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ANALYSIS OF REPORTING OF PUBLIC BROADCASTERS IN B&H DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN FOR THE 2018 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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Abstract: *In the last twenty years, we have often witnessed that public broadcasters serve political and economic elites more than the interests of citizens. Deviation from professional principles and legal norms is especially pronounced in the pre-election period, when public broadcasters turn into implicit, but often explicit representatives of certain political options. In the paper, the informative program of public broadcasters in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the pre-election campaign for the General Elections of 2018 was processed through the analysis of media content, with the aim of establishing whether the reporting of public broadcasters corresponds to the principles of responsible and serious journalism.*

Keywords: *responsible journalism, SMELL test, public broadcasters, General elections 2018*

INTRODUCTION

Considering that Bosnia and Herzegovina is still a transitional society, or has entered the era of post-transitional unconsolidation, depending on the theoretical approach, the burden of social disorder, political immaturity and democratic lack of enlightenment eats away at this country and its citizens almost daily and hinders its "European path". Ralf Dahrendorf (1990) points out that post-communist societies, such as BiH, need six months for political change and the formation of a constitution, six years for the formation of a democracy based on the rule of law, a parliamentary system and political and ideological pluralism, and even sixty years for

the formation of a democratic society. If we ignore the war suffering and destruction, Bosnia and Herzegovina has nominally passed the first two phases, more or less successfully. However, the impression is that the third phase, the formation of a democratic society, will be really long.

There is a long way to go from a “hybrid regime”, as the analysts of the British *The Economist* characterized Bosnia and Herzegovina, to a stable democracy. “Traveling” should be easier with the efficient operation of institutions. One of the most important, in the context of the formation of civic awareness of the population, is certainly the public service institution. Rade Veljanovski (2005) says that the public service was founded by the public, controlled by the public and financed by the public. He emphasizes that it is about *the broadest social interest that can only be fully realized in the cooperation of social forces: the institutions of the system and the entire civil society, that is, the citizens themselves* (Veljanovski, 2005: 21). In this regard, the public service represents a significant factor in the democratization of social relations and appears as a catalyst for an open society, as Veljanovski points out.

The theory says one thing. However, what about practice? In the last twenty years, we have often witnessed that public broadcasters serve political and economic elites more than the interests of citizens. Deviation from professional principles and legal norms is especially pronounced in the pre-election period, when public broadcasters turn into implicit, but often explicit representatives of certain political options. Although they nominally have equal conditions for political promotion, certain political parties and individuals are a little more “equal than others”. Of course, “more equal than the others” refers to parties in power that often use public broadcasters for political promotion beyond the conditions established by law, most often in news broadcasts.

Free media is one of the instruments of civil society that should contribute to raising civic awareness. Among the numerous standards and criteria of the journalistic profession, objectivity, in the sense of not omitting facts, a comprehensive approach to the processing of events, highlighting important in relation to unimportant facts and honesty towards the public, and impartiality, in the sense of impartiality, balance and value neutrality (Čupić, 2010), certainly are one of the most important. However, often the same media that should be the “watchdogs of democracy” contribute, both consciously and unconsciously, both to the ethno-national “trench positions” of political elites, and to the preservation of the state of latent antagonism in general (Bubonjić, 2015). Editorial policies of B&H media, and therefore public broadcasters,

following the line of ethno-political divisions, act in accordance with those divisions, while most media are closely connected to certain centers of political power (Bašić-Hrvatinić, Thompson, and Jusić, 2008). Insisting on divisions, political leaders use the media and specific ethno-political rhetoric to secure votes and stay in power (Marko, 2011). The use of the media to maintain a state of latent intolerance is more than noticeable in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

PRINCIPLES OF RESPONSIBLE JOURNALISM

The importance of public broadcaster can be seen in the Law on the Public RTV System of BiH, which, in Article 5, regulates the tasks of the public broadcasters, points out that the basic task of public RTV services is to *by placing diverse and credible information, truthfully inform the public about political, economic, social, health, cultural, educational, scientific, religious, environmental, sports and other events, encourage democratic processes, ensure appropriate representation of unbiased news and programs about current events, in prime time and other times, informative, cultural, artistic, educational, children's, sports and entertainment programs, and that programs of the highest quality are available to the public in Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

As for the aspects of the Editorial Principles of the Public Broadcasting System in BiH, in the General Provisions in paragraph 1.1. it is stated that *the broadcasters of the Public Radio and Television System in BiH serve the public with their programs (...) Their task is to inform citizens, but also to facilitate public debates in which the goals and interests of the democratic public are profiled. They have an obligation to promote the historical and current national, cultural and religious, economic, regional and other positively valued characteristics of Bosnia and Herzegovina. For their work and overall media activity, these broadcasters are solely responsible to the public (...) Public broadcasters are obliged to provide diverse and balanced radio and television programs (...) The programs will respect the dignity of persons and groups, as well as the peculiarities by which they mutually differ. Public service programs promote human rights and democratic freedoms, social justice, tolerance and understanding among community members* (Editorial Principles of the Public Broadcasting System in BiH, General Provisions, paragraph 1.1).

The Law on the Public Radio and Television System of Bosnia and Herzegovina states that Public RTV services are obliged to provide a program that meets high ethical standards of *respect for human life,*

dignity and physical integrity of the person, and the promotion of democratic freedoms, social justice and international understanding and peace (Law on Public Radio and Television to the system of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Article 26, paragraph 1). Furthermore, in the realization of the basic programming principles, public RTV services will *inform the public in a truthful, comprehensive, impartial and timely manner about political, economic, educational, scientific, religious, cultural, sports and other events in the country and the world (...) all political, economic, educational, scientific, religious, cultural and other issues impartially, enabling an equal confrontation of different points of view with the aim of strengthening the democratic spirit, mutual understanding and tolerance (...) to contribute to the respect and promotion of basic human rights and freedoms, democratic values and institutions, and improving the culture of public dialogue* (Law on the Public Radio and Television System of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Article 27, paragraph 1, point a) d) f)).

Finally, it is forbidden in the programs *to incite and spread national, racial or religious hatred and intolerance (...) to incite discrimination and hostility towards individuals or groups because of their origin, skin color, political belief, religion* (Law on the Public Radio and Television System of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Article 28, paragraph 1 point a)).

Nominally, most of theses from the Editorial Principles of the Public Broadcasting System in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as from the Law on the Public Radio and Television System of Bosnia and Herzegovina, could be said to coincide with the principles of one of the first documents that specify the responsibility of the media in the most comprehensive way - the report of the Hutchinson Commission for press freedom from 1947. Among other things, it is recommended there *that credible, complete and intelligent reporting of daily news, placed in a context that gives it meaning, is desirable, as well as "faithful reflection of the various groups that constitute society* (Korni, 1999: 98). In the time of transition between two value systems in which one is collapsing and the other has not yet fully formed (Pavlović, 2011), the media, public broadcasters above all, *have an increased responsibility for the affirmation of true democratic values and principles. They are the ones who should influence the change of civic consciousness, so that young, non-ideological, professionally educated and communicatively competent people lead us towards the global family* (Aracki, 2011: 88).

However, it is noticeable that, by directing information, the media significantly influence the formation of public opinion. *In this way, public opinion has a distorted or incomplete picture of the event, and*

often with irrelevant or secondary information, it moves away from what is important, which citizens should have full insight into in order to form an opinion. By denying or directing, their views are most often wrong, superficial or not formed at all. Without publishing information, especially important for general interests in the community, the public opinion are manipulated. (Čupić, 2010: 46)

Placing biased, often exclusive and tendentious views that favor one side leads to a distortion of the image of the event, *and a distorted image of the event results in distorted opinions of those for whom such images are the main source of knowledge and, ultimately, wrong choices in uncertain situations (Kurtić, 2006: 91).*

In order for society to be responsible, journalism must also be responsible. As far as the principles of responsible journalism are concerned, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) state that journalism must be most loyal to citizens. Then, that journalists must be independent from those they write about. Also, journalism must be in the service of monitoring the powerful and provide a forum for public criticism. After all, the news must be comprehensive and balanced. Bogdanić (2016) points out two basic principles of the journalistic paradigm - the principle of truthfulness and the principle of responsibility. As for the principle of responsibility, he states that this principle has two interrelated aspects. *The first is the subject of responsibility itself, i.e. what is the responsibility of someone who reports the news (...) The second aspect of responsibility is contained in the question to whom the journalist is responsible. In the paradigm of journalism, these are members of the social community, a certain public to whom the medium addresses - readers, viewers, listeners. (Bogdanić, 2016: 173)*

When it comes to the values of journalism, Caple and Bednarek (2013) list, among others, the following categories of news values: size, scale or scope of the event; conflict and negativity of events; the positivity of the event; the impact, significance or importance of the event to the public; the time and proximity of the event; compliance of events with cultural values and expectations of the public; the unexpectedness of the event; prominence or elite status of persons, countries or organizations; factors associated with sensationalism; clarity, conciseness, plainness and precision; factors of balance in reporting. In this regard, Bogdanić (2016) points out that the values that make up the paradigm of journalism refer to three interconnected dimensions of journalistic practice and journalistic discourse: relationship to reality, ethical values and journalistic language.

The relationship to reality consists of the following values: timeliness, credibility, accuracy, completeness and balance in relation to the event. Seismic value consists of editorial values or criteria that are commonly used in the selection of newsworthy events: proximity, general social interest/public interest, consequence, importance, unpredictability, and cultural knowledge or awareness. Finally, journalistic language is constituted by description, clarity, precision, connection and completeness. (Bogdanić, 2016: 175)

MEDIA IN THE PRE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Regarding media reporting during elections, Radojković (2011) points out that election cycles in political life are excellent occasions for reporting on institutions in the journalistic field. *The media should not only record the activities of political competitors, and reduce political communication to that. They have the right to an independent attitude, opposition and criticism of political programs and candidates. On the other hand, they also have an unwritten mandate to work for the benefit of citizens and their participation in the political process. (Radojković, 2011: 35)* The same author emphasizes that “nepotistic” media have lost their independence due to political pressures, secret agreements and/or certain privileges, and for that reason he classifies them as “outsiders” in relation to political communication. *Because, with the loss of independence, they can no longer maintain a critical distance towards the managers of political communication, political marketing and PR, nor perform an analytical-commentary role on their own behalf or on behalf of the public. (Radojković, 2011: 36)*

Radojković's thoughts regarding the potential causes of control and dominance of the political establishment in political communication are also interesting. First of all, he points out that due to the remnants of state ownership in the national media, this gives the government the right to appoint management boards, and these the chief and responsible editors in the publicly owned media. By government, Radojković means the political parties that formed them through their agreements and bargaining. Also, instead of provoking media attention on topics about the common good, Radojković points out that the political establishment deals with provoking topics that smear and discredit competitors in the political game. Unlike true democratic orders, in societies in transition or post-transition societies, *the media are not the real initiators of negative publicity as a moral punishment for irresponsible individuals and*

institutions (Radojković, 2011: 37). After all, the political establishment is increasingly using the strategy of avoiding dialogical political communication. First of all, as Radojković points out, by suppressing problems by moving debates from the main stage (to conferences, round tables, etc.), especially when the initiative comes from the civil sector. Also, by moving from conflicts about facts to conflicts about principles. *That's why the public is just disgusted, and more and more citizens are minding their own business. Participatory are only those who secure their existence through the party card, as well as the controlled youth of the party. They can act publicly, carry out actions, put up posters, volunteer on the Internet and social networks, and thus strengthen political communication in favor of their party. However, all this is "quasi participation", because the interest of such apparently active citizens is completely different.* (Radojković, 2011: 37)

As for the election campaign, for example in Germany, public television stations are obliged to broadcast election commercials of political parties without compensation. *At the beginning of the pre-election campaign, political parties are allocated a certain number of slots for broadcasting, in accordance with their political importance. These commercials are not broadcast in advertising blocks, but in the main evening slot, often in the news. The exact term for individual parties is determined according to the principle of the dice. Therefore, it can certainly happen that even exotic, small parties broadcast their video in the best time slot, and thus reach a significant number of viewers.* (Shulz, 2011: 92)

Taking into account that television still plays a large role in the "media sky" and that for voters it represents the most used source of information during the election campaign, as pointed out by Schulz (2011), the reach and potential of television makes it particularly attractive for campaign management. But also potentially dangerous, taking into account the possibility of manipulation. *A political campaign can relatively easily instrumentalize and direct current reporting. Television news draws only the most salient events of the day; several events that have a high news value in the field of reporting, primarily those that are manifested through striking images, actions of people, "faces that speak" and controversies and conflicts.* (Shulz, 2011: 101)

The results of public opinion polls play a significant role in pre-election campaigns. So, for example, in the election campaign for the German Bundestag in 2009, the four major German television stations presented the results of election polls 48 times in their news programs,

devoting 160 minutes to it (Shulz, 2011). The same author emphasizes that polls are not only used to determine the current outcome of the race. *They also have an instrumental function. They can serve the parties to direct the public's attention to results that are favorable to them - in the hope that they will thus improve their electoral chances. They serve the media as a means to increase the value of the news they broadcast during election reporting, and thus as a way to increase attention and interest, primarily among apolitical readers, that is, viewers.* (Shulz, 2011: 106)

Parties in power tend to steer issues and events. *The party that is currently in power enjoys an advantage from the very beginning and since it influences daily political events. She can create events and time them at favorable times. In addition, the media naturally focus their attention on the executive, because status and power are important factors for news.* (Shulz, 2011: 108)

It is clear that the media provide voters with a “window to the world” through which they can observe events during the election campaign. Therefore, the media image of the pre-election campaign is also an indicator of what representations the voters will receive about it, what information about programs and candidates, topics and personalities will be available to them and what influences they will be exposed to, as stated by Shultz (Shultz, 2011). Otherwise, *the media also have the function of means of advertising, through which the election messages of parties and candidates are distributed, and indirectly, among other things, so that the motives of advertisements become the subject of reporting* (Shultz, 2011: 110). However, the media do not see themselves only as neutral presenters of the pre-election campaign, but also as active participants in the process of political will formation. *This stems from their public engagement, which not only assigns them the function of informing, but also the function of participating in shaping opinions, among other things, by articulating approval and criticism. The media are, therefore, actors with their own interests in the election campaign. Therefore, it is completely legitimate for them to favor a party(s). In most democracies, valid journalistic codes and legal regulations require them, after all, to adhere to the principle of distinguishing news from commentary.* (Shultz, 2011: 110) Thus, it is not uncommon for the media to take sides, even in more developed democracies, but in their case news and commentary are clearly separated.

Regarding the share of items with election content in news broadcasts, as an example, we cite the elections for the German Bundestag in 1980, when the share of items with election-related content in all television

news was 10%. Contributions with electoral content during the 2005 and 2009 Bundestag elections more than doubled, as stated by Shultz (Shultz, 2011). The same author points out that the results of the research indicate an increasing echo of the German parliamentary elections in the news, especially since recently, while on the other hand, in Great Britain, there has been a decline in the attention paid to the elections by the media since the beginning of the nineties. However, a more important segment in the context of coverage with election content is how the media distributes its attention to individual parties, especially to candidates for the highest positions in the government, than how much attention is paid to the campaign in general. Shultz (2011) points out that the media presence of politicians and parties is very different. *First of all, it depends on the political importance of the parties, on what position they have with regard to the election results, and then on the political "weight" and popularity of politicians. The most attention is paid to the leading politicians from the strongest parties, and primarily to the candidates for chancellor.* (Shultz, 2011: 112) The same author cites the results of research in Germany that point out that politicians who are currently in office enjoy an advantage in terms of the amount of attention paid to them, compared to their opponents.

As for the attention paid by the media to political subjects, Shultz (2011) points out that politically balanced reporting is expected from German television, and public broadcasters are even legally obliged to do so. This is generally interpreted as equal attention to political camps or more precisely as "balanced diversity", as the same author points out. Similar regulations exist in a number of countries. For example, in Great Britain, the "stopwatch balance" principle applies, i.e. strictly balanced reporting on large parties. However, analyzes of media content show that news content in reality deviates from balanced reporting (Deacon, Wring, Golding, 2006).

When it comes to the positioning of topics in the news program during the pre-election campaign, the media and political parties "fight" for dominance. Analyzing the Swedish parliamentary elections of 1979, Asp (1983) found that the topics covered by the media corresponded more to the topics that were a priority from the point of view of the voters than to the topics that were of importance to the parties. Overall, the results were in favor of the fact that greater defining power is in the hands of the media than in the hands of the parties. On the other hand, Semetko (1991), analyzing the British parliamentary elections of 1983, found a greater match between the topics defined by the parties and those

covered by the media, which could be interpreted as a sign of greater discretionary defining power of the parties in Great Britain. However, studies of the British parliamentary elections in the past decades indicate that the parties lost their power there and left the positioning of topics in the news program during the election campaign to the media. Shultz (2011) draws the conclusion that the topics covered in the media during the election campaign in Western Europe are less directed towards the topics that the parties consider to be a priority and *are more aligned with how the events during the campaign are ranked according to their informational value, and thus according to the criteria for attracting the attention of a wide audience, that is, the majority of voters* (Shultz, 2011: 115).

An important segment in the analysis of media reporting during the pre-election campaign is the evaluation of topics as well as their placement in a specific framework. That frame, or “framing” in this context, means the chosen perspective of observing the problem and the thematic aspects that are emphasized, as stated by Shultz (Shultz, 2011). As far as the evaluation of topics is concerned, depending on their basic political orientations, the government or the opposition can be presented in a favorable or unfavorable light. *By doing thematic framing (framing), some media violate the norms of objectivity in journalism. As actors with their own interests, they try to influence the formation of opinions during the election campaign because they direct the framing-reporting to one party-political side, in a way that is hardly noticeable to the voters.* (Shultz, 2011: 117, 118)

Taking into account that television is the “queen of all media”, frequent presence on television enhances the recognition of candidates. And that is a prerequisite for voters to get an idea of his ability and personality. Taylor and Fisk (Taylor, Fiske, 1979) recognized the “Top-of-the-head-phenomenon” which explains how mere presence on television can bring a politician advantages, especially in elections. This phenomenon shows that value judgments are not formed primarily on the basis of a systematic weighing of all relevant information, but spontaneously, on the basis of the freshest and most easily accessible impressions and memories. *The more prominently the candidate is present on television, the greater the chance that he will be present in the image of voters and be taken into consideration as a relevant alternative when they decide who to vote for.* (Shultz, 2011: 118) Thus, we can see that the tendency for overemphasized presence on television in order to promote the recognition of candidates is not only present in transitional societies such as ours, but represents

a general tendency. However, the media, especially public services, are not obliged to follow these tendencies and efforts of politicians to be present on television and to give them space and attention.

The same author points out that the presence in the media is an expression of the political power and familiarity of the candidate. *Television, even more than other media, is managed according to the status of the news factor, and concentrates its attention on a small number of leading and well-known politicians. This results in an attention bonus, which is enjoyed by the candidate who is the current holder of the state office (also called “service bonus” or “office bonus”). The “service bonus” leads to the fact that many voters have their own idea of the holder of the state office even before the start of the election campaign, while the opponent’s image has yet to be developed.* (Shultz, 2011: 119)

RESEARCH DESIGN WITH METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Through the analysis of media content, we processed the informative program of public services during the pre-election campaign. With the help of McManus’ SMELL test (McManus, 2012) and based on the analysis of journalism (Bogdanić, 2016), we tried to establish whether the reporting of public broadcasters corresponds to the principles of responsible and serious journalism. We analyzed the central news of public broadcasters in BiH (Dnevnik 2 on BHTV at 7 p.m., Dnevnik 2 on RTRS at 7:30 p.m. and Dnevnik 2 on FTV at 7:30 p.m.) during the election campaign period. We analyzed the central news because they are broadcast in “prime time”, that is, in the time when the largest number of people watch television and news shows, so that they can have the greatest impact on the population.

Referring to McManus’ SMELL test, in the analysis we tried to establish who provides the information in order to establish whether the media (journalist) or the source in the text knows what it is talking about (is it relevant). Then, what is the motive of the media and sources of information to share it with the public. Also, whether the content primarily informs, persuades or entertains.

Otherwise, the content it informs presents verifiable facts and specific observations. Each assumption or fact is attributed to a precisely defined source. The source practices fairness, that is, presents information impartially and represents all parties involved in the problem. Those who inform prefer a “grey” view of the world, they do not observe it in extreme

positions (black and white). No overgeneralizations, no judgments and no calls to action. On the other hand, unprincipled persuasion always involves some form of manipulation or lack of relevant facts. The tonality of the information is more emotional than logical, the sentences are in the form of slogans with strong calls to action (Vukojević, 2014).

Furthermore, we sought to determine whether there was any evidence to support the claims made in the features. Also, does the news or information make sense? Are the generalizations and conclusions correctly drawn? Are the conclusions compatible with what is already known? We tried to see if there were any relevant facts that were omitted, and if all participants were given the opportunity to express their views. In addition, we checked whether the standards of timeliness, accuracy, completeness and balance were met in the features. Also, when selecting the events listed in the features, were the criteria of proximity to the event in relation to the target public, then general social interest, the possibility of reacting to the event being reported on, importance, etc., respected? We tried to determine whether journalists express impressions, metaphors and qualifications. Also, whether and to what extent there is political influence on the information program. In other words, are there explicit or implicit examples of political control of public services. Finally, whether there is separation or abuse of public functions in the context of reporting by public services in the pre-election campaign. Through the analysis, we tried to establish whether and to what extent the politicians in power use the information program for political promotion.

It is necessary to mention that we did not include all features in the analysis (especially in the central news on RTRS). It was not so important for us to respect the quantitative aspect of the analysis, that is, to accurately determine the share of election content in the central-information programs of public broadcasters. It was more important for us to see the matrix in the reporting and analyze the discourse. Also, to recognize whether the principles of responsible and serious journalism have been respected.

During the analysis, we noticed certain tendencies in reporting, which we marked with the following terms:

- *Value-neutral content*: a stance that does not take sides in a conflict, corresponds to objective reporting;
- *Balancedness*: represents relative impartiality or neutrality in describing events and phenomena, assumes a multifaceted and measured description, aims to portray the image of the phenomenon or event as faithfully and comprehensively as possible, using as

many data, sources and statements as necessary (Bogdanić, 2016: 180, 181);

- *One-sidedness and partiality*: the opposite of balance, representing only one side, either critical or affirmative, subjective evaluation of events, phenomena or people;
- *Tendency*: steering in a particular direction, aiming at a particular goal, deliberately, with a particular aspiration, having a hidden aspiration (Byjаклиja, 1996);
- *Explicit mention of election content*: direct mention of choice in any context, either critically or affirmatively;
- *Implicit mention of election content*: content in the features in which the elections are not mentioned at all, but based on the approach and discourse, an implicit conclusion can be drawn that the hidden motive is to connect with the elections and political subjects, most often in the affirmative;
- *Concealed political promotion*: it is connected with the implicit indication of election content, an affirmative description of events, phenomena, people or political entities in which individuals or groups are glorified and given credit for certain activities;
- *Hidden persuasion*: content in the features that does not inform but tries to implicitly convince viewers of something - values, political program, to create a positive perception of political subjects and the like, implies a certain form of manipulation or lack of relevant facts;
- *Informative content in the feature*: verifiable facts are presented, each assumption or fact is attributed to a precisely defined source that represents the unbiased presentation of information and all parties involved in the problem, there are no excessive generalizations and judgments;
- *Political PR and political marketing*: "selling of political ideas" conveyed by the media, the media are at the service of political subjects and follow their activities, appearances in public, spread their ideas and represent their interests;
- *Expression of impressions, qualification and characterization of phenomena*: expression of personal observations, assumptions, judgments, evaluations and conclusions, exaggerations, stereotypes and clichés are used, they are usually colored and biased, metaphorical meanings are often conveyed, inflammatory and derogatory words are used;

- *Spin, manipulation and propaganda*: skilful management of topics, making tricks, using data, events and statements for the purpose of deceiving, cheating, leading to wrong conclusions and wrong opinions, trying to influence the broadest layers of the population by spreading ideas and representing the interests of a certain option (Byjaklija, 1996), distortion of facts to present people or events as better than they are or as they are not at all;
- *Affirmative feature*: content in an feature that elevates and creates a positive image of a person or event, often more than it really is, an elevation above mediocrity;
- *Politicization of an event*: giving a political character to an event, especially by the force of God, without good intentions (Byjaklija, 1996), presenting an event through the prism of politics, imbuing the event with politics;
- *Pseudo event*: staged, purposefully created events that have media attractiveness in order to ensure publicity, are created only to ensure publicity, are organized only to be covered and recorded by the media.

We compared the obtained results with examples from developed democratic countries, such as Germany, whose broadcasting system is, according to Veljanovski (2005), one of the most developed in Europe. In this way, we established whether and to what extent public services in BiH lag behind public broadcasters in Western Europe in terms of compliance with professional and legal norms related to reporting in pre-election campaigns..

DISCUSSION

Although the focus of our research was not a quantitative analysis of the central news, we cannot help but notice that the central news on RTRS during the election campaign lasted on average five minutes longer than the central news on FTV and BHRT. The average length of central news on RTRS is 32 minutes, and on FTV and BHRT 27 minutes, which is almost 20% less compared to central news on RTRS. The shortest central news on RTRS (27:48) lasted as long as the central news on FTV and BHRT on average. The longest central news on RTRS lasted 37 minutes and 46 seconds. On the other hand, the shortest central news on BHRT lasted 22 minutes and 56 seconds, while the shortest central news on FTV lasted 25 minutes and 15 seconds. The longest central news

on FTV lasted 29 minutes and 37 seconds, and on BHRT 46 minutes, which represents a significant deviation from the average. However, if we ignore that central news, which was broadcast on the last day of the election campaign before the election silence, in which 13 minutes of content with explicit election content was broadcast, along with an almost six-minute interview, the longest central news on BHRT lasted 33 minutes and 37 seconds. As for deviations from the average length of the central news, on RTRS the central news differed by 10 minutes (shortest central news 27:48 – average 32:00 – longest central news 37:46), on FTV by four minutes (25:15 – 27:00 – 29:37), and on BHRT even 24 minutes, if we also take into account the central news of the last day of the election campaign (22:56 – 27:00 – 46:00). If we ignore that central news, the deviation from the average length of the central news at BHRT lasted slightly less than 11 minutes (22:56 – 27:00 – 33:37), which again represents the biggest deviation.

As far as the share of election content in the central news is concerned, RTRS had the fewest items with explicit election content. However, on RTRS, contributions with implicit election content (covert political promotion and covert persuasion) were present to the greatest extent. On the other hand, on FTV and BHRT, almost all programs related to the elections had explicit content, while a negligible percentage of programs with implicit election content (disguised political promotion and hidden persuasion) were recorded. Overall, features on RTRS that could be explicitly or implicitly linked to the elections made up the vast majority of the central news, often more than half and often almost a two-thirds majority. On the other hand, features with optional content on FTV and BHRT rarely exceeded a quarter or a third of the central news, and on a couple of occasions they were not recorded at all. Thus, RTRS was dominated by election topics, less often explicitly and more often implicitly, while FTV and BHRT were dominated by other topics that could not be linked to elections.

Taking into account that the maximum length of time for almost every item on television news is two minutes (Melit, 1995), we noticed that the items on RTRS lasted longer not only in relation to that maximum, but also in relation to the length of the items in central news on FTV and BHRT. Almost all the features on RTRS that were the subject of analysis exceeded two minutes, often three minutes, and it used to happen that the features lasted even four or five minutes. On the other hand, the programs on FTV and BHRT averaged two minutes, with occasional deviations when they lasted longer than two minutes.

As for the qualitative analysis, which was the focus of our research, we observed certain tendencies and recognized a kind of reporting matrix during the pre-election campaign, above all when it comes to RTRS.

Although Article 3 of the Law on Radio-Television of the Republic of Srpska states that RTRS is a public company and that it is independent in performing its activities, has editorial independence and institutional autonomy, as stated in Article 8, it seems that Article 4 still prevailed, who says that the founder of RTRS is Republika Srpska. The state still has a strong role in RTRS, which we can relate to Radojković's (2011) statement, which, in the context of potential causes of control and dominance of the political establishment in political communication, points out that due to the remains of state ownership in the national media, this gives the government the right to appoint management boards, and these editors-in-chief and responsible editors in the media in public ownership, who in turn edit the program according to the will of the political establishment. In this regard, although RTRS is nominally a public media and should be owned by all citizens, it seems that the remnants of an undemocratic organization and value system are still present and very strong so that we can freely characterize RTRS as a *de facto* state media.

We can prove this statement by simply looking at the selection of topics, events and personalities that dominate the features in the RTRS news program. There were almost no features in the central news of the RTRS during the pre-election campaign, which, most often explicitly, did not mention the representatives of the authorities in the RS, above all Milorad Dodik and Željka Cvijanović. Also, Dragan Bogdanić and Dragan Lukač were often in the focus of features in the central news. It is important to note that government representatives who perform some of the most important functions (president, prime minister, ministers) were mentioned in the features, although there was often no need for this, because their function could not be linked to the event in any way (e.g. when the women's volleyball team of Serbia visited Banja Luka, the statement of Željka Cvijanović is taken even though she has nothing to do with volleyball, sports or the Serbian national team). Also, RTRS often followed pseudo-events such as ceremonial cutting of ribbons and opening of buildings, laying of foundation stones or officialization of the start of construction of a building, at which politicians were present. Pseudo events are otherwise legitimate from the point of view of political subjects because they serve their promotion. However, the media, and especially public broadcasters, are not obliged to report on those events and thus promote political entities. As far as the pseudo

events themselves are concerned, the focus has always shifted from the event to the politician, which leads us to the conclusion that the events were organized to promote politicians, and that RTRS wholeheartedly supported all of this and positioned itself as a public mouthpiece of the authorities in presenting their activities.

Unlike e.g. in Germany, where during the election campaign and small parties, often in news programs, have the opportunity to present themselves to the public, RTRS's news program mainly broadcasts information related to the activities of government representatives. Furthermore, in connection with the instrumentalization and extraction of only the most striking events, the danger is the tendency of the media to present only one political option, as is the case with RTRS and the presentation of the activities of the ruling coalition. The media normally pay more attention to the activities of the representatives of the government because they perform more responsible functions in society than the representatives of the opposition and because by the nature of their work they are much more aware of state and social activities. This tendency is particularly pronounced in RTRS and is widely used by the ruling coalition in Republika Srpska led by SNSD. Otherwise, while during the management of the pre-election campaign the ruling party enjoys the advantage brought by its current mandate, as pointed out by Schulz (2011), the challenger's campaign implies much greater efforts to achieve resonance in the media, which was also visible at RTRS. Moreover, the opposition was not only not evenly represented, but was often attacked, proscribed and stigmatized, not only by representatives of the government but also by journalists, thus RTRS openly placed itself at the service of a political option and became its advocate and promoter.

On the other hand, in the features in central news on FTV and BHRT, no open political promotion of representatives of the government at any level in BiH could be noticed. With the exception of a couple of examples (laying the foundation stone for a building with social apartments in Šionica near Srebrenik when the mayor of the municipality is being promoted), FTV and BHRT reported in an impartial, balanced and deontologically adequate manner. Often in the features on FTV and BHRT, a critical attitude dominated. But unlike the RTRS, which directed its criticism exclusively towards the opposition in the RS and the ruling coalition at the BiH level, the criticism on FTV and BHRT was directed towards all political subjects, without exception. In the reports on FTV and BHRT, on a couple of occasions it was possible to notice hidden persuasion, but without covert political promotion (for example,

the report on the all-day protest of the "Justice for David" group on September 25). On the other hand, in almost every feature on RTRS in which election content was implicitly mentioned, one could see covert political promotion as well as covert persuasion. The role and importance of politicians in an event, in the activities of the government and the like were emphasized.

Contributions in the central news on FTV and BHRT were value-neutral, in contrast to RTRS, where more than open advocacy of one political option was observed. Also, in the features in the RTRS central news, one could often see the use of inadequate argumentation (e.g. *argumentum ad populum*, that is, the conclusion that something is true by pointing out that people agree with us; *argumentum ad numerum* - the conclusion that something is true because which most people think is true; *argumentum ad nauseam* - something becomes true if it is repeated long enough; *argumentum ad ignorantiam* - the claim that something is true because the contrary has not been proven; *argumentum ad odium* - an attempt to gain favor for one's claim by exploiting existing sentiments bitterness, spite or rejoicing over someone else's misfortune, that is, an attempt to influence emotions by connecting the object of hatred with the opposite of our arguments; *circulus in demonstrando* - "circular argumentation" is present when someone uses what he is trying to prove as part of the evidence; *argumentum ad verecundiam* - "argument from awe" is a logical fallacy that occurs when a conclusion is considered correct only because it is supported by some authority, usually of questionable expertise or outside the field of the topic in question; *petitio principii* - "assuming a proposition" is a logical error that occurs when an unproven proposition is used as if it were proven and therefore taken as a premise; *argumentum ad metum* – wrong argumentation in which a person tries to create support for his idea by trying to increase fear of the alternative (Stojadinović, 2014), otherwise most of the logical errors, i.e. inadequate argumentation was observed in the features about alleged foreign agents and "domestic traitors").

In almost every RTRS central news, contributions were broadcast that essentially resembled political marketing, that is, political PR. RTRS teams reporting from the event paid more attention to the politicians than the event (for example, when they reported on the celebration of the centenary of the breakthrough of the Thessaloniki front, after stating the technical details, they quickly shifted their focus to Željka Cvijanović - how she met with church dignitaries before the celebration, how they organized a lunch in her honor, how she makes a statement and the like). In connection with monitoring the activities of politicians, a tendency

to politicize events could be observed at RTRS. In addition to following pseudo events and taking statements from politicians, it is noticeable that they favored and highlighted politicians at almost all events, even those that were not organized by political entities, at least not officially. There were no events (from economy and medicine, through sports to culture) where a statement was not taken from politicians, even when their domain of activity could not be linked to the event (e.g. during the opening of the ethnic house in Sitnica na Manjača when a statement is taken from Nikola Špirić even though he has nothing to do with rural tourism), or even when they were not responsible for the event at all (e.g. during the opening of a children's dental clinic in Dragočaj near Banjaluka, a statement is taken from Igor Radojičić even though he emphasizes that for the opening of the clinic, the Banja Luka Health Center is responsible, not the City of Banja Luka).

On the other hand, the features in the central news on FTV and BHRT did not take the form of political PR. Also, with the exception of a couple of cases (e.g. laying the foundation stone for a building with social housing in Šionica near Srebrenik), FTV and BHRT did not report on pseudo events at all. Unlike RTRS, there were no reports on FTV and BHRT that followed the activities of politicians. Even when they reported from an event where politicians were present (e.g. the opening of a forensic laboratory when Dragan Mektić was present or the session of the UN General Assembly where Bakir Izetbegović was present), they did not take statements from politicians, or those statements were short and general. Also, in the statements of politicians at the RTRS, the role and importance of the authorities in the RS were almost always emphasized (what they did, what they are doing for the benefit of the RS, how they fight against "foreign enemies and domestic traitors" and the like), the importance was also emphasized individuals (when the politicians themselves, e.g. Milorad Dodik or Željka Cvijanović, emphasize their role in "preserving the stability of the RS", "economic prosperity of the RS", "fighting against the enemies of the RS" and the like).

As for the shots in the reports, unlike RTRS, whose reports are dominated by shots of politicians (how they approach objects, how they shake hands, how they welcome them, how they see them off, how they talk to citizens, children or workers, how they give speeches, how cutting the ceremonial ribbons, laying the foundation stone and the like), in the programs on FTV and BHRT, shots with politicians were kept to a minimum. As an example of a different approach in reporting from the event, we can cite a report on the ceremonial commissioning of

the "Bočac 2" hydroelectric plant. Namely, at the RTRS, in addition to technical details and stating the importance for the local community, the focus was quickly shifted to politicians. Thus, shots with politicians, their speeches at the opening, their statements to the media and the like dominated the section. On the other hand, at BHRT, the focus is on technical details and significance for the local community, without emphasizing the role of politicians in the event.

Features on RTRS were often tendentious and one-sided, full of impressions. Journalists favored representatives of the authorities in the RS while attacking the opposition in the RS, representatives of joint authorities at the BiH level (with the exception of HDZ BiH representatives), as well as Western statesmen and ambassadors (with the exception of Donald Trump). In the reports on FTV and BHRT, no open attack on political subjects could be observed. Even when they reported critically, one could see that they were trying to use an unbiased and balanced approach.

As far as the presentation of impressions is concerned, "colored language" was used to a significant extent in the features on RTRS, especially on the topic of the protests of the "Justice for David" group, alleged interference by Western countries and embassies, and the work of joint institutions at the BiH level. Journalists at RTRS often expressed views, impressions, as well as qualifications and characterizations of events and persons, which largely coincided with the views of the ruling coalition in the RS, primarily the SNSD. This was especially expressed in the features concerning the alleged interference of Western countries in the electoral process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, then in the features in which the usual discursive matrix about "ours and theirs", i.e. about patriots and traitors, was cited, also when reporting on the successes of the current authorities in the RS, as well as about the protest of the group "Justice for David". On the other hand, in the features on FTV and BHRT, it was not possible to clearly recognize the narrative of political parties that glorify the government, either at the entity or state level, or that attack political opponents.

In addition to examples of inadequate argumentation, political marketing, unbalanced approach, hidden persuasion and presentation of impressions, features that can be identified as manipulation and spin were also broadcast on RTRS. They could most often be seen in features on the topic of the alleged interference of Western countries in the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in the case of the protest of the "Justice for David" group. In both cases, it was more than obvious that they served to spread fear and hatred, both towards the West and BiH,

but also towards anyone from the RS who does not think the same way as the ruling party. Moreover, the spread of fear and hatred was often not hidden and implicit, but openly and clearly directed at the target subjects - the West, BiH, the opposition in the RS. On that occasion, the writings of web sites and „portaloids“ from Serbia were transmitted, the texts of which could be seen as a "school example" of unprofessional journalism: construction of events that is largely untrue, unverified and unknown sources, stating positions as fact, one-sided approach, lack of evidence and the like. On the other hand, the reports on FTV and BHRT did not record examples of manipulation and spin, as well as reports in which the spread of fear and hatred is present.

CONCLUSION

Summarizing the results of the analysis of the features in the central news of public broadcasters during the pre-election campaign that explicitly or implicitly touched on election topics, we could not escape the impression that RTRS almost completely violated the rules of responsible journalism. Everything that the theory dictates, all the rules of responsible and serious journalism, all ethical principles, seem to have been quite freely interpreted and widely understood by the journalists and editors at RTRS. In addition, the content of the features often deviated from the legal norms regarding program principles as well as the principles of the RTRS Statute. Features in RTRS central news were most often unbalanced, biased, one-sided and tendentious, and manipulation and spin could be recognized in some features. Although journalists are not expected to be only "microphone holders", journalists at RTRS often exceeded the limits of local criticism and used discourse inappropriate to the principles of responsible journalism. Colored language was used, journalists often crossed the line of decency, aggressively and often offensively attacked political opponents of the ruling coalition in the RS, as well as anyone who opposes the authorities in the RS and thinks differently. Also, the authors of the features used excessive generalizations, qualifications and characterizations. They often presented inappropriate conclusions based on inadequate arguments or pseudo-arguments.

On the other hand, the features on FTV and BHRT were also often critical, but no tendency, bias or one-sidedness could be noticed. Criticism was directed at all political options, often generally towards politicians, political parties and the political order in general. Also, the discourse used in the programs on FTV and BHRT was not inappropriate, no colored

language could be observed, there were no insults. Generalizations were appropriate. In contrast to RTRS, in the reports on FTV and BHRT, inadequate and pseudo argumentation could not be observed. With certain exceptions, the features were mostly balanced, in contrast to the RTRS features, which were mostly unbalanced. When reporting from the event, the journalists of FTV and BHRT focused on the event and the possible benefit that citizens can have without highlighting the politicians, unlike RTRS, which always shifted the focus from the event to the politicians and promoted their activities.

As far as the quantitative aspect is concerned, the features on RTRS lasted longer than the features on FTV and BHRT. In addition, they often exceeded the maximum of two minutes per feature. Also, in percentage terms, they occupied more time in the central news when it comes to the share of election content in the central news compared to FTV and BHRT. After all, central news on RTRS lasted almost 20% longer than central news on FTV and BHRT.

In general, the features in the RTRS central news (Dnevnik 2) in which the elections were explicitly or implicitly discussed, significantly deviated from the principles of responsible and serious journalism. On the other hand, the features in the central news on FTV and BHRT to a significant extent, with individual deviations, corresponded to the principles of serious and responsible journalism.

ANALIZA IZVJEŠTAVANJA JAVNIH EMITERA U BIH TOKOM IZBORNE KAMPANJE ZA OPŠTE IZBORE 2018.

**Mladen Bubonjić
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Abstract: *U posljednjih dvadesetak godina često smo svjedoci da javni emiteri više služe političkim i ekonomskim elitama nego interesima građana. Odstupanje od profesionalnih principa i zakonskih normi posebno je izraženo u predizbornom periodu, kada se javni emiteri pretvaraju u implicitne, a često i eksplicitne predstavnike pojedinih političkih opcija. U radu je informativni program javnih emitera u Bosni i Hercegovini*

tokom predizborne kampanje za Opće izbore 2018. obrađen kroz analizu medijskih sadržaja, s ciljem utvrđivanja da li izvještavanje javnih emitera odgovara principima odgovornog i ozbiljnog novinarstva.

Keywords: *odgovorno novinarstvo, SMELL test, javni emiteri, Opšti izbori 2018*

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