

**FINAL REPORT**  
**on the Visegrad fellowship research at the**  
**Vera & Donald Blinken Open Society Archives**  
**by**  
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## **Introduction**

My research in the Vera & Donald Blinken Open Society Archives, entitled “What is new in old news: on the mechanisms of misrecognition in the newscasts in former Yugoslavia” was conducted in the period between June, 01st and July, 30th, 2017. Within the research I investigated documents (audiovisual materials) belonging to the HU OSA 338 archival unit, which comprises television newscasts from 12 televisions from the former Yugoslav region, created in the period between 1990 and 1994. The research I conducted was a critical investigation into the relation between the media and nationalism in former Yugoslavia. I argued in particular that the unique contribution of television media in the creation of nationalist ideology can be seen in the mechanisms of misrecognition of identities which they used. In my presentation of the research, I elaborated more specifically on three such mechanisms, namely “the employment of superiority endowing narratives”, “the attribution of blame” and the making of “advantageous comparisons”.

## **1. Description of research activities and findings**

The relation between media and nationalism in former Yugoslavia has gained the status of a “classical topic” within the South Eastern European studies, nationalism studies, media studies etc. Yet, most of the studies tend to elaborate the role of the media in the spread of nationalism simply as part of a causal chain that started with the political and/or intellectual elites or as representing the banal nationalism that was at stake among the citizens of each of the republics. In addition to this, most of the studies investigating the relation between media and nationalism in former Yugoslavia have been conducted on written media and only a few referred to television programs (Kurspahić, 2003) (Mihelj, 2008) (Mihelj et al., 2009) (Turković, 2000). In light of this state of the art in the field, my research within the Visegrad fellowship had two aims. First, to prove that the news programs of the television media also created specific nationalist narrative, whose specificities can be understood through investigation of the structure of the news programs. Within

this investigation I found that the news media were employing mechanisms of misrecognition as substantial part of their narratives which created a unique nationalist media product. By using the audiovisual documents in the Yugoslav collection at the Open Society Archive, my second aim was to develop further the researches done on television media within former Yugoslavia and contribute to a new understanding of their role in relation to the nationalism that reached culmination in the 90s of the past century.

The research was developed in two phases. The first phase included a content analysis of the newscasts from the months prior and during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, which were the periods between March and June, 1991 and 1992. The aim of this phase of the research was to trace the use of terms designating ethnic identities, their further qualifications and contexts, their institutional framing, the modes of use and the frequencies. This type of analysis provided me with a possibility to reconstruct one half of the media agenda and the media framing of the televisions investigated for the researched period. I created tables of content analysis and informative graphs for each program which was found on the tapes consulted. The data in these tables was further summarized and thus used in the second phase of the research.

The second phase of the research was reconstruction of the summarized data of the content analysis into the theoretical framework of the notion of recognition, by delineating the mechanisms of misrecognition which were used by the media in the investigated period. Within this second phase I created a timeline of occurrences for each mechanism, and determined its contextual appearance and function within its social context of usage.

Within my research I found that the mechanisms of recognition, which I delineate as repeating patterns of misrecognition in the television newscasts investigated, can be considered as unique contribution of the television media in the creation of a so called “media nationalism” which can be differentiated from the one employed by the political elites, the intellectual elites or the banal nationalism which was present on a grass root level. In an ontological sense, these mechanisms were the constitutive parts of the nationalism produced and employed by the television media. On an epistemic level, I claimed that they shall not be considered as arguments but rather as engines for arguments, through which a different rationality in the public sphere is being constantly recreated. In a moral sense, I claimed, that these mechanisms were instruments for expressing mistrust, disrespect (in any form, starting from the mild forms of institutional marginalization to open public humiliation) and also misesteem (implicitly through support and propagation of certain values tied to certain ethnic groups exclusively or in a very open stigmatization) towards other identities. With different functions in different media agendas, mechanisms such as the deployment of superiority narratives, the attribution of blame and self-victimization, and the use of advantageous comparisons, were proved to be the most common “nationalist media products” in the investigated periods. Within my presentation examples were shown regarding their use as justification for the armed conflicts and the perpetration of inhumanities, in Croatia as well as Bosnia.

## **2. OSA materials used**

All materials that were used in my research belong to the HU OSA 338 archival unit. As my research was focused on the period prior and during the first months of the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, it included analysis of the news programs of Radio Television Belgrade (from January 1992 Radio Television Serbia), Studio B, TV Politika and Yutel that were found on the following tapes from the period March 01, 1991-May 30, 1991 and March 02, 1992 – May 30, 1992:

| <b>Tapes from 1991 and the war in Croatia</b> | <b>Tapes from 1992 and the war in Bosnia</b> |
|---|--|
| t25(22)                                       | t106(73)                                     |
| t53(36)                                       | t228(196)                                    |
| t58(39)                                       | t229(197)                                    |
| t61(40)                                       | t230(198)                                    |
| t62(41)                                       | t231(199)                                    |
| t64(42)                                       | t232(200)                                    |
| t65(42)                                       | t233(201)                                    |
| t67(43)                                       | t234(202)                                    |
| t70(54)                                       | t235(203)                                    |
| t73(56)                                       | t236(204)                                    |
| t75(57)                                       | t237(205)                                    |
| t76(58)                                       | t238(206)                                    |
| t79(59)                                       | t239(207)                                    |
| t80(60)                                       | t240(208)                                    |
| t82(61)                                       | t241(209)                                    |
| t84(62)                                       | t242(210)                                    |
| t87(63)                                       | t243(211)                                    |
| t88(64)                                       | t245(213)                                    |
| t91(65)                                       | t246(214)                                    |
| t92(66)                                       | t247(215)                                    |
| t94(67)                                       | t248(216)                                    |
| t97(68)                                       | t249(217)                                    |
| t98(69)                                       | t250(218)                                    |
| t101(70)                                      | t251(219)                                    |
| t105(72)                                      | t277(245)                                    |
| t107(73)                                      |  |
| t108(74)                                      |  |
| t109(75)                                      |  |
| t110(76)                                      |  |
| t111(77)                                      |  |
| t112(78)                                      |  |
| t113(79)                                      |  |
| t114(80)                                      |  |
| t115(81)                                      |  |
| t116(82)                                      |  |
| t117(83)                                      |  |
| t119(85)                                      |  |
| t120(86)                                      |  |
| t121(87)                                      |  |
| t122(88)                                      |  |
| t126(92)                                      |  |
| t167(133)                                     |  |

### **3. Further research activities on the topic**

In order to complete my research, as I currently conceive it, I consider it to be necessary to conduct two further researches: one of empirical and the other of a theoretical nature. As it has already been mentioned in this report, the content analysis and the summary tables of the results constitute only one part of the media agenda and the media framing of the televisions investigated for the time period. The second part must come from additional sources regarding the perception of the audience of the phenomena reported in the news and their opinion about the same. In this respect I aim to investigate further available opinion polls conducted among possible viewers of the televisions investigated, in the period between 1990 and 1994. On the theoretical side I aim at systematic broadening of the framework of the theory of recognition with the mechanisms of misrecognition detected in my research. I would also investigate, in this direction, the similarities and compatibilities between the mechanisms of moral disengagement which are widely elaborated in social psychology and the mechanisms of misrecognition in the formulation I provided in my research.

### **Bibliography**

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