

# MEDIA POLICIES AND THE SETTLEMENT OF ETHNIC CONFLICTS

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide a detailed description and analysis of the planned media policy intended to support the successful peace implementation process in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia). In doing so, the paper will address several questions about occurring problems, possibilities of implementation and the results and experience gained from applied policies. These basic questions can be outlined as follows:

- How have media policies influenced the processes of democratization and peace implementation in post-Dayton Bosnia, if at all?
- What are the difficulties faced during the implementation of media policies in ethnically polarized contemporary Bosnia?
- What is the position of the media in complex power relations in such a society?
- Do the local Bosnian authorities have the ability and the incentives to sustain peace and advance the development of a democratic media and of civil society in general? In other words, what is the outlook of applied media policies?

First, this paper proposes that a successful media policy has to deal with all existing problems. Because the media in Bosnia is in need of total and rapid restructuring, a selective approach is unsuitable. The ruling nationalist oligarchies tend to use all available means to maintain their monopoly over the public discourse. This means that a partial solution is ineffective. Consequently, an effective media policy has to aim for total reform of the media landscape. It has to simultaneously deal with structural reorganization, issues of media freedom, problems of media performance and inflammatory language, creation of independent regulatory institutions and mechanisms of enforcement, education of journalists and media managers, and the creation of interethnic communication channels. Failure to successfully deal with any of these issues will directly undermine all other aspects of the applied media policy.

Second, if nationalists are to be deprived of their monopoly over the media, particular help should be given to local independent media and special focus should be placed on the restructuring of the most influential local broadcasting networks. It is likely that the ambitious projects of totally new, internationally sponsored and supervised broadcasting networks such as OBN and FERN will meet with strong resistance by both local authorities and audiences, and will therefore remain in the shadow of domestic broadcasters.

Finally, there are two parallel but opposite forces within the media scene: on the one hand, international actors are breaking the information blockade and enhancing interethnic and country-wide communication, thereby enhancing integration; on the other hand, ruling oligarchies are trying to further fragmentize the media landscape and its audience by creating party-owned media outlets locally and regionally. Therefore, long-term media policy will have to deal with this problem by focusing on smaller media units on the municipal and regional levels rather than concentrating on the urban centers.

This paper begins with a presentation of the general socioeconomic and political conditions of Bosnia, including background problems in certain policies and introducing the major players on the Bosnian political scene. The general conditions of local media are then analyzed by outlining the structure of the media, the characteristics of media performance and the role of the media in the power struggle in post-Dayton Bosnia. A list of the major problems to be addressed by applied policies and the most important decisions made in the course of the implementation of those policies follows. Next, objectives and strategies are clarified followed by an analysis of the implementation of developed media policies. Then the results and influence of implemented policies on the local communities are described. Finally, a summary of the research outlining the most important lessons learned and proposing possible future use of those lessons in similar cases conclude the paper.

## 2. General Socioeconomic and Political Conditions<sup>1</sup>

This section provides insight into general socioeconomic and political conditions in contemporary Bosnia. It first outlines major characteristics of the country's population, dominant political concepts and groupings, economic conditions and arrangements brought to existence after the Dayton Accords. Secondly, the section introduces major international actors involved in the implementation of the peace agreement, and assesses the dominant power distribution in society. This section presents a necessary basis for further analysis of the media scene, which can be undertaken only if one takes into consideration the wider social context within which media operate.

### 2.1. *Domination of Nationalist Concepts*

The ethnic structure of Bosnia largely resembles that of the former Yugoslavia: none of the three major ethnic groups—Bosniaks,<sup>2</sup> Serbs and Croats—have an absolute majority. According to the 1991 census, Bosnia's population was 4.35 million: Bosniaks made up 44%, Serbs 31%, and Croats 17%. Those declaring themselves as Yugoslavs made up 5% of the population and the remaining 3% consisted of some 25 other nationalities. In

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the data taken from Media Plan (1997a).

<sup>2</sup> With the outbreak of the war in Bosnia, Bosnian-Muslim government proclaimed the name Bosniak as an official, politically correct name for Muslims.

accordance with its ethnic structure, the first free elections in November 1990 brought into power nationalist forces from three ethnic camps. The Bosniak nationalist party SDA (*Stranka demokratske akcije*—Party of Democratic Action) won the largest number of votes (33%), the Serb nationalist party SDS (*Srpska demokratska stranka*—Serb Democratic Party) was second with 26% and the Croatian party HDZ BH (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica BiH*—Croat Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina), which won 16% of the votes, was third. They formed a coalition government and elected the president based on the rotation principle; however, these arrangements failed to prevent the war that started in early 1992.

The war drastically changed the socioeconomic and political situation. Until 1996 approximately 200,000 people were killed, the number of displaced persons reached approximately one million internally and another million refugees were dispersed worldwide, half of which found permanent residence in host countries. It has been estimated that economic damages and losses reached 70-115 billion USD. At the beginning of 1996 industrial production shrank to 5% of the 1991 level, with unemployment rates reaching 75% in some regions (Media Plan 1997a, 41).

The Dayton Peace Accords<sup>3</sup> provided for the continuing existence of the sovereign state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and determined new political and institutional arrangements. The state now consists of two entities: Republika Srpska, holding 49% of the territory, and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, holding 51%. The shared responsibilities of Bosnian institutions are divided into several basic categories, such as foreign policy, monetary policy, and foreign trade and customs policy. The Entities are responsible for their separate armies, police forces and other functions not assigned to common state institutions.

The most serious impediment to the Dayton Peace Accords comes from the still dominant nationalist parties, the SDA, the SDS and the HDZ. None is truly satisfied with the new arrangements. Both the Serbian and Croatian political elite generally prefer a full division of Bosnia while Bosniak leadership prefers a strongly centralized state (OHR 1998b; Moore 1996, 8).

Keeping this fact in mind, the Dayton Accords were created to provide international actors with all the necessary powers to properly react to any difficulties that may occur during their mandate in Bosnia. The US insisted on a strong implementation force that would be superior to any of the already existing armies. Additionally, the Accords also contain provisions for the full involvement of international actors in the process of peace implementation in all of its aspects, from the creation of joint Bosnian institutions to the development of civil society. International actors were given large-scale powers to remedy any obstruction of the implementation of the peace plan, as will be shown in the following section.

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<sup>3</sup> The Peace Agreement was enacted on November 28 in Dayton, Ohio, USA, and then signed in Paris on December 14, 1995. It was enacted by the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and witnessed by representatives of the Contact Group nations—the US, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia—and the European Union Special Negotiator.

## 2.2. *New Actors on the Scene*

Because of the extremely complicated situation and the overall lack of political will on the part of the ruling parties to support peace implementation, the Dayton Accords provides for several international organizations to take part in the peace process in Bosnia.

Annex 1 of the Dayton Accords invites the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) to organize negotiations on weapons control and regional military balance. The OSCE is also requested to supervise the preparation and conduct of postwar elections. In this respect the OSCE has created the Electoral Code of Conduct and the Provisional Electoral Commission as the institutional framework for the supervision of elections.

In accordance with Annex 1 of the Agreement, a multinational peace implementation force, IFOR, under the command of NATO and with a grant of authority from the UN, has been invited to Bosnia. IFOR—in 1997 renamed SFOR (Stabilization Force)—is empowered to monitor and ensure compliance with the Accords on military aspects and fulfill supporting tasks. SFOR has a right to carry out its mission rigorously, including the use of force if necessary.

Annex 10, which deals with the civilian implementation of the Accords provides that a High Representative be designated, consistent with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, to coordinate and facilitate civilian aspects of the peace settlement such as humanitarian aid, economic reconstruction, protection of human rights and the holding of free elections. The Office of the High Representative (OHR) generally supervises the fulfillment of the political aspects of the Dayton Agreement, reporting both to the UN Security Council and to the Contact Group.

Additionally, in accordance with Annex 11, the UN established a UN International Police Task Force (IPTF) to carry out various tasks including training and advising local law enforcement personnel, as well as monitoring and inspecting law enforcement activities and facilities. IPTF is headed by a commissioner appointed by the UN Secretary General.

With the powers they received, these four organizations penetrated all of the important aspects of contemporary Bosnian society. Nevertheless, local authorities did not want to relinquish their hold on power. Consequently, they continued to manipulate nationalist sentiment in order to preserve their positions within their respective ethnic camps, thus continuously obstructing implementation of the Dayton Agreement. Mechanisms for the division of state powers have been blocked and basic human rights such as the right to private property, personal safety and free speech have all been denied or violated (OHR 1998b; Media Plan 1997a, 9, 27).

In light of the developments depicted above, the following section describes the structure and performance of the Bosnian media, and initiates the analysis of applied media policies in postwar Bosnian society.

## 3. Characteristics of the Local Media Scene

In 1991 there were 435 registered media units in Bosnia. Out of that number 377 were newspapers and other print media; 57 were radio stations, including three belonging to

the state broadcasting company; and 4 were TV stations, including three state channels (Media Plan 1997a, 67).

Due to the drastic changes in the socioeconomic and political situation, only about 50%, or precisely 272 active media, survived the war (Media Plan 1997a, 67). This radical decrease is the best indicator of conditions in which the media were forced to operate during and immediately after the war. After Dayton three ethnically based and completely isolated media systems evolved. One system operates in Republika Srpska, and only after the Dayton Agreement did the Serb authority, i.e., the SDS, allow independent media. Another media system operates in the Bosniak part of the Federation, where small independent media existed throughout the war in the larger cities of Sarajevo, Zenica, Tuzla and in some other urban areas. The third media system was developed within the so-called Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia, a part of the Federation under the control of the Croatian nationalist party HDZ BH. This media system was only rudimentary and was fully dependent on the media system of the neighboring Republic of Croatia. Moreover, as late as 1998 independent media were not allowed to exist within Croat-controlled areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Thus, the media scene of Bosnia in early 1996 completely mirrored the ethnic, territorial and political divisions of the country. Consequently, the media were completely subordinated to the ruling elite in ethnically distinct regions; this monopoly was maintained by all available means, including threats, blackmail, financial dependence and even physical force directed at defiant media (Human Rights Watch World Report 1998; International Crisis Group Report 1997). Media dependence on the ruling parties was further enhanced by the totally devastated economy and by the absence of basic regulatory mechanisms in both Entities and Bosnia as a whole. Another important structural characteristic of Bosnian media is the strong influence of the neighboring states, the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The influence of these states ranges from strong political and economic interference in the media in Bosnia to direct penetration of Bosnian territory by their own broadcasts and other media products without any interstate agreements and contradicting international standards of exchange concerning media programming between sovereign states.

Consequent media performance reflected the dominant power distribution within society. Media content was overwhelmingly nationalist, with discriminatory practices against "other" ethnic groups and all political opponents. The dominant public discourse in each of the three ethnically distinct parts of the country was that of one party, one territory and one nation. Anything or anyone opposed to this perception of reality was marked as deviant and consequently removed from the public arena (Wheeler 1997; ICG 1997; Media Plan 1996a, 1997b). Moreover, the lack of professional journalistic standards also impeded the media's capability to perform their "watchdog" function. Ethnically structured audiences exercised additional pressure on all opposition media, further decreasing their capability to articulate more universal and international concepts. Furthermore, the legacies of war drastically reduced the objectivity of all involved political actors, thus further polarizing already overloaded political discourse.

Due to the total nationalist monopoly over the political scene, the established order has been constantly reaffirmed through the use of pressure; this manipulates media performance and imposes dominant nationalist discourse on public space. Consequently, the media legitimizes that same oppressive order by constructing collective identities and

regurgitating ideologies, which, in turn, support the existing power distribution in society. The process is cyclical and self-sustaining. In this context, and in a somewhat paradoxical manner, one can see how opposing nationalist parties actually reinforce each other's dominant positions within the country, functioning as strong ideological coalitions based on self-inflicted conflicts, anxiety and discrimination. By promoting incompatible ethnic and nationalist ideas, these parties continuously legitimize each other's concepts and the populist policies they engender. Consequently, this cycle of power reinforcement eliminates any other political concepts that could promote reconciliation between opposing ethnic groups. Indeed, it is anxiety and hatred that such systems feed on, and all opposing views are thus silenced or removed to the margins of public discourse.

In conditions of constant oppression, a nonexistent market economy, weak and fragmented political opposition, and ethnically homogenous and mutually hostile audiences, no local media has the potential to make decisive positive change in dominant discourse. The most important media, such as public service broadcasters or influential daily newspapers, are firmly controlled by ruling oligarchies, and small independent media are simply too weak to make significant change. Moreover, those independent local media are constrained by the very character of their audiences. Because audiences in Bosnia are ethnically structured, independent media inevitably needs to have an ethnically based appeal if they are to keep their audiences. Although these independent media are critical of the ruling parties, they still have strong ethnic appeal, which further reinforces existing divisions in the country. No small independent media can afford to promote universal concepts under such unfavorable conditions.

In summary, the local Bosnian media in early 1996 were caught in a vicious cycle of the power struggle; it was impossible to break away for several reasons:

1. Ruling nationalist parties used all accessible means to maintain their control over the most important media and hamper access to those media by opposition parties.
2. Under such conditions media performance was rather discriminatory and inflammatory, thus radically obstructing democratization and reconciliation processes.
3. There was a general lack of independent media in most of the country, and a total lack of interethnic media that could bridge the gap between mutually isolated ethnic camps.
4. Small local independent media were constantly exposed to all possible forms of pressure, which drastically reduced their appeal potential.
5. Weak and fragmented political opposition was incapable of providing support for the independent media because of the authoritarian rule of nationalist parties.
6. The devastated economy and lack of basic market conditions made media dependent either on state (i.e., nationalist parties) or foreign financing which further enhanced their impotence within the existing distribution of power.
7. The very character of ethnically homogenous audiences constrained independent media appeal. Although these media criticized ruling nationalist parties and their ideologies, they were pressured to reinforce that same ideology if they wanted to satisfy the expectations of their audiences. Incompatible ethnic identities have prevented independent media from articulating more universal concepts.

8. The total lack of any regulatory mechanism further enhanced the uncertainty of independent media and provided space for extreme nationalist discourse to enter and control the public arena.
9. The lack of professional journalists and the journalistic legacies of communism further reduced the potential of independent media, silencing any views opposing the official nationalist ideology.
10. The continuous interference of Croatia and Yugoslavia further polarized the already overloaded public discourse and rendered almost impossible any efforts to regulate media space within Bosnia.

In such an apparently closed situation, no local politicians were able to undermine the dominant position of the three ruling nationalist parties. Therefore, the creators of the Dayton Agreement established a set of new actors and institutions with the task of changing this frozen political scene and depriving nationalists of their monopoly over the country. In respect to the media, an extensive set of policies was developed in order to solve the problems listed above which hampered the democratization and reconciliation process in the country. The following four sections will provide a thorough analysis of the applied media policies, the developed strategies and the objectives of implementation, as well as analyze the difficulties and results of the applied policies and their influence on the democratization and reconciliation process.

## 4. The International Community's Media Policy

### 4.1. *Turning Points*

Considering the complexity of the situation, there was a necessity for simultaneous action in all aspects of the political struggle if the peace process was to succeed. Hence, opening the public sphere to opposition groups was a crucial task if democratization was to ever take place. In practice, the International Community was faced with the enormous challenge of totally reconstructing the existing media if the peace process was to be sustained. The problem was that none of the ruling Bosnian parties was willing to support such reconstruction and thus directly endanger its own ruling position. An additional problem was the total lack of basic state institutions and of a legal system at the federal level of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, the absence of democratic traditions, civic culture and any form of a grass-roots civic movement created additional problems for the proposed media policies. These policies were also confronted with a total lack of popular support in the general climate of distrust and uncertainty.

Consequently, the International Community was forced to start from scratch and systematically implement an entire set of media policies. In this respect, there was a need to empower the international actors to intervene in the sphere of the media on all levels, from the creation of basic regulatory institutions, through the monitoring of media performance, to the imposition of penalties on noncompliant politicians and media units. Therefore, from 1996 to 1998 several important decisions and actions

were enacted in order to empower the OHR and the OSCE to intervene in the media. They are as follows:

Within the Electoral Code of Conduct, the OSCE and its Provisional Electoral Commission aimed to regulate the chaotic media in postwar Bosnia with the Rules and Regulations Concerning the Media. The Rules and Regulations define basic issues of media conduct during electoral campaigns such as adequate information for voters, obligation of government in respect to the media, problems of professional and journalistic ethics and issues of access to the media.

In April 1996, in accordance with the Rules and Regulations Concerning the Media, the OSCE established the Media Experts Commission (MEC). The MEC was empowered to ensure fulfillment of the Rules and Regulations Concerning the Media and it became the first media regulatory body in postwar Bosnia.

As a reaction to the continuing obstruction of the Dayton Agreement by local authorities, the Sintra Declaration<sup>4</sup> of May 30, 1997, gave large-scale powers to the OHR including the right to interfere in the media sphere (OHR 1998a).

Additionally, the Peace Implementation Council meeting in Bonn in December 1997 charged the OHR to establish the Independent Media Commission (IMC) that started operation in June 1998. On August 1, 1998 it brought into force the Broadcasting Code of Practice for radio and television in Bosnia. All broadcasters are now required to adhere to this code, drawn from other European models and conforming to the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It was necessary to empower the OHR and OSCE for the overall restructuring and democratization of the media. Nevertheless, due to the changing political conditions, there was a need to constantly adjust to new circumstances. The experiences of 1996–98 show that only strong regulatory mechanisms can deprive nationalists of their control over the media. These experiences forced the International Community to adjust its approach and grant even more powers to the OHR in order to fully implement developed media policies. These newly established settings have had a decisive impact on the restructuring of media institutions and on the overall democratization of the country. The following section will provide more insight into the objectives and strategies of the OHR and OSCE in respect to media issues.

#### *4.2. Objective and Strategies*

Due to an overall lack of independent and professional media, there was a need for the complete transformation of the media sphere. Accordingly, a rather extensive strategy was proposed and enacted in several stages in order to respond to the problems that characterized the Bosnian media in early 1996. The pivotal role in implementation of these media policies was given to the OHR and the OSCE.

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<sup>4</sup> Ministerial Meeting of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council held in Sintra, Portugal. The Peace Implementation Council is the supervisory body of all actors involved in the Peace Implementation Process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its Steering Board consists of: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, UK, US, The European Commission and associated members, UN and OSCE.

As mentioned earlier, in April 1996 the OSCE had already established the Rules and Regulations Concerning the Media and the Media Experts Commission. This was the first step in the creation of basic media regulations that would provide for a free and fair electoral campaign in the 1996 general election. In this respect, the MEC established the Media Monitoring Center, the Media Access Support Team and six regional Media Expert Subcommissions in order to have full control over media performance in Bosnia (Domi 1998). The MEC was empowered to issue warnings, obligate violators to broadcast or publish specific materials and, most importantly, recommend financial penalties and the removal of candidates from electoral lists to the Provisional Electoral Commission.

Because the function of the MEC was reduced to electoral periods, there was a need to create a general media regulatory body with the necessary powers to fully regulate the media. Hence, in accordance with the Bonn conference decisions, the OHR created the Independent Media Commission (IMC), which started operation in June 1998 (OHR 1998b). The IMC has the authority to impose sanctions, ranging from warnings to the closure of broadcasters. The IMC brought into power the Broadcasting Code of Practice for radio and television in Bosnia and Herzegovina. All broadcasters are now requested to adhere to this code, which is consistent with internationally recognized standards of broadcasting.

Future strategy calls for the adoption of legislation on public broadcasting in both Entities. The efforts of the OHR, IMC and the OSCE will focus on these and related issues. Another important assignment given to the IMC and the OHR is the prevention of constant interference from the Croatian Radio Television (HRT) from Croatia and Radio Television Serbia (RTS) from Yugoslavia in the media space of Bosnia. These two networks are now requested to respect international standards of broadcasting and the IMC Code of Conduct and are obliged to regulate their access to the media market in Bosnia and Herzegovina through proper business agreements in accordance with Bosnian law (Peace Implementation Council, December 1998).

Another pillar of the long-term strategy of the International Community was the establishment of diverse and independent media, providing for objective information and a variety of opinions to enter public discourse. In this respect media organizations that are not heavily influenced by local government are receiving substantial support from a variety of sponsors. Moreover, there was significant support for the creation of new independent media in media-poor regions as well. In 1996 alone, approximately 5.17 million USD was donated for the development of independent and alternative media in Bosnia by different organizations and governments (ICG 1997, 32-33).

The OSCE created the Independent Media Support and Research Program aimed to gather information on the media in Bosnia and to enable involved actors to identify and support promising independent media units. The program provides a database on Bosnian media and coordinates cooperation between donors and media organizations (OSCE Bosnia and Herzegovina Mission Web Site). Furthermore, the OSCE supports NGO programs which provide training for journalists and media managers. The aim is to teach them to work in the competitive conditions of democracy and the market economy. Diversification and training are further advanced by strategies aimed to promote interethnic communication and cooperation.

One of the most important aspects of media strategy in Bosnia is the removal of the information blockade and the reestablishment of cross-Entity and interethnic

communication and cooperation networks. In order to achieve these goals, the OHR and the OSCE strategy consists of creating cross-Entity broadcasting networks and distributing press over ethnic and Entity lines, as demonstrated by the following programs.

The Open Broadcast Network (OBN) project was initially developed to establish a transmission network within Bosnia, enhancing the capacity of existing independent TV stations by linking them in a national network that would cover both entities. However, in the second phase, it started to operate as an independent broadcasting corporation under the guidance of the OHR. Its goal is to support pluralist democracy, freedom of expression and independent journalism and to provide programming on an inter-Entity level, accessible to all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In order to achieve this, international donors invested approximately 17.5 million USD in the creation of the OBN during 1996 and 1997 (ICG 1997, 32-33; OBN Project Description).

Another important project in interethnic communication is the Free Election Radio Network (FERN). It is an internationally supported project that started on July 15, 1996. It is the only radio station that covers all of Bosnia and is unique in its universal appeal.

The OSCE developed the Print Distribution Program for enhancing inter-Entity communication. This program distributes copies of newspapers and magazines across entity boundaries, between Bosniak and Croat areas of the Federation and between eastern and western regions of Republika Srpska. Each month, approximately 21,500 copies of 23 publications are distributed across the country. Over 170,000 copies were distributed in 1997. The future goal is to change the program into a commercial distribution operation run by locals (OSCE Bosnia and Herzegovina Mission Web Site).

Additionally, the OHR has launched the Public Service Information Campaign in order to reduce the manipulative power of party-controlled media through the distribution of crucial information relevant to the electoral campaign. This project was aired on all major networks and numerous smaller local stations. The future goal is to provide more public service reports in 1999 in a similar manner (OHR 1998b).

Apart from the promotion of inter-Entity communication, another important aspect of the media strategy was to loosen political grip of nationalist parties on the media, in particular on public broadcasting networks. In order to do so, the OHR and other actors started in late 1997 to restructure Serb Radio Television (SRT) controlled by the SDS, and Radio-Television Bosnia and Herzegovina (RTVBH) controlled by the SDA. The goal was to create networks that would operate according to international standards of public broadcasting, with independent governing bodies that would guarantee the minimum influence of the ruling parties.

Nevertheless, the implementation of these policies was not easy and had to be done in phases in order to overcome the resistance of the nationalist parties in power. What follows is a description of the implementation of those policies, the problems that emerged and the methods with which those problems were overcome.

## 5. Implementation of Media Policies in Two Phases

The political situation in Bosnia has radically changed since 1996. Consequently, media policies went through significant changes while responding to the dynamics of the Bosnian

political scene. In respect to these developments, there are two clearly distinguishable phases in the changing media policies of this period: the first phase started in early 1996 and lasted until June 1997. The Sintra Conference of June 1997 was the turning point that marked a completely new approach by the International Community to the problems encountered during the implementation of the described media policies.

During the first phase, until mid-1997, the International Community largely focused its attention on fulfilling the military aspects of the agreement, providing the necessary minimum of security conditions for the further implementation of the peace settlement process. Consequently, civilian aspects of the agreement suffered, thereby enabling nationalist parties to continue maintaining monopolies over their respective ethnic groups. This applied to the situation of the media as well. On the one hand, the International Community invested large amounts in the development of independent media, which resulted in an increased number of units in both Entities. On the other hand, the OHR and the OSCE failed to protect these media from the pressures exercised by the local authorities. International monitoring organizations frequently reported violations of freedom of the press in the postwar period. For example, in February 1997 a group of thugs threw tear gas into the offices of the independent monthly *Dani* (Days) in Sarajevo and physically attacked the deputy editor in chief, and in September the offices of the Bosnian Serb independent newspaper *Alternativa* in Doboj (Republika Srpska) were destroyed by a bomb (Human Rights Watch World Report 1998, 241).

Most notably, local authorities obstructed the establishment of cross-Entity media: both FERN and OBN. Due to the obstructions, they were not able to start broadcasting soon enough and both networks failed to make any significant impact on the 1996 election. The OBN went on air only seven days before the elections. Only the protection of SFOR troops permitted the International Community to install transmitters across Bosnia, thus enabling FERN and OBN to reach audiences from all ethnic groups. Nevertheless, this process took some time and both projects also failed to fulfill their purpose during the 1997 municipal elections.

Additionally, nationalist parties ignored the work of the MEC, thus undermining the whole concept of the Rules and Regulations Regarding the Media. The media continued with their discriminatory practices: SRT and RTVBH discriminated against the opposition and solely supported the ruling SDS and SDA parties respectively. Croatian media allowed no access to opposition views whatsoever. Practically all of the authority-controlled media impeded opposition parties and generally misbehaved during this period (ICG 1997, 2-4; Wheeler 1997). Moreover, local broadcasters, in particular SRT, constantly incited hatred and distrust toward the International Community and SFOR, even causing incidents and physical attacks on peacekeeping forces on several occasions, in particular during the first half of 1997.

After the experience of the first eighteen months, the International Community drastically changed its approach to the media in mid-1997. The critical point was the Sintra Declaration<sup>5</sup> of May 30, 1997, that gave large-scale powers to the OHR in respect to the media. Most notably, it declared the right of the High Representative to curtail or

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<sup>5</sup> See footnote 4, section 4.1.

suspend any media network or program whose output is in persistent and blatant contravention of either the spirit or letter of the Peace Agreement (OHR 1998a).

The beginning of the second phase was marked by a struggle with the SDS over control of the SRT network. The SDS was stripped of its authority over the network only after the SFOR took control of its transmitters on October 1, 1997. This move gained credibility for the OHR and SFOR and enabled further restructuring of the network. Due to this, its managerial board and editors changed, and the network gained an internationally appointed supervisor for the duration of the peace mission in Bosnia. Following the restructuring of SRT, the OHR focused on the reformation of RTVBH during the summer of 1998. The RTVBH network also acquired an international advisor and the new Board of Governors was freed from the domination of the SDA. During the final work on this paper (July–August 1999) the OHR dictated that RTVBH be absorbed into the broadcasting network of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which would ensure equal treatment of both Croats and Bosniaks in its programming. The OHR also enacted a law creating an all-Bosnian public broadcasting service network which will forge cooperation between public broadcasting networks of the Federation and Republika Srpska.

Despite this, not all of the existing problems have been solved. The persistent issue is continuing interference in the Bosnian media by Yugoslavia and Croatia. During the 1998 election the Croatian national TV network, HRT, and the Serbian TV network, RTS, committed two major violations of the media regulations. Both networks repressed all opposition candidates and clearly promoted candidates of nationalist parties. Only after the MEC recommended and the Provisional Electoral Commission removed several HDZ candidates, did HRT provide equal treatment of opposition candidates. In a similar manner, RTS interrupted the pre-election blackout with a broadcast that clearly favored the nationalist Serb Radical Party (Domi 1998, 26–27).

Additionally, both networks, HRT and RTS, broadcast their programs in Bosnia without any interstate agreement. The HRT even used RTVBH transmitters captured by Croat forces to broadcast its programs. Hence, one of the priority tasks of the newly established IMC was to solve these issues. According to the OHR, the IMC's first decision addressed the role and activities of HRT broadcasting in Bosnia. The IMC ruled on September 15, 1998, that the legal status of Erotel, which broadcasts HRT in Bosnia, was uncertain and concluded that the use of frequencies by Erotel required IMC regulation. The IMC assumed sole custody of the transmission sites, facilities and frequencies until RTVBH and Erotel reach an agreement acceptable to the IMC (OHR, 1998b).

The strong involvement of MEC and OHR in the second phase resulted in the nationalist parties changing their strategies. Two opposing forces are at work: integration forged by the International Community, and further disintegration and segmentation of audiences initiated by the nationalist parties. Contrary to the integration and democratization of the media, nationalists prevented the creation of independent and professional media in rural regions such as eastern Republika Srpska and western Herzegovina, and maintained their control over local and regional media outlets. Additionally, because they were largely deprived of their control over national broadcasting networks, they established private media units in order to compensate for losses. For example, the SDA built its own media empire of several newspapers and is now establishing its own TV station in Sarajevo. The SDS also established its own TV station after the OHR took control of the SRT network.

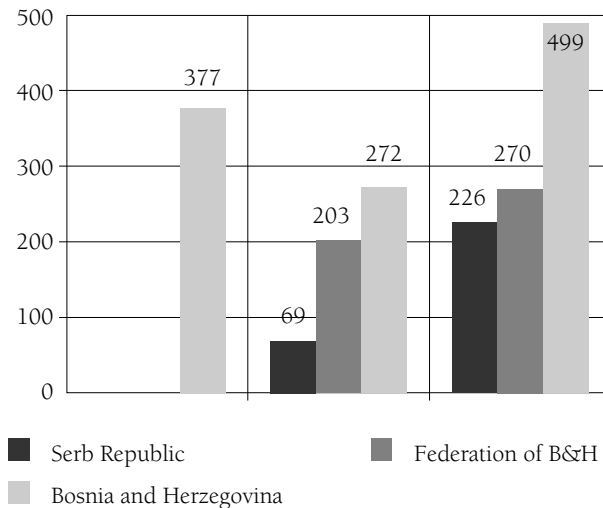
Hence, future media policies will have to take these new developments into consideration and focus more intensely on municipal and regional levels and less on the urban regions of the country.

### 6. Results of Applied Media Policies

Despite all obstacles, significant results have been achieved through applied policies, especially since mid-1997. First, established regulatory mechanisms started to operate and are now advanced by the IMC and its Broadcasting Code of Conduct. Consequently, this has had a decisive impact on the overall conditions within the media. The public broadcasting networks SRT and RTVBH have been removed from the reach of the SDS and the SDA respectively, and are undergoing radical restructuring, helping them to become professional public broadcasting networks. It has taken some time for the regulatory institutions to gain the necessary powers and credibility, but once they did, the media scene started to rapidly transform.

Notably, the number of media units doubled since 1996. According to local sources, 272 active media survived the war, from which 203 units exist in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and 69 in Republika Srpska (Media Plan 1997a, 67). In the first year after the Dayton Agreement, by March 1997, the number of units increased to 490. The largest expansion was registered in the Republika Srpska, growing to 220 units. The rest of the 270 units were registered in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Most importantly, once independent media were established they managed to resist the authorities' pressure and survive despite the hostile environment (ICG 1997, 3-4). The following chart clarifies this.

Figure 1. Media Development in Bosnia and Herzegovina for 1991–97



Source: Media Plan (1997a) p. 67.

Apart from these developments, OBN and FERN started to play a more important role in forging interethnic communication and reconciliation. According to the OHR:

OBN and FERN remain the only genuine cross-Entity television and radio networks which do not attempt to promote or cater to one particular ethnic community. The formation of the OBN International Trust, expansion of the network through new affiliates, acquisition of strong programming and recruitment of a more professional news and current affairs team has had dramatic effect on audience penetration and the reputation of OBN over the last few months. Election coverage by OBN and Radio FERN was wide ranging, offering more time than other networks for all political parties and candidates (OHR 1998b).

Nevertheless, it should be noted that OBN still remains in the shadow of local broadcasting networks (RTVBH, SRT and HRT) and its influence in the creation of public discourse cannot be compared to that of domestic media. Apart from the obstruction of its work by local authorities, there are other perhaps even more important reasons for the bad performance of OBN. First of all, much criticism regarding OBN was directed at the quality of its programming and the low journalistic skills of its personnel. This is due to the fact that the best journalists and other media personnel have remained in their positions at domestic media outlets. Another important cause for the limited success of OBN lays in the very character of ethnically homogenous audiences which simply expect to receive ethnically packaged programming and often strongly identify with particular domestic media and well-known journalists associated with them. Accordingly, such an audience is likely to be skeptical about new, foreign media networks that suddenly present a completely new picture of reality, including journalists and contexts that with which they cannot identify (see also ICG 1997).

In this respect the importance of OBN and FERN rests in their role as providers of initial interethnic communication involving the removal of the information blockade and dissolving the isolation of ethnic camps. However, they can not replace the most influential local broadcasting networks of RTVBH and SRT.

The implementation of this extensive set of policies has helped to loosen the political grip on the media, create an independent media, establish the first inter-Entity and interethnic communication networks, and lay the ground for a detailed legal framework for the media. As a result, voters can choose among a variety of viewpoints and different political actors able to challenge the nationalist hold on power. In other words, applied media policies have had significant impact on the general democratization process, providing necessary foundations for the diversification of the political scene, establishment of the rule of law and protection of basic human rights (free access to information, possibilities for free and fair election, etc.).

All these arguments are probably best supported by the outcome of the September 1998 general election, which was the most peaceful and democratic in the country's history. Says OHR:

The results showed further evidence of a steady trend towards greater moderation and pluralism in Bosnian politics. The share of the vote won by extreme nationalist parties fell in both Entities. The monopoly of the three most important ethnically-

based parties is weakening. And the voice of an independent, increasingly self-confident opposition in both Entities is growing (OHR 1998b).

The nationalist parties no longer have an absolute majority in their respective parliamentary bodies, and parties supportive of the Dayton Agreement can now control legislative branches at all levels of government in both Entities. Additionally, in the future the president and the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be more committed to the peace process than earlier ones (OHR, 1998b). Moreover, newly established parties have entered the political arena and the number of parties represented in legislative branches has significantly increased. In the case of the Federation Assembly, the number of parties increased from 6 to 18, and the SDA no longer has an absolute majority. A similar trend also occurred in the federal cantons, in which the SDA and the HDZ lost their dominant positions in all races. The situation in Republika Srpska is even better because the opposition coalition SLOGA, together with the different Federation parties, holds the majority of seats in the Parliament (OHR, 1998b). The chart below documents the results of the 1998 general election.

Table 1. 1998 General Election in Bosnia and Herzegovina

1998 General Election in Bosnia and Herzegovina (% of Votes)		
	National Assembly of Republika Srpska	Federation House of Representatives
Party of Democratic Action / Coalition for Unified and Democratic B&H	16.92	49.22
Serbian Democratic Party	21.65	–
Croatian Democratic Community of B&H	1.55	19.68
Serbian Radical Party	13.11	–
Serbian Popular Union	12.92	–
Socialist Party of Srpska Republika	10.67	1.16
Union of Independent Social-Democrats –Milorad Dodik	7.29	–
Social-Democratic Party of B&H	2.68	13.65
Social-Democrats of B&H	–	3.17
Croatian Christian-Democratic Union	1.42	2.96
Others	11.80	10.16

Source: OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina Web Site

Apart from the obvious significance of applied media policies for the general process of democratization, their effect on local communities still remains obscure. Since the media operate on the intersection of cultural, political and economic spheres of any society, the attempt to provide a solid statement about the media’s direct influence on local communities would involve the parallel study of:

- the totality of structural arrangements and economic and political influences on the media, involving detailed investigations into ownership, political pressures, regulatory mechanisms, financial conditions, issues of journalistic professionalism, etc.;
- the thorough analysis of media performance, i.e., the qualitative analysis of programs and texts of the most important broadcasting and print media;
- the analysis of the audience's reception and use of available media output.

Only through a correlation of all these sets of variables, within the context of the changing political and economic scene in contemporary Bosnia, would it be possible to provide solid data about the eventual effect of applied policies. Nevertheless, even such thorough analysis would not escape contradictions because the effects sought for only exist within the tenuous realm of culture—of collective and personal identification, interethnic (in)tolerance and general societal interaction within and between local communities. Additionally, analysis would have to be undertaken over a longer period of time if the results are to be relevant. Cultural change does not happen overnight, as is obvious in many postcommunist transitional societies (such as Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, etc.).

Hence, it is clear that this paper does not aim to answer the question, what are the effects of applied policies upon local communities in Bosnia, although there is a great need for such data. The amount of research, time, space and resources simply do not allow for such analysis. Therefore, the study focuses only on the issues of media policies, investigating their implementation within existing structural settings and power relations, while issues of media performance and audience reception are only touched upon. Nevertheless, I would like to provide two proposals about possible effects of applied policies on local communities, despite the fact that at this stage it is impossible to support them with any hard evidence:

First, diversification of the media and pacification of public discourse are likely to reduce existing tensions between ethnic groups by introducing moderate political options and concepts and by supporting public discussion based on arguments and knowledge. In this sense, applied policies can contribute to the general process of pacification and reconciliation within the country, which would then have significant relevance for all relations between and within local ethnic communities.

Second, public dialogue based on arguments and knowledge is likely to have long-term effects on individual and collective learning processes in society. In this way, it presents a starting point for the development of civic culture and civil society, and thus provides a platform for new relations between local ethnic communities. In this context, it is perhaps important to note that the first forms of inter-Entity cooperation and of civic nongovernmental engagement in contemporary Bosnia have been initiated by local independent media institutions.

All in all, this issue remains open to debate and the subject of further research, although there are many reasons to assume significant effects of applied policies on local communities in contemporary Bosnia. Such research should take into consideration all the factors depicted above if the results are to be relevant. Despite the complexity of such research, the situation in Bosnia, which approximately resembles a controlled experiment, should be sufficient incentive to continue.

## 7. Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to analyze applied media policies within the peace-settlement process in Bosnia and to answer several basic questions about problems in the sphere of the media; objectives and strategies of involved actors; and implementation, problems and results of applied policies. In summary, the results of the research can be outlined in several basic lessons about implementation of media policies in peace settlement processes:

The media exercises significant influence on the political landscape. If democratization and reconciliation are to take place in a society characterized by a complex set of divisions, priority should be placed on the reduction of the information blockade and the creation of a diverse and independent media conveying different political concepts.

Once created, independent media is able to survive only with significant financial and political support from the International Community. Thus all necessary support has to be given to the development of such media in media-poor regions.

The International Community has to use all of its powers, including force, if such policies are to be successful. Violations of the regulations have to be rigorously punished. Extremists will comply with the agreements only if costs of noncompliance are higher than costs of compliance. The sphere of the media is no exception to this rule.

In the highly fragmented and chaotic media the priority is to establish a regulatory framework and a regulatory body with strong powers to interfere in all aspects related to the media. This has to be done immediately since it takes time for such institutions to become fully operational and capable of using all of their powers. Additionally, these institutions have to be operational all of the time, not only during election periods, if they are to achieve significant results. Recalcitrant media and their patrons will use those periods of weak control to reinforce their dominant positions and will continue with their obstructive influence.

In order to efficiently break the information blockade and to offer alternative sources of information to all social groups, it is necessary to create interethnic media. This is particularly important in situations where there are no necessary conditions for cooperation between local media outlets. Despite this, “implanted” or “foreign” media are likely to remain in the shadow of the most influential local broadcasting networks with which audiences already strongly identify. Therefore, interethnic media like OBN and FERN cannot be major producers of reconciliation and democratization, and vast efforts have to be focused on the reconstruction of influential local media outlets.

It is of crucial importance to deprive nationalists of their influence on national broadcasting networks and to restructure those networks in accordance with democratic standards of *public service broadcasting* like in western societies.

Since all of these actions are aimed to forge diversification and democratization, they effectively reduce the monopoly of the ruling oligarchies over the general political scene. Hence, these oligarchies, unused to operating in diverse conditions will do anything to obstruct implementation of such policies.

One of the major impediments to the creation of independent media is the absence of the market economy. Under such conditions no media are able to survive on their own. Hence, the creation of a market economy and training of media managers to operate in such conditions are basic preconditions for successful democratization and diversification of the media.

If applied policies are successful on the national level and in respect to the influential media, it is likely that the ruling parties will try to redirect their influence on small local and regional media outlets, and will establish their own private media outlets.

The neighboring states with strong interests in the particular country will exercise enormous influence on all spheres of its society including the media. Hence, the International Community will have to regulate issues like interstate broadcasting or distribution of newspapers, and will even have to use means of pressure to prevent negative influence from those neighboring states.

It is of great importance to introduce strong domestic political actors who have the power and incentives to maintain peace. Such conditions will aid the further development of civil society and will thus influence the media as well. In order to reduce fragmentation of the political landscape and to forge interethnic cooperation, it is useful to create cross-Entity electoral laws that favor big parties and coalitions.

The case of Bosnia has more than local importance. Because it is an extreme case, it practically encompasses all of the problems that can be found in a transitional, post-conflict or multinational society which is trying to adjust its communication system for new needs. In this respect, policies applied can be used, for example, as a model for the integration of ethnic minorities in developed industrial societies such as Germany or France. Furthermore, the lessons from Bosnia can be used for the development of stabilizing policies in countries like Macedonia, Azerbaijan or Moldova, which are characterized by strong centrifugal forces and complex ethnic diversity. Finally, the lessons learned can be useful for loosening the tensions in regions such as Kosovo in Yugoslavia, when the situation eventually calms down and the peace process takes its turn.

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