats. These attacks start mainly in the online space, where hecklers can smother anonymously. All four interviewees have experienced online hatred and all panel members have been attacked viciously online. These attacks are directly sended to the interviewees and found in their inbox and found on facebook pages, tabloid media and in comment sections online. In the sections below, one will learn about the experience of journalists, what triggers their hecklers mostly and the effect it has on themselves and their conduction of journalism. This chapter presents the journalist being the target of hate campaigns and their struggle to prosper journalism in a healthy democracy.

*Stokić: “Usually I get such bad, horrible comments (whenever I post my articles on Facebook), bad feedback from people who disagree. They are, mostly, some kind of fascists and say they would kill all gay people or kill all the migrants. And in this case, I am their focus.”*

It does not stick with anonymous hatred and disagreeing in a very inappropriate and intimidating manner. Stokić received death threats from a convicted man, who did not do it anonymously, which gave Stokić an opportunity to file a complaint against him at the local police station. As one could read previously, no criminal charges were enforced and the man could keep threatening to cut her head off, since ‘it is an act of freedom of speech.’

The weak juridical protection is not caused by a weak juridical framework, but rather the execution (KAS, 2021). One could point out the unpopular position of journalists, especially female reporters, within the sphere of Bosnia. All female interviewees note how their concerns and fear are not taken seriously by the public prosecutor's office and a part of the society in general. Hasanbegović recently went publicly with her threats, saying the files have been tucked away for over three years and a half, as one is writing (Banjaluka.net, 2023).

One could imagine the impact these personal attacks could have on an individual. Naturally, it differs per person how one reacts to these situations. One might have a thick skin, which appears to be present at all interviewees. Still, the impact most definitely exists, as all interviewees admit.

*Stokić: “At certain periods there are some threats or attacks or even bad messages. I am a little bit more careful on (when walking down) the street. It is not like I feel unsafe. I don't think someone will attack me, but I'm afraid that I will get into some uncomfortable situations. Maybe ten days ago, I went to the gas station and when I got out of my car, I saw in front of me a guy who was sending me such bad and sexist messages for a long time on Facebook. And in the end I had to report him to the police and he was standing there just like that. And I was thinking like; ‘Oh my God’, would he recognize me or would he hit me or something? But he didn't even see me. He just got inside his car and left. But also, those death threats I got, that guy lives two streets*

*away from my house. And I see him in a store, on a street or something. And every single time it is not comfortable.”*

The fear is strengthened by the sense that one is not protected. One finds itself relatively alone in the fight against SLAPPS, (online) threats and political pressure. Multiple reasons cause the feeling of solitariness. First and foremost, the weak juridical protection and character assassination, which causes the struggle of the journalists not to be taken seriously. A good example is how one of the interviewees was sent away by the regional police officer, after she received death threats. Later on, no prosecution followed as it was labeled as an act of freedom of speech. Adding the fact that there is little to no solidarity between journalists and unions that are divided by ethnic lines, journalists feel isolated in their fight for justice (KAS, 2021).

#### **5.4.2 Discredit and accuse**

The most named reason for attacks, whether it is online, direct or indirect, is character assassination. As described before, whenever one dislikes the content, the matrix is to attack the one who set it out in the first place. A well-known strategy that cannot be found solely in Bosnia, but can be found all over history, all over the world. However, the character assassination does uphold a regional frame. As the target is to discredit, all interviewees recognize the execution of character assassination in Bosnia within an ethno-political frame. Most notable is the recent online slander of Hasanbegović.

*Hasanbegović: “They started attacking my mom, who married a non-muslim and my sister, who lives in Greece and they made up a story that she (my sister) converted to Christianity. I mean, yeah, that’s (supposed to be) totally irrelevant. It’s not true, first of all. But still, they went so far that they went to (my Facebook profile) to check. Since I have a lot of Greek friends from my days abroad, they found one or two pictures of me and my sister. And this other girl (who is Greek) that looks a little bit like my sister. And they went to all this trouble to go there and figure it out and say that, ‘okay, yeah, this is my sister’s new name because she converted to Christianity.’ ... They (who put those stories out) radicalize the audience. And for that audience, making up that story, it’s hitting all the buttons they need to hit. Because what they’re*

*essentially trying to do, they're trying to have someone else attack me. They're not doing it directly. So that's a legal gray zone because if you make me into a target and someone else hits me and someone else attacks me because you're constantly trying to make out to me someone who is against your values, who is going to destroy everything you believe in. I've been called a British spy, an American spy, a violent terrorist, I am on a mission to convert Muslims to Christianity.”*

These stories are no exception. They are published in online web portals or on Facebook pages. All of the interviewees have either experienced or know someone close to them who has experienced (online) disinformation being spread on someone's character. As Hasanbegović tried to explain, who one's mother married should not be of any importance, to the message that is sent out by the journalist. However, in the space of Bosnia these personalia's do matter, following ontological assumptions. It aligns with Campbell's (1998) 'ontological' concept of the inescapable realm. The audience for whom these messages are meant to, perfectly discredit a journalist in this case, as they 'are hitting all the buttons, they need to hit', as Hasanbegović explained.

Why are they hitting the right buttons with disinformation about one's family member's conversion to Christianity? The narrative of fixed groups has been discussed in chapter two is alive and well. The primordialist assumption of three ethnic identities, herein classifying the society in the Bosnian Muslim, the Orthodox-Serb and the Catholic Croat. As Campbell (1998) describes, it is both made-up as very much existing, as it exists within the ethnopolitical frame of the character assassination, in this case.

All interviewees touch upon the concept of being a traitor of 'one's own kind.' However, they all emphasize that the radicals who threaten, intimidate and slander, are not at all of 'their own kind.' Having made that acknowledgement, the narrative of being a deserter is evincing that one's content produced is deceiving as well. Therefore, within the space of Bosnia and the primordialist inescapable realm, the example of Hasanbegović, where radicals would go as far as making-up the story of Hasanbegović' sister switching names, whilst being converted to Christianity, since it would proof her being disloyal as a Bosniak Muslim. Turčilo experienced the identical

matrix as she was pointing out a case of corruption within the university she is working for.

*Turčilo: "Short, there was this case of corruption at the university with certain staff members and I spoke openly about that. Both in the media and in our meetings at the university. So basically the corruption case was politically affiliated. So the members of that one political party, which is the Party of Democratic Action. Actually it started through their, what we call bots and trolls, and this smear campaign against me. So the matrix was exactly as explained. They said, 'she works at the university. She works with young journalists, with young students. And she actually talks to these journalists, future journalists about the genocide. And she actually is a genocide denier.' Which has, of course, nothing to do with any kind of anything that's happening. My faculty published a statement saying that's not the case. And after that, after that was written online, that was posted online on certain kinds of right wing, right wing web portals and Facebook pages, I started getting even death threats."*

Again, the ethnopolitical 'you are either with us, or against us' is the modus operandi. It rhymes with the narrative Oberschall (2000) concluded, where latent primordialism is instrumentalized and there is no space for middle-ground and nuance. Eventually, the individual is the biopolitical target, which is the journalist in this case. Another example which underpins the paradigm is the online slander Stokić has to endure. Stokić operates in Republika Srpska, the Serb-dominated entity of Bosnia.

*Stokić: "In Republika Srpska, The public narrative is that there are no migrants since they are Muslims and terrorists and we have to like, stick together and fight against them and their country. And there is me who is in the middle of Banja Luka, collecting help for migrants and visiting migrants and taking pictures with them and posting it on Facebook saying; 'See, they are my friends.' So I get a lot of anger... I get attacked really publicly and openly and there are a few people in Banja Luka who for the last three years spread the narrative that I'm a migrant whore who is totally unattractive to Bosnian men. So I have to go to woods with migrants to be satisfied. And they*

*are obsessed with me. I have blocked them on every single social network, but from time to time they still post things about me, although I didn't publish anything lately about that topic. It says to me that they keep on thinking about me and my work and it is a little bit scary to be honest and I also got death threats."*

The positioning of journalists as a plague for society, instead as a key pillar for liberal democracies, is a part of the narrative that slanders and discredits journalists. Stokić, Turčilo and Hasanbegović note the verdict of being an enemy of society, whereas the key of journalism is supposed to be, being the voice of the powerless (Hargreaves, 2014).

*Stokić: "They see me as a part of the problem. And. I am like an object of their anger. I was. There were some online campaigns by those people trying to discredit me. They spread rumors about me, like, I live in Banja Luka and in Republika Srpska, migrants are like; There are no migrants because there is that public narrative that they are Muslims and terrorists and we have to, like, stick together and fight against them and defend the country from terrorists. And there is me, who is in the middle of Banja Luka, collecting help for migrants and visiting migrants and taking pictures with them and posting them on Facebook saying: "See, they are my friends." So I get a lot of anger targeted at me."*

*Turčilo: "After that was written online, that was posted online on certain kinds of right wing, right wing Web portals and Facebook pages, I started getting even death threats. So, I had to go to the police and report that because I received threats in my mailbox that since I'm a snake, I should be hit in the head and should be killed because that's what the snakes deserve, especially those who kind of, you know, betray their nation."*

*Stokić: "I think that some people got a sense that I am against Serbians, although I am Serbian myself. So here, if you criticize your own people, they will automatically say that you work for the other one."*

*Hasanbegović: “Everyone is employing the same ways to control. Just try to intimidate. Character assassination has become a rule of thumb. Whenever you want someone to do something you like, just attack the person. You know, what they are basically saying is that you are a whore or you are this or that. Just attack the character. You try to kill this person's credibility. And that's how you deal with an issue.”*

These examples of threats are only a few. Multiple surveys present a livelihood of journalists in Bosnia where threats are, so to say, part of the job, as one could read in chapter four (KAS, 2021; RSF, 2021). Along with the ethnopolitical origin of the character assassination, interviewees point out the sexist aspect as well. Where a male will get attacked for his ethnic identity, a female reporter will receive threats for her family as well and the sexist demarcations of her being a whore, a bad mother and in general be discredited for being a woman, as all interviewees unanimously note.

#### **5.4.3 The livelihoods**

Journalists are not making a wealthy living, so to say. For journalists in Bosnia, a disposable income is all but guaranteed (KAS, 2021). The weak socio-economic position makes journalists vulnerable, as explained in chapter four. The unstable position is experienced as the biggest threat to journalism. As one is already sacrificing a lot, the underprivileged position to not be able to feed a family, or oneself, is a major threat to journalism. Not only because it makes journalists choose for a different career path, also since it creates a vulnerability to political influence.

*Bičakčić: “The pressure comes from the political parties in the form of the financial obstacles, because in most cases, the politicians control funding or change the funding to the media. Advertising is under political control, which all tends to put the pressure on not necessarily journalists per se personally... They're simply not touching the sensitive topics. So certain stories for certain people, because they anticipated that potentially could put them in any kind of danger. I mean, again, we are talking about dangers that could be cutting the funding, which is an existential threat.*

Whether it is the state or a private company, the funding in the form of subsidy or advertisement, comes with a certain power. Within independent journalism it is therefore existential that the editorial space and donors are in no way intertwined.

The most famous example on how to give no chance to a conflict of interest is the separate elevators of the Chicago Tribunal. One elevator for journalists only and one for the marketing staff, where the latter was not able to stop at the floor of the editorial room (Lauerer, 2019).

For Bosnia, this utopia is a foreign country far away. Within the Public Media Service, politically affiliated people are appointed and as the media system is divided by ethnic lines, so are their journalists and their coverages, presenting three different paradigms of Bosnia (KAS, 2021). For market-based media outlets, the advertisers are ruling the editorial room.

*Hasanbegović: "I was already working at one of the private TV channels. And the moment when I realized my owners' interests was when I had this really big story about some doctors not allowing sick children, not allowing teachers for sick children to be transported abroad for medical treatment, even though the parents provided found the donors, found the money, found everything. They just literally had to sign off on that. And I got the parents, the papers and everything. But the owner (of the TV Channel) would not approve the story because he had a personal relationship with those doctors of that clinic. And when I discovered that and even the topic, such as smoking, you know, we couldn't even cover that because one of our advertisers at the time was the tobacco company. And, you know, when you started as a student having all of these illusions that you have to follow standards and you're actually there for your viewers or for your readers, and you have to uncover the truth and you have to check and get to the bottom of things. And you're starting to discover that actually some things are being dictated by those who are paying (...) I got fed up and I wrapped up my journalism career."*

The striking illustration of Hasanbegović' first drop-out of journalism reveals how strongly all aspects of pressure are intertwined and force journalists to either drop all

journalistic standards or drop-out and find a new profession. Hasanbegović decided to start a new career elsewhere, until returning to journalism half a decade later. Others decide to comply and have their independence sold, which is supposed to be the foundation of journalism. All interviewees acknowledge they recognize cases of (former) colleagues and competitors clearly promoting a certain politician, or neglecting certain topicalities purposely. Cases of former journalists turning into (unofficial) PR advisors right after elections are known. It is a phenomenon called 'buying silence.' During the election, the media outlet or journalist turns into a propaganda distributor and is appointed to a well-paid position right after the elections.

*Stokić: "I had this colleague in my newsroom. She never wanted to deal with some taboo topics saying things like, 'I don't want to get bad comments. I don't want to be attacked.' And so she was reporting about, I don't know, photo exhibitions, book promotions, things like those light things with danger."*

Similar methodologies are visible on the structural scale. A media network picks a clear side on the eve of elections and gets the exclusive media rights to a sporting event appointed. For the individual, again the distinction should be made between gender. Especially women in smaller communities tend to be more cautious, since their job opportunities are slimmer and losing their income could be disastrous. Which creates, again, a very tempting path to go after a different profession.

#### **5.4.4 The sacrifices**

The media is sometimes described as the fourth power, within Montesquieu's Trias Politica; a key pillar for liberal democracies (Hargreaves, 2014). On the Balkans, one could label it as a pillar of democracy on shaky ground (KAS, 2019). Those pillars of endurance need to be intensive, as one could read in all the paragraphs above, from chapter five, where the experience of being a journalist is described. The sacrifices one makes in order to perform ethical journalism is extensive, as all interviewees explain.

*Stokić: "I decided not to have kids in Bosnia because all this anger against me will transfer to my kids and I don't want that for them. I feel like the moment*

*when I give them birth, they have the same label as I do. So if I decide to have kids, I will move to another country and to an entire new community and start a new life. But here, I think it is not possible.”*

*Hasanbegović: “I'm just being a little bit more careful because I'm not putting up pictures of some of my friends and things like that because they end up being attacked or whatsoever, you know, they recently started attacking my mom and my sister completely, you know, completely private people with no social media. My sister really does not have social media. (...) So they started attacking that. They were attacking my sister and saying bad things about my sister.”*

However, the attacks and direct consequences to one's livelihood are not causing any doubts of dropping-out to the interviewees, but another reason does. After going through all these circumstances, the feeling that it is all done for nothing, yields most drop-outs. One hopes the reports on corruption, conflict of interests or any investigative story on political scandals will change the country for the better. The sense that one is fighting against all odds frustrates the interviewees and their partners the most.

*Bičakčić: “If you're on your own, then you are protecting yourself only, you're probably safe, but once you have family, your sour points are higher because whoever is targeting you could also switch the target to the kids or the partner or your family or whoever. Yeah, it's I mean, generally journalists tend to be reckless in some of the protection measures, in particular when they feel that it is limiting their possibilities to do their job. We have very strict rules on not working on individual stories. So journalists have to work in teams because it's much harder to attack a team than an individual report. They have to be in contact with the editors at all times in case the situation is particularly problematic. If the security risk is higher than we said, a couple of teams on the field simultaneously, because they can monitor one another. But we did have cases where journalists just dropped-out. They just dropped-out. They couldn't cope with not necessarily the depression and the risk. They couldn't cope with the outcome of the story because they were continuously extremely*

*disappointed and they didn't see any reaction from the system. Story after story after story. So some of the people just couldn't cope with their negativism (on the results), they just basically felt that their work was irrelevant."*

The next generation of journalists recognizes the situation. For all the reasons as mentioned above, a very little number of students pursue a career in journalism (KAS, 2021). Most of the students who take journalism classes eventually end up in public relations. The path of a journalist is not a popular one, to say the least.

### **5.5 The source**

After going through all these experiences, one wonders: why is all of this happening? What is causing these attacks and how can one make sense of the phenomenon in the wider context? Firstly, the situation has not occurred over the past couple years. In fact, the situation has slightly improved since the arrival of international broadcasters as Al Jazeera and the continuation of certain international donors, to organizations as the CIN (KAS, 2021). Nonetheless, journalists are addressed upon their ethnicity, as a result of the polarized political situation (RSF, 2021).

Again, this is not something new, the only shift that has happened over the last decade, is the rise of the internet and the implications for journalism in general. Without going too much into details, one can imagine the impact the internet has had on the media landscape. Once again, these are not implications for the region exclusively. Though, what is relevant for Bosnia regarding the digital era, is the accessibility to reach out to journalists and the possibility to distribute any information relatively easily (Hargreaves, 2014). All interviewees experience most hateful comments online. Rarely someone on the streets reaches out to scold a journalist. This does not mean online hatred is not harmful, moreover, it is a strategy.

*Hasanbegović: "So you have those who are creating fake content, you have a group disseminating shares and everything, and then you have a group in charge of commenting. And those comments like the fake profiles, you can see horrible comments, but then you go to their profiles. They have no content on their profiles. So it's a structure. It's not spontaneous. It's a very well developed system (...) They (who put those stories out) radicalize the*

*audience. And for that audience, making up that story, it's hitting all the buttons they need to hit. Because what they're essentially trying to do, they're trying to have someone else attack me. (...)*

*So now that is used against journalists, against professors, against academia, against any experts, against anyone who dares to say something they don't agree with. Literally."*

Spamming the mailbox, commenting hatred and spreading disinformation is all part of the same matrix of character assassination and putting pressure on journalists. The internet opened a space where both strategies are accessible and can thrive easily.

### **5.5.2 The escapee**

Still, the question of why one's mailbox should be flooded with hatred stands. Why are these interviewees targets of harmful disinformation about the personalia? Why are these deliberate lies distributed? To answer these questions, one seeks to find answers at the source, regarding the frame of the character assassination and the reproach.

Looking into the data collected and the answers given, one finds a significant relation of being accused of being a deserter, a traitor and disloyal to the group. Words such as snake, honor and disrespecting the group are mentioned numerous times. As noted before, the most used, ergo: most efficient character assassination is the frame of the journalist being an opponent of the people, instead as a voice of. One might expect one ethnic identity to play a role in discrediting 'the other' ethnic identity. However, this research finds almost every attack to be coming from 'the own' group. An essential note is the paradox of describing the three ethnic identities as the sole three groups, whereas this research actually perceives this narrative as a problem. Or as one of the interviewees describes it:

*"Quote unquote, indeed! God forbid they (the radical aggressors) are part of my group. They're everything that we are not!"*

Both Hasanbegović and Turčilo are accused of being a bad muslim and traitor to all Bosnians. Hasanbegović received these accusations online, but had also incidents

on the streets of Sarajevo, where hecklers scolded her for turning her back on islam. Every possible proof of her 'betraying' muslim Bosnians is utilized for discrediting, as one could read previously on the disinformation spread about her mother and sister. The same matrix was applied in the case of Turčilo, where she was accused of being a genocide denier. Within that perspective Turčilo would be on the side of extremist Serbian nationalist, who openly deny the Bosnian genocide and contest the conviction of the ICTY<sup>11</sup>.

In the case of Stokić, she is accused of being a traitor to the serb-orthodox community. The examples given uphold the narrative of her being helping 'the other', combined with a strong sense of sexist accusations of being a 'Muslim-whore', and not being attractive enough for Serbian men.

This research recognizes a clear correlation between the attacks on journalists and the source of the attacks being the 'own' group, within the interviews conducted. Noting once more that a large-scale survey is needed to underline this finding, however, within the explorative nature of this research, one could recognize this pattern.

The possible cause for the attacks coming from a more restraining nature, rather than an attack from the 'opposing' group is two-sided. A first explanation is that the audience in Bosnia watches, reads and listens solely to their 'own' broadcasters (KAS, 2021). As explained before, the media landscape is divided by ethnic lines and so is the audience (KAS, 2021). The second explanation is a follow-up of the initial ethno-territorial demarcation of the (media) landscape in Bosnia. Media outlets are already othered, as 'others are needed and therefore constantly produced and reproduced to maintain the cohesion in the formatted order of a territorially demarcated society' (Van Houtum & Van Naerasen, p.134). In the Serb-dominated entity of Republika Srpska, for example, there are only a few who dare to hold the power accountable, which is the key to journalism (Hargreaves, 2014). Those who do, as for Stokić, but also the news outlet Buka<sup>12</sup>, which is a critical journalism platform from Banja Luka, which refuses to be a spokesperson for the local government. Those news outlets that do not comply with the distribution of propaganda and upholding the standards of journalism. Those still need to be

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<sup>11</sup> International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY))

<sup>12</sup> <https://6yka.com/>

'othered' and are therefore attacked in the paradigm of the demarcated Bosnia, by narrative of three ethnic identities. Stokić is a traitor, according to the online slanders and Buka is officially labeled as an enemy of the state (read: entity of Republika Srpska).

The efforts to 'other' within the paradigm of the three antagonist ethnic identities are brutal. They align with Oberschall's (2000) findings, revealing how middle-ground became dangerous and attacks from the 'own' group were not uncommon. "In Osijek (Croatia), a Serb economist who was also the vice-mayor and had been elected as an independent moderate to the Zagreb legislature in 1990, described to me the rise of extremism and ethnic violence. 'It was safer to take sides than being for peace in the middle', as her own case testifies. Former students avoided her. One later told her, 'It was dangerous to be seen talking to you in public' (Oberschall, 2000; p. 995-996)"

One is either with or against in the inescapable realm of primordialism. Buka and Stokić are the middle-ground who question power and refuse to join the primordial blocks. In today's Bosnia, biopolitical attacks on the individual are not as direct as during the war, but the ongoing brutality is described by Hasanbegović' anecdote on a genocide survivor and a colleague.

*Hasanbegović: "Just yesterday, I read a horrible montage about a guy who is a journalist from another private TV channel, N1. The guy had his family murdered during the war. He's an orphan who survived, you know, things that you can't even imagine. And was attacked for being the accomplice of the people who actually murdered his family. It was so sickening. So, so sickening. He was a little child. They took his mom in front of his eyes. He never saw her again. They took him away. They later found her head in the river. It's such a horrible story. And then you're attacking just because he dared to cover a story that they thought, you know, there was some controversy about some stupid, I don't know, gathering or whatever. And he was covering it as a reporter and he was covering it as it is. He was reporting on what he was seeing and they didn't like what he was reporting on. So you just take a person who had such a horrible personal tragedy and who is a victim of all of that, and then you accuse him of these despicable things. So, yeah, it's just sometimes it's, you know, sometimes it's just too much.*

### 5.5.3 The spotlight

This research points out the social construction of identity conflict as the trigger to these attacks are from a completely different motive. All interviewees are very much aware of which topics cause the most aggression. Interestingly, it is not with an ethno-political nature, although that does cause a lot of anger. Journalists know that when there is shed light on corruption, they will face a flooding of disinformation on their person.

Within all interviewees personal experiences, whenever they pointed out a case of corruption, they took down the pants of a powerful political person or businessman, the backlash they faced was fierce.

*Bičakčić: “We just had a recent situation with a corruption case within the police. A high ranking police officer who was reporting on his assets that he acquired, acquired it in a very suspicious way. And after the story was out, he was threatening the journalists that he was going to rip their throats out. It got to the point that we got police protection for journalists that left the office, because he was deemed as being extremely aggressive. Now he's under suspension.”*

*Hasanbegović: “We're onto some corruption cases now and they're attacking reporters who brought it out for. We had the State Department reports. (...) I think in the last report they discussed journalists who uncovered corruption cases being actually targeted mostly by these fake accounts and these people.”*

*Stokić: “I suppose that if you are an investigative journalist, people (are supposed to) see you as someone who does some great things for his community because he reports about corruption, about those things, and who helps the community to grow. But in Bosnia, they see you as a part of the problem. We had this war 30 years ago and people are still terrified because of it. And there is one sentence often used in Bosnia, like, in the sense like everything; ‘What is going on now is okay because they are not shooting at us like we used to’. We will agree to corruption and a bad life and to be poor and to be hungry just to keep our peace, like we don't need a new war and we will*

*suffer. But we don't want to fight again. And politicians all often use war as a tool to win elections or to start a new fight between people.”*

The obvious goal within the whole phenomenon, is to create fear among journalists. It is a key element in both Foucault's (1979), as Oberschall's (2000) argument. Fear is a reproduction of power, since slandering a journalist pushes the journalists' colleagues to choose a different approach. All interviewees admit they are aware of cases where journalists backed-off, as a result of their fear. They are all very much aware when and where the attacks happen, which reveals the understanding of the line of the Bosnian society, which certain people (or society) do not want to be crossed. As the line is not constitutional, since freedom of press is very much established in Bosnia, it is a subconscious line reproduced by fear. The strategy of normalization of hierarchizing one by taking one away from the group, presenting one as a traitor for exercising one's profession, is an undeniable form of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1979). Corresponding to the example of journalists is the anecdote by Judah (1997) which describes how moderate Serbs feared their extremist ethnic-allies as much as the 'other.' "Peer pressure, fear, not only of Muslims but of extremist Serbs who might finger him as a 'traitor', were the major reasons for joining a militia. Some of these men were unemployed and expected a job in the coming Serb government as militia or police (Oberschall, 2000. p. 997). Fear is elemental in exercising power (Foucault, 1979).

Oberschall (2000) highlighted the role of the media as a key contributor to the distribution of fear. The awakening of fear was performed by news media, intellectuals, popular culture, education and history, hence, Foucault's (1979) process of normalization (Oberschall, 2000). Therefore, journalists, but also the academia interviewed could be described as strong indicators of the presence of disciplinary power.

#### **5.5.4 The hostage**

A primary finding of this research is the connection of disciplinary power and the maintenance of power. The narrative of three ancient antagonist identities need to be upheld. There is an us and a them and whoever argues differently, is one of them. The *modus operandi* can be found within the frames of the attacks as the traitor label

is one of the strongest discretizations. The dangerous space where journalists should not head, according to the ones in power, is holding power accountable or questioning the ancient hatred narrative.

All interviewees note the practice of power by those, in order to remain in power. Since the declaration of independence, generally, the same political parties have ruled Bosnia for over 30 years. Those who question their power, know that the consequences will be fierce. The given hypersensitive topicality collides with the core of journalism and journalists are aware of their so to say restricted area.

*Hasanbegović: The country is corrupt and the way to keep these people in power is just to constantly try to create a dissonance between people. Tell them these ones hate you, want to kill you, you know, turn people against each other. Basically say that they want to destroy us. We're going to lose our identity. We're going to lose everything. They're constantly doing that. And the modus operandi is basically the same. Doesn't matter which corpus is coming from, you know, it's basically all the same. Just try to attack just so you can control. And then people live in fear. People constantly think someone else wants to attack them and you are the one who is going to save them. And that's how you keep in power when you have nothing to offer and when corruption has eaten, has been eating every single segment of your society.*

*Turčilo: "Why?" Because they (journalists) are now accusing our great defenders of the country that they are being corrupted. So this is the matrix. They are abusing the war. And, you know, because our national leaders are still continuing this narrative of war time, they are saying things like: "We as politicians are defending you not as the citizens, but members of a certain ethnic group from the next genocide." That's the matrix of their political campaigns. So once you say something bad about them, then they just spin it and make you actually not talk about corrupt politicians, but you are actually blaming someone who is defending his nation and you are, you know, obstructing these brave people. Then they actually post that online. Then they spread it everywhere through the like, right wing media as well. And then you have a bunch of people who are ready to, you know, be manipulated and*

*believe in such things. And they will then be basically against those journalists.”*

Together with the same political parties, structures and affiliates, the narratives remain as well. The maintenance of power is more than the pawns sticking to their place. It is upholding the subconscious problematic sets of rules. That being said, this research points out the questioning of power, in forms of reports on corruption and questioning the three antagonist ethnic identities as given, as most problematic. In a normalized society, the problematization is internalized (Campbell, 1998). Therefore shedding light on cases of corruption and discussing ethnic identity results provokes disciplinary power, not directly from the elites top-down, but also grassroots-wise eventually.

*Stokić: “There are not many people, especially not many women in Bosnia, who are dealing with human rights. Especially some specific parts of human rights. Like a lot of people report about LGBT in a way of organizing pride or violence against them, but not many people report about giving them the right to adopt kids or to get married. And when I report about that, I get a lot of it (hateful messages). And if there would be more people reporting about the same thing, the pressure would be less and people would be used to it. Like, okay, those are some topics I don't agree with, but a lot of people are. So maybe it is.*

As Stokić reveals, journalists are part of the same society, hence, the same process of normalization. They are both an input and an output (Scheufele, 1999). They are a possible key contributor to a shift in mentality, as Oberschall (2000) noted as well, on the eve of the Bosnian war. Journalists can wrest themselves and the society with them away from its own Foucauldian (1979) imprisonment. However, it is for that exact reason they are attacked as fiercely as they are.

## **5.6 The effect**

Ethical and independent journalism results in a lot of drawbacks, so much has been made clear. The possible outcomes and how disciplinary power translates into unethical practices in the newsroom, will be discussed in the paragraph up next.

The first impact of disciplinary power on the profession of journalism can be observed within the number of young students wanting to seek a profession in journalism. The profession is not popular at all and most students who do study journalism, mostly end up in public relations. Turčilo, head of the journalism department at the University of Sarajevo, admitted only two or three students went for a career in journalism the past few years. The main reason for the decline of the profession is the deprived socioeconomic perspective and the unwillingness of suffering political pressure and threats.

In line with the decrease of popularity of the profession for its delicate social position, active journalists find it hard to get experts to speak out. For example, academia and experts are not willing to be interviewed or have their voices heard, since they fear the consequences of the subject they discuss. Journalists therefore cannot establish stories on certain topics, although especially taboo topics should be brought into the spotlight. All interviewees find difficulties finding interviewees themselves problematic, which is hindering their execution of journalism. Especially topicalities of sentiment such as ethnopolitical sphere and corruption, as noted before.

The weaker socioeconomic position makes journalists vulnerable for either direct or indirect censorship. Direct censorship appears whenever certain topics or stories are off-limits by decision. It does not matter whether the decision came from the editor-in-chief directly, or is initiated by powerful political figures. Examples such as the one given by Hasanbegović earlier, whereas the decision is made by the private TV owner, initiated by powerful businessmen, reveal how independence is sold. These examples are no individual cases. The phenomenon of buying silence is a well-known strategy for political figures to channel any negative publicity, as noted before. Therefore, the individuals working within a newsroom are targeted. Not with hateful messages, but a tempting salary and more stable position elsewhere. Especially during election times, or any time frame of political essence, the tool is brought up in order to influence the media landscape.

Another likewise method noted, which takes advantage of the poor socioeconomic position of journalists, works the other way around. Not a wealthy job that is tempting journalists, but the fear of funding being cut off makes journalists deviate from following journalistic standards. Combined with the presence of the being a possible target of hateful messages and slanders, there is a growing trend of

self-censorship among journalists in Bosnia (KAS, 2021). All interviewees recognize the effect both the socioeconomic deprivation and drawbacks the profession of journalism has on colleagues and on themselves. They observed colleagues in the past purposely setting a different agenda, since they are not willing to accept the consequences. This indirect effect causes media workers to neglect certain topicality, pick their wording carefully and frame certain topics in a line of the least resistance. Therefore, media workers that do censor themselves reject all journalistic standards as their interest is not solely reporting the truth for the public interest. Especially in Bosnia, where historical facts as the genocide are disputed in certain spaces, it should be journalists who report factual on historical events.

*Hasanbegović: "When you talk about genocide, I'm going to get my inbox full of people saying; 'Yeah, it's a lie. Those people are alive. They're all living in Denmark or in Sweden.' These kinds of messages are what you're receiving when you're talking about children killed in Sarajevo. They (online hecklers) are going to come up and say: 'No, it's not true.' Again, if you mention or review war crimes, there are a few that were convicted of war crimes by members of the army of Bosnian army during the war. So, of course you publish that, because I don't really condone any war crime, it doesn't matter what nationality it is, but then you're going 'on the other side.' People say, 'how dare you say that? This is not correct.' But we followed the words. You just follow the verdicts. If someone is convicted, then that is the truth to report on. (...) Your focus is on the victims and on their fight. (...) We're talking about the victims and the survivors and their fight for justice. That still continues. And I really care about it. People who are full of hate, for them the truth is a legitimate target."*

### **5.6.2 The Agitator**

Journalists in Bosnia have long faced numerous challenges and difficulties that have made their work increasingly challenging. These challenges range from political pressure, threats and intimidation from powerful interest groups, and the constant threat of violence. As a result, many journalists have resorted to self-censorship, a practice in which they refrain from reporting on certain issues or taking a critical stance on certain topics to avoid backlash.

Self-censorship has become a commonplace for journalists in Bosnia, which is a fairly understandable reaction to the threats and violence. Though, it leads to an erosion of trust in the media and further propagandizing the public. As a journalist is a reciprocal element within a society, it reproduces frames of the narratives it lives (Scheufele, 1999; Foucault, 1979). As noted before, journalism can contribute heavenly in a shift of mentality, which is underpinned by all interviewees. All would like to see more quality media outlets and some fierce competition between those quality news outlets. Now the journalists scrutinized are competing with propagandists for the truth, instead of competing with rival news organizations for the clearest and most clarifying report. Turčilo notes how there were reports of a conflict of interest of the Prime Minister, but once the story was published, other media outlets started putting out stories protecting the man in question. The stories of propagandists did not bring new research or evidence to the table, but framed it as a falsehood since ‘he is a nice guy, that will not do such things.’ Until these issues are addressed, it is unlikely that the situation for journalists in Bosnia will improve and much needed topicalities, historical facts and corruption will be withheld (KAS, 2021). A race to the bottom, whereas media workers protect their ‘own group’ and spread falsehoods on ‘the other’ is described by Oberschall (2000, p. 993): “When some began slanting the news in favor of their own nationality, others followed because they did not want their nationality to be disadvantaged. With no one to stop unprofessional practices, news reporting and analysis became a competitive spiral of propaganda.” Now, more than thirty years later, that same spiral still needs to be burst. More quality journalism platforms are needed to shift the momentum towards ethical journalism (KAS, 2021).

*Hasanbegović: “Al Jazeera is completely immune to all the interference and there are not too many of these (broadcasters). So I don't think it's just a finger of destiny or what do you call it, but I don't think I would be, I mean, here just we have to follow the guidelines. We have to follow the standards. (...) We love new TV stations coming up and trying to do so because it's making us better, since we have to compete with someone. We have to do even better. So maybe we're helping raise the standards a little bit because you see how stories are being done. (...) All we wanted to do was to work slow and steady but with an impact. And slowly, you know, you can see*



*people are changing. I have people from high schools, actually kids from high schools shooting a story of this, like it's shows on different topics. We have a cultural dialogue. We never not argue, but we never fight with our guests. We don't disrespect our guests. We believe that you can ask very tough questions and not allow people to tell you untruth, but you can do it in a very polite, cultural, nice way, intercultural dialogue."*

## 6. Conclusion and recommendations

This exploratory research reveals the captured state of Bosnia, where journalists are a part of as well. Rather than being disciplined by the 'other' violently, it is the extremists of the 'own' group that try to uphold the narrative of three antagonist identities upon independent journalists. These extremists are, so to say, their own guards of their Foucauldian (1979) prisons. Journalists that conform to stories that imply ethnic hatred and cover up crimes - instead of reporting on them - join those extremists, to maintain their own imprisonment.

Those that try to break down the walls and look beyond ethnic identities, by reporting solely on those that are corrupt, fraudulent and unethical, or simply follow journalistic standards and serve the public, are the targets of threats, attacks, (online) smear campaigns and SLAPPS. Especially holding power accountable pushes the right buttons, for the individual to receive vicious attacks in the given forms. Topics of political essence are therefore delicate and attract a higher possibility of the posed effects of attracts, resulting in the described effects of buying silence, self-censorship and unethical reporting. Naturally, during elections and the periode running up to the polls creates a more tense environment for journalists, since it represents a stretch of political essence.

Attacks often include the narrative of betrayal of the 'own' ethnic identity, which aims to create a character assassination. A well known strategy, which gives the journalist a bad reputation, thus the journalism one supplies is therefore believed to be deceiving as well. The smear campaigns and other attacks more often than not instrumentalize latent primordialism, as a strategy to discredit journalists. For female journalists, a sexist aspect is often included too, all to falsely harm the integrity of journalists.

Apart from the attacks on the individual, the socio-economic opportunities are problematic as well. Most media outlets are divided by ethnic lines and therefore connected to the political sphere, which is again, separated by ethno-political lines. Those dependencies create vulnerabilities linked to the same trap of complying to the ontological assumption of antagonist ethnic identities. Independent media outlets are therefore very rare, since the public media services are divided by the ethnic

lines and market-based journalism is mostly depending on businessmen with their own political agenda.

As a result of all the above, journalists experience a strong sense of self-censorship, or eventually drop out of journalism, since the profession takes a heavy mental toll (KAS, 2021). The deprived socio-economic opportunities combined with the mental issues the attacks incorporate, make journalism in Bosnia not only a profession, rather it is a calling. A calling that implies sacrifices for the individual, in order to serve the public interest.

En masse, Bosnia's situation for journalists does not differ heavenly from other countries in South-East Europe, where there are lower socio-economic opportunities and more cases of smear campaigns, more known cases of corruption, political pressure is closer to the surface and SLAPPS are more common (KAS, 2021). Nor does it differ from the challenges journalists face all over the world in the 21st century, since there is the possibility to directly connect to journalists via the internet. However, the weaker juridical framework to protect journalists in South-East Europe, combined with the socio-economic deprived environment and the by policies and law established ethnic lines in Bosnia create an even harder atmosphere to pursue the journalists mission to serve the public interest.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

This research has explored the phenomenon of disciplinary power affecting journalists in Bosnia, from the perspective of the journalist oneself. The perspective underpinned with the previously known data portray a downward spiral, with a few branches of hope. As noted in this research and by several other reports, the help of the international community is needed and helpful. International broadcasters and donors that establish local actors with the much-needed protection against the disciplinary powers have proven to be successful.

With regard to the academic research, as hinted before, in order to get a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, a larger scaled, more representative survey is needed. Though this research unravels a first concept of the phenomenon, the group of interviewees is not representative, nor exhaustive. The explorative nature of this research could provide a useful basis for a further analysis delving into the livelihoods of journalists in Bosnia. With further results backing the international aid, firstly to prove its value. Secondly, to understand the right deployment of



international aid and professional help. Therefore, in order to scrutinize the next step, This research would recommend to set-up a greater-scaled survey and researching the success stories of the new media platforms in Bosnia. All for the same eventual goal of establishing a sustainable, professional, ethical and stable media landscape in Bosnia. A landscape where journalists do not need to watch their backs and can carry out their calling safely.

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