The London School of Economics and Political Science

Inside Propaganda

Serbian Media in the Yugoslav Wars 1991-1995

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for the examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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Abstract

In my thesis, I analyse the role propaganda plays in war and violence. More specifically, I am interested in the different functions propaganda can serve in war, as well as the discourses and techniques developed and used by media outlets as they disseminate war propaganda. Additionally, I examine the processes through which governments and regimes assume control over media outlets. I conduct such analysis through a detailed examination of the propaganda aired on the Radio and Television of Serbia (RTS) during the Yugoslav Wars. I analyse the broadcasts aired during the Slovenian 10-Day War, the Croatian War of Independence, and the Bosnian War. On the basis of my analysis of the relevant literature and an empirical examination of the Yugoslav case, I produce a framework for analysing propaganda, which provides insight into war propaganda and details how propaganda works in violent settings.

To my family and Milan Čola Krstanović

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Contents

Acronyms

ARBiH – Armija Bosne i Hercegovine (Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina)
CSCE – Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DUTCHBAT – Dutch Contingent located in Srebrenica
EC – European Community
FP – Federalno Predsedništvo (Federal Presidency)
HDZ – Hrvatska Demorkatska Zajednica (Croatian Democratic Union)
HTV – Hrvatska Televizija (Croatian Television)
HV – Hrvatska Vojska (Croatian Army)
ICTR – International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ICTY – International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
IRMICT – International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals
JNA – Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija (Yugoslav People's Army)
MEC – Media Experts Commission
MUP – Ministartsvo Unutrašnjih Poslova (Ministry of Internal Affairs)
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDH – Nezavisna Država Hrvatska (Independent State of Croatia)
OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RS – Republika Srpska
RSK – Republika Srpska Krajina (Republic of Serbian Krajina)
RTB – Radio Televizija Beograd (Radio and Television Belgrade)
RTLM - Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines
RTNS – Radio Televizija Novi Sad (Radio and Television Novi Sad)
RTP – Radio Televizija Priština (Radio and Television Priština)
RTS – Radio Televizija Srbije (Radio and Television of Serbia)
SANU – Srpska Akademija Nauka i Umetnosti (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts)
SAOK – Srpska Autonomna Oblast Krajina (Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina)
SDA – Stranka Demokratske Akcije (Party of Democratic Action)
SDS – Srpska Demokratska stranka (Serbian Democratic Party)
SFOR – NATO Stabilization Force
SFRY – Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia)
SIV – Savezno Izvršno Veće (Federal Executive Council)
SPO – Srpski Pokret Obnove (Serbian Renewal Movement)
SPS – Socijalisticka Partija Srbije (Socialist Party of Serbia)
SRJ – Savezna Republika Jugoslavija (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia)
SRT – Srpska Radio Televizija (Bosnian Serb Radio Television)
SSNO – Savezni Sekretarijat za Narodnu Odbranu (Federal Ministry of Defence)
TO – Teritorijalna odbrana (Territorial Defence)
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMIK – United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNPROFOR – UN Protection Force
VJ – Vojska Jugoslavije (Yugoslav Army)
VRS – Vojska Republike Srpske (Bosnian Serb Army)
ZNG – Zbor Narodne Garde (National Guard Corps)

Prominent Individuals[1]

Aleksandar Bakočević – The President of Serbian National Assembly (1991-1993)
Aleksandar Vučić – Current President of Serbia
Alija Izetbegović – President of the Presidency of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1996); Bosniak Member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1996-2000)
Ana Brnabić – Current Prime Minister of Serbia
Andrija Rašeta – JNA General
Ante Gotovina – Lieutenant General noted for his role in the Operation Storm during the Croatian War of Independence
Ante Marković – Federal Prime Minister/President of the Federal Executive Council (1989-1991)
Blagoje Adžić – JNA Colonel General; Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of SFRY (1989-1992); Federal Secretary of People's Defence of Yugoslavia (1992)
Borisav Jović – President of the Presidency of Yugoslavia (1990-1991)
Budimir Košutić – Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia
Carl Bildt – High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995-1997)
Cyrus Vance – Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Croatia (from 1991); United Nations Envoy to Bosnia
Dobrica Ćosić – President of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts; President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1992-1993)
Dobrosav Bjeletić – RTS Director
Dragan Vasiljković aka Captain Dragan – Commander of a Croatian Serb paramilitary unit called Knindže
Dušan Mitević – RTB Director
Franjo Tudjman – President of Croatia (1990-1999)
Gojko Šušak – Croatian Minister of Defence (1991-1998)
Igor Ivanov – Russian politician who served as the ambassador in Madrid in 1991 and later on became the Foreign Minister of Russia (1998-2004)
Ivan Stambolić – President of Serbia (1986-1987); President of the League of Communists of Serbia (1985-1986)
Janez Drnovšek – President of the Presidency of Yugoslavia (1989-1990); Prime Minister of Slovenia (1992-2000)
Josip Broz Tito – Leader of the Partisan Movement and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
Kiro Gligorov – President of Macedonia (1991-1999)
Marko Negovanović – Lieutenant General of the JNA until 1992
Marko Perković Thompson – Croatian singer
Mihajlo Erić – RTS editor-in-chief of the newsroom
Milan Babić – Preisdent of Republika Srpska Krajina (1991-1992); Prime Minister of Republika Srpska Krajina (1995)
Milan Kučan – President of Slovenia (1991-2002)
Milan Panić – Prime Minister of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1992-1993)
Milomir Minić – Prominent SPS politician
Milorad Dodik – Current Serb member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Milorad Vučelić – RTS Director
Nikola Koljević – Serb Member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1990-1992); Vice President of Republika Srpska (1992-1996)

[1]Many of these individuals had different roles and positions throughout their political careers. For the reasons of brevity, I only focus on the roles they had in the relevant period analysed in this doctoral thesis.

Predrag Vitas – News Chief Division at RTS
Prince Lazar – Ruler of Serbia (1373-1389)
Radovan Karadžić – President of Republika Srpska (1992-1996)
Ratko Mladić – Commander of the Bosnian Serb Army
Ratomir Vico – RTB General Director
Richard Holbrooke – Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs (1994-1996)
Slobodan Milošević – President of the Presidency of Serbia (1989-1992); President of Serbia (1991-1997); Founder and Leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia
Stipe Mesić – President of the Presidency of Yugoslavia (1991-1991)
Vojislav Šešelj – Leader of the Serbian Radical Party
Warren Christopher – US Secretary of State (1993-1997)
Željko Ražnatovic Arkan – Commander of a Serb paramilitary unit called Arkan's Tigers
Zoran Andjelković – Member of the Executive Board of the Socialist Party of Serbia

"I asked out of politeness whether the fighting in the village was heavy. 'Why, no, there was no fighting between Muslims and Serbs in the village', she said. 'Then why were the Muslims arrested?' 'Because they were planning to take over the village. They had already drawn up lists with the names of the Serb women who were to be taken into harems for the Muslim men.'

'Harems?' 'Yes, harems. Their Bible says men can have harems, and that's what they were planning to do once they had killed our men. Thank God they were arrested first.'

She wiped her brow. 'How do you know they were planning to kill the Serb men and create harems for themselves?' 'It was on the radio. Our military had uncovered their plans. It was announced on the radio.'

'How do you know the radio was telling the truth?', I asked. 'Why', she demanded to know, 'would the radio lie?' 'Did any of the Muslims in the village harm you?', I asked, softly. 'No.' 'Did any Muslim ever do anything bad to you?' 'No.' She seemed offended. 'My relations with Muslims in the village were always very good. They were very nice people.'" [2] (cited in: Vetlesen, 2005: 193).

[2] Bosnian Serb woman interviewed in Banja Luka.

Chapter One: Introduction

Many scholars contend that speech and propaganda can be powerful tools in promoting the perpetration of war and violence. Timmermann (2005) argues that hate propaganda is one of the most efficient methods of inciting violence as it makes it seem desirable and necessary. Effective hate propaganda, he suggests, can turn otherwise ordinary people into mass murderers. McKinney (2002: 111) argues that "[p]ropaganda helps to cause war. In this role, propaganda serves a similar function to armaments. Although neither propaganda nor armaments represents the underlining causes of armed conflict, namely ethnic tension, religious differences, territorial struggles, and so forth, both work to exacerbate rather than alleviate these underlining causes of war." Yanagizawa-Drott (2014), using quantitative methods and econometric modelling, suggests that hate propaganda in Rwanda played a significant causal role in the 1994 genocide. Benesch (2014a) explains how speech can encourage violence, and proposes various ways of countering that speech, based on an analysis of peace campaigns in Kenya during the 2013 elections.[3] In addition to these scholarly claims, states, political parties, media organisations, and civil society groups across the world have expended immense quantities of thought, time, energy, and money on public political communication, on the assumption that it is vital to their chances of exerting influence, contesting power, and achieving their aims – including violent ones**.** The importance of speech acts and propaganda in encouraging violence is also recognised in international law - direct public incitement or instigation to genocide is criminalised (Benesch, 2012b).

Despite such suggestions that propaganda can be important, the scholarly study of propaganda and violence is surprisingly under-theorised, fragmented, and leaves numerous key questions unanswered. How important is propaganda's role in enabling violence? What are the key features of hateful propaganda? What strategies are effective in promoting the idea that violence is justified and necessary? Answers to these questions would produce several important contributions. First, they would provide insights into how and why people become willing to engage in mass violence. Second, they can help us understand the broader power of propaganda over political life. Finally, understanding the power of propaganda in the process of justifying mass atrocities could have important implications for effective methods to counter dangerous propaganda and prevent violence.

[3] For further discussions, see: Benesch, 2012; Cohen, 1996; Kaufman, 2006; Keen, 1986; Metzl, 1997; Payne, 2009; Wilson, 2017.

How Propaganda Works

This doctoral thesis aims to fill the lacuna in the existing literature. I analyse how propaganda operates in conflicts, and the potential role it plays in justifying[4] and motivating violence, through an in-depth analysis of Serbian propaganda and atrocities between 1991 and 1995 during the Yugoslav Wars. I examine elite deployment of propaganda, the dynamics within the institution that produced propaganda, the roles propaganda plausibly had during the Yugoslav conflict, as well as the content and character of political propaganda. More specifically, I use my analysis of Radio and Television of Serbia [RTS] propaganda to develop a framework for studying and analysing propaganda in conflict. I argue that such a framework could assist scholars in examining the plausible role(s) propaganda plays in conflict. Whilst the findings from a single case study should not be overstated, they can serve as a foundation for thinking about the relationship between propaganda and conflict more generally. It is probable that some mechanisms of propaganda that are found in the former Yugoslavia are not limited to this case and could be found in other instances of mass atrocities. And indeed, I argue that my framework can be used to examine other cases in which propaganda was deployed and mass violence against civilians took place.

A Missing Variable

What is Propaganda?

Michael Balfour, a British propagandist during World War II, defined propaganda as "the art of inducing people to jump to conclusions without adequate examination of the evidence" (cited in: Cole, 1990: 2). Ellul (1973: 25) claims that "[t]he aim of modern propaganda is no longer to modify ideas, but to provoke action. It is no longer to change adherence to a doctrine, but to make the individual cling irrationally to a process of action. It is no longer to transform an opinion but to arouse an active and mythical belief." Cunningham (2002: 134) claims that propaganda is indifferent to truth and truthfulness, knowledge and understanding; it is a form of strategic communication that uses any means to accomplish its ends. Stanley (2015: 52) claims that:

> political propaganda […] is a kind of speech that fundamentally involves political, economic, aesthetic, or rational ideals, mobilized for a political purpose. Propaganda is in the service of either *supporting* or *eroding* ideals.

[4] Throughout, I am concerned with the justification of violence in a subjective sense, as *a process which makes individuals believe that a practice is acceptable* (as opposed to an objective justification - through which a practice is established as genuinely normatively just).

I argue that these definitions carry two problems. First, many of them fail to demarcate the concept of propaganda and differentiate it from speech acts, discourse, or ideological dissemination. Second, though some of the definitions rely on assertions that propaganda has certain causal effects, its actual power to elicit such effects typically remains unproven.

I suggest that one definition escapes the aforementioned criticisms and thus I rely on it in this thesis. Jowett and O'Donnell (2006: 7) define propaganda as:

> *the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.*

This definition allows for a broad understanding of propaganda – one in which propaganda could deploy all methods of communication, both verbal and non-verbal (through videos, films, pamphlets, or posters) in its attempt to direct people's behaviour. Importantly, such a broad definition does not render propaganda an all-encompassing phenomenon. Instead, Jowett and O'Donnell successfully demarcate the concept and differentiate it from other, similar, phenomena like discourse or ideology. In this definition, whilst propaganda is understood as a form of discourse, speech act, and ideological dissemination, it denotes a specific subset: that which is *articulated publicly, deliberately, and systemically as part of a purposive communicative effort to influence political behaviour* - as opposed to private, diffuse, undirected, or incidental dissemination of ideology, or non-ideological speech or discourse more generally. Finally, instead of assuming that propaganda is successful in altering people's beliefs and behaviour, this definition only suggests that propaganda is *attempting* to influence people's views – whether it is successful in doing so requires investigation that goes beyond mere definition.

Contemporary Explanations of Violence

Scholars have offered many explanations of organised collective violence. Some researchers approached this question from a macro perspective, thereby trying to explain why wars occur. Broadly speaking there are two theoretical perspectives to this question: *rationalist* and *cultural/emotional.* Other scholars focused on explaining why individuals become willing to engage in violence. The approach which focuses on the micro-level participation in violence, often called the *situationalist* approach, tends to argue that social pressures influence individuals, thereby making them prone to engage in violence. As I argue below, neither of the approaches have examined the role of propaganda in these processes. Such a lacuna in the literature is unfortunate, since it is quite possible that propaganda can encourage individuals to engage in violence and can also contribute to the outbreaks of wars.

Rationalist thinkers usually suggest that mass violence is a logical strategy deployed by groups in their attempt to maintain power and maximise support (Downes, 2008; Kalyvas, 1999; Kalyvas, 2006; Valentino, 2004). Emotions, propaganda, or ideology usually play no significant role in such accounts. Kalyvas (2006) suggests that macro approaches, which tend to treat ethnic and other groups as unitary actors, and do not sufficiently distinguish between the central and peripheral dynamics of violence, mistakenly conclude that ideology, ethnicity, or emotions play a more important role than they actually do. Instead, his control-collaboration model suggests that one should focus on the relationship between armed groups and civilian population, which he treats as the key variable that explains the outbreaks of civil wars and the organisation of violence. Armed groups use different tools and strategies (from providing goods and benefits, to coercion) in order to simultaneously gain civilian support and minimise the support that the rival group receives from them. Such a strategy could involve the use of violence which, depending on the circumstances, can be *selective* (typically used when the armed group has strong control over the territory) or *indiscriminate* (typically used where such control is very low).[5] Kalyvas suggests that indiscriminate violence is effective only under a specific set of circumstances, whilst selective violence can encourage civilians to support the armed group because by doing so, they decrease the chances of becoming the targets themselves (Kalyvas, 2006; Kalyvas, 2012). Put simply, whether and what kind of violence will occur against the civilian population is not motivated by ideological assumptions that the armed groups hold, as much as by the actual power and control they have over the territory they want.

Another rationalist explanation can be found in what Posen (1993) terms the "ethnic security dilemma." In instances when the state structure is collapsing different ethnic groups find themselves in a situation of insecurity akin to that faced by states in international anarchy. Unable to differentiate between offensive and defensive strategies deployed by other ethnic groups, each group decides to engage in pre-emptive military actions to eliminate the potential threat posed by other ethnic groups (Lake & Rothchild, 1996; McDoom, 2012; Posen, 1993).

To the concept of "ethnic security dilemma", Lake and Rothchild (1996) add two additional structural factors likely to lead to eruption of violence. The first is "information failures" – lack of knowledge and information about other ethnic groups' preferences and abilities. The second factor is the "problem of credible commitment" – when groups cannot credibly commit themselves to obey agreements they reach. In their view, when such strategic dilemmas are accompanied by state weakness, ethnic tensions are likely to result in violence. Some scholars,

[5] Rožič and Verovšek (2008: 114) summarise these helpfully – selective violence is "aggression directed towards individuals who are targeted based on specific information about their actions" while indiscriminate violence is "executed *en masse* without regard for the actions or preferences of individuals".

often primarily working with quantitative methods, further suggest that factors that rationally incentivise insurgency by reducing its costs or rendering it more feasible (e.g., the presence or absence of rough terrain, availability of primary commodities, financial resources, etc.) matter greatly, whilst factors such as ideology, ethnicity, or propaganda are either considered largely irrelevant or not even mentioned (Collier & Hoeffler, 2001; Fearon & Laitin, 2000).

Rationalist explanations provide important insights into why and how civil wars occur. The shift towards studying the micro-foundations and micro-dynamics of violence has indeed improved the scholarly understanding of conflict and violence against civilians, and rationalists have revealed many of the external and structural factors that create an environment where violence and civil wars are likely to occur. A few rationalists suggest that propaganda can play some role in facilitating violence – as one of many strategic tools deployed by different actors in their attempt to acquire or maintain power (de Figueiredo & Weingast, 1999; Walter, 2017). For example, they might consider it plausible that Serbian authorities used propaganda to portray Croats as a greater security threat because they perceived it as a good strategy for maintaining the support of the Serbian population (Gagnon, 2004). Indeed, Fearon and Laitin (2000) demonstrate that elites tend to misuse the asymmetry of information between the leaders and masses, and manipulate the masses into thinking that other ethnic groups are a major existential threat. On this reading, propaganda is more than epiphenomenal storytelling – it is an active and calculated strategy aiming to portray the world in a particular way, which creates advantages for those who decide to deploy it.

However, the efforts rationalists invest in examining the role of propaganda in civil wars is limited. They do not conduct careful examinations of how propaganda is deployed and developed, and what strategies and factors make propaganda effective in fulfilling the aims of those who decide to use it. Furthermore, as Fearon and Laitin (2000) note, even if it is true that propaganda is a strategy deployed by elites, it is still unclear why masses follow what their leaders tell them – when is propaganda a successful tool to deploy? While it is plausible that masses follow due to the kinds of basic personal interest rationalists emphasise – like loot or security (Woodward, 1995) – it is equally possible that some people are genuinely persuaded by propaganda and consequently engage in violence. It is also possible that propaganda does not have the power to directly persuade, but that it instead enhances the power of other factors that rationalists find important in facilitating violence. For example, perhaps propaganda exacerbates the problem of credible commitment when elites portray the other side as traitorous. Since rationalists do not engage in a detailed examination of the creation, development, and the usage of propaganda, as

well as the potential causal mechanisms through which people respond to such propaganda, they ultimately provide minimal theoretical insight into such dynamics.

An alternative set of explanations focuses on the role of *emotions and ideology* in wars and mass atrocities. Scholars that deploy and develop such accounts suggest that emotions and ideology are important in motivating people to engage in violence and outbreaks of civil wars – either as tools deployed by elites in their attempt to mobilise masses, or as factors that directly alter people's perception about the legitimacy of violence against certain groups (Kaufman, 2006; Leader Maynard, 2014; Mann, 2005; McDoom, 2012; Semelin, 2007; Straus, 2015; Weitz, 2003). Even these scholars, however, devote limited attention to propaganda and its relationship to ideology. Presumably, the power of ideology to persuade resides, at least in part, in propaganda – whether people will be convinced by certain ideas is dependent upon the way those ideas are communicated. Hence, if it is true that ideology can motivate people to engage in violence, we need to ask how such ideology is constructed, promoted, and disseminated. Does the mode of dissemination influence ideology's ability to encourage violence? Does ideology's persuasive power depend upon content, or does the way that content is communicated play an independent role? What are the mechanisms through which propaganda helps emotions such as fear or anger become widespread? These questions carry weight, and any theory that wishes to fully explain violence through ideology or fear should engage in a further interrogation of propaganda.

There is a similar lack of analysis of propaganda in approaches to conflict that focus on individual motivations to engage in violence. This approach, which Fujii (2009: 89-102) terms *situational*, suggest that large-scale violence against civilians can be explained by the forces of social pressures that encourage people to commit acts they otherwise consider morally abhorrent – that is, people are compelled by circumstances to commit violence (Bauman, 1989; Browning, 1992/2001; Waller, 2007; Zimbardo, 2007, see also: Leader Maynard, [forthcoming]). These explanations are consistent with psychological research that examines the role of obedience to authority, and conformity in facilitating violence (Milgram, 2010). However, it is unclear why these scholars do not consider propaganda in more detail – it is plausible that propaganda helps create or intensify the set of circumstances which compel people to engage in violence. For example, it is plausible that propaganda does not only work through persuasion, but by shaping people's perceptions of what everyone else thinks. Such perceptions create incentives to conform to apparently dominant beliefs – going against those apparent beliefs carries costs, whilst going with them may be personally beneficial (see also: Leader Maynard [forthcoming]). Consequently, it is plausible that the dominance of RTS and the ideology that was disseminated through this channel created the kinds of social pressures which incentivised people to engage in violence, or at the very

least, to support regimes advocating violence. Whilst this would not deem propaganda the sole cause of violence and civil wars, it may render it important in exacerbating factors associated with atrocities. To gain a better insight into these issues, detailed studies of propaganda in situations where violence occurs are necessary.

I do not suggest that the aforementioned accounts and explanations are necessarily wrong, I merely argue that they are incomplete. Propaganda interacts with and influences almost all of the above-mentioned factors, which are usually considered as relevant in violent settings and outbreaks of civil conflicts. Whilst I do not wish to suggest that propaganda is the sole cause of violence or civil wars, I argue that propaganda plays a role in encouraging violent behaviour, and that our knowledge and understanding of that role is limited. Consequently, conflict studies and genocide scholarship are in need of more detailed studies of propaganda in violent settings. Such studies represent an important contribution that needs to be added to the puzzle of mass atrocities, and I envisage my dissertation as one such study.

Contemporary Literature on Propaganda

As indicated above, most mainstream political scientists, and international relations scholars who work on civil wars and conflict do not analyse propaganda in depth. However, to the extent to which some researchers do study propaganda, I suggest that this research is incomplete. Furthermore, the impact of propaganda is often asserted, rather than rigorously examined, and scholars who work on propaganda often do not relate their findings to alternative explanations of why mass atrocities occur (Straus, 2007).

Several scholars suggest that propaganda has a direct impact on the likelihood of violence. Timmermann (2005: 258) argues that "without the constant, enduring hate propaganda, which succeeded in creating a climate in which the elimination of the Tutsi population appeared not only acceptable, but necessary, to the Hutu minority, no act of incitement in the sense of instigation could have had the effect of turning an entire people into murders." Timmermann then suggests that the power of propaganda to portray violence in such way is grounded in dehumanisation. He concludes that, given the power of hate propaganda to facilitate violence, such propaganda needs to be treated as an international crime. Similarly, Benesch (2014b: 3) notes how: "[i]nflammatory hate speech catalyses mass killings including genocide, according to scholars, survivors and, notably, some former perpetrators." She argues that when establishing whether speech should be categorised as dangerous, one should focus on *the speaker, the audience, the speech act, the historical and social context, and the means of dissemination*. She proposes several ways in which one could effectively counter such speech in order to decrease the likelihood of violence. These, and other similar,

portrayals of propaganda's power in facilitating violence are often accepted by international lawyers, legal theorists, and international courts (Wilson, 2016). The main assumption is that propaganda has a direct impact on people's perceptions about the legitimacy of violence, and as such plays a key role in facilitating mass killings.

At first glance, these accounts may appear persuasive, however, they carry several problems. First, as Straus shows, political communication research largely discredits such accounts of propaganda. As he argues, it does not seem viable that propaganda operates on the "'hypodermic needle' model of media effect […], whereby media purportedly injects ideas into the body politic and thereby have a direct impact" (Straus, 2007: 614). Second, these explanations largely assert that propaganda matters rather than actually demonstrating the empirical impact of propaganda in, for example, convincing people to believe that the extermination of Tutsi is acceptable and necessary. Timmermann simply asserts that the power of propaganda lies in dehumanisation, and that dehumanisation can alter people's perception about the legitimacy and necessity of violence.[6] And, as Benesch (2012b) herself notes, even international courts have been remarkably quick to assert the power of propaganda to generate violence on the basis of little direct evidence. Similarly, Wilson (2016: 539) contends "that international law has not begun to define and conceptualize in a rigorous and well-evidenced manner what [propaganda's] effects are. Yet, international tribunal judgements continually pronounce upon propaganda's effects with great authority and certitude." Third, these accounts do not explain how important the role of propaganda is when compared with other causal factors usually associated with mass atrocities or how propaganda interacts with such factors – like ideology, emotions, or the causes and dynamics that rationalist scholars find important (Straus, 2007).

Other work that considers propaganda usually focuses on preventive peace campaigns and their success in countering electoral violence or promoting peace (Benesch, 2014a; Benesch, 2014b; Collier & Vicente, 2013; McKinney, 2002; Price, 2000; Wolfsfeld, 2004), and the advantages and dangers of free speech in fully or partially institutionalised democracies (Hare, 2009a; Hare, 2009b; Hare, 2016; Heinze, 2014; Heinze, 2016; Snyder & Ballentine, 1996; Waldron, 2012). Whilst such research is obviously important, there are limits to what it tells us about the relationship between hate propaganda and violence, or how propaganda works in violent settings. Snyder and Ballentine (1996) provide a strong case against instituting complete freedom of speech in weak or dysfunctional democracies. They draw an analogy between the economic market and the marketplace of ideas, suggesting that both need to be restricted in less institutionalised democracies

[6] Supporting evidence of this effect can be found in leading psychological research, but the specific relationship between dehumanisation and different kinds of violence is complex (see: Bandura, 1999; Bandura, Underwood & Fromson, 1975; Rai, Valdesolo & Graham, 2017).

– these countries have no proper mechanisms to ensure fair competition, and market failures are likely to occur. Consequently, they argue, new and weak democracies that institute full and unconditional freedom of speech are likely to have their discourse hijacked by nationalists and mythmakers. Kurspahić (2003) reaches similar conclusions in his research on the role of the media in the Yugoslav Wars. He argues that newly established democracies (like former Yugoslav states) are not likely to challenge the one-sidedness of the media because the public is not used to being exposed to a variety of opinions and finds that this was part of the reason why media played such a destructive role in violence that occurred in these countries (Kurspahić, 2003: 59). He concludes that independent and free media are not sufficient to prevent violence and that balanced representation of all parties needs to be institutionalised in weak democracies. These findings suggest that some institutional regulation of the media may be necessary, but the link between propaganda and violence remains only suggestive. Neither Snyder and Ballentine nor Kurspahić provide a sustained and detailed account of how propaganda *works* in violent settings or how it *leads* to violence.

Following the same line of thought, others have engaged in empirical analysis of discourse interventions, peace campaigns and electoral violence. McKinney (2002) investigates whether jamming radio stations that broadcast hate propaganda has a chance of decreasing violence and argues that jamming transmitters in Bosnia after the government's failure to implement sections of the Dayton peace agreement had a positive effect. Collier and Vicente (2013) analysed the impact of a wide-ranging peace campaign organised by ActionAid International Nigeria during the 2007 Nigerian elections, finding that the intervention reduced the likelihood of electoral violence by 47% in areas targeted. They also found that peace campaigns had a positive impact on voter turn-out, that was massively increased once the campaigns started. Similarly, Benesch (2014a) suggests that peace campaigns made a positive difference in Kenya during the 2013 elections. However, such research does not examine the actual processes that (potentially) link propaganda and violence in any empirical detail. Whilst some authors successfully demonstrate that various information and discourse interventions help de-escalate violence, this finding does not automatically prove that propaganda leads to escalation of violence or how it does so. These accounts are suggestive of the possibility that propaganda can instigate violence, but they leave the specific causal mechanisms unexamined.

Thus far, I have tried to demonstrate two things. First, much of the literature on violence and conflict does not take propaganda seriously, either explicitly deeming it irrelevant or simply ignoring it. Such neglect is rarely justified convincingly, given the lack of detailed examination of propaganda's relationship with violence in observable cases. Second, much of the research that

does consider propaganda directly merely assumes that propaganda encourages violence (although in some cases encouraged by the finding that peace campaigns and jamming relevant transmitters can de-escalate violence). However, the questions *how* propaganda operates in conflict, or *how* propaganda instigates violence remain open and require further investigation. Both these trends leave the analysis of propaganda incomplete and unsatisfactory.

Propaganda and Conflict – RTLM and the Rwandan Genocide

There are two exceptions in the propaganda literature that analyse the relationship between propaganda and violence in more detail – Straus (2007) and Yanagizawa-Drott (2014) both examine the role Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) played in the Rwandan genocide. What is striking is that these scholars reach completely different, if not mutually exclusive, conclusions. Straus suggests that RTLM had a marginal and conditional impact, while Yanagizawa-Drott suggests that as many as 50,000 lives could have been saved had the international community jammed the radio station. The difference in methodological approaches could potentially explain the variation in results, but this is not helpful in determining the actual state of affairs and the relationship between propaganda and violence in the Rwandan genocide.

Straus (2007: 611) focuses on two main questions: "first, do radio broadcasts account for the onset of genocidal violence in Rwanda; second is radio responsible for prompting ordinary citizens to become genocide perpetrators?" He begins by criticising existing accounts of RTLM's role in the Rwandan genocide (particularly those suggested by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda – ICTR), arguing that they suffer from both theoretical and empirical weaknesses. He identifies three primary theoretical weaknesses:

> First, the claims [that RTLM mattered greatly in encouraging violence] are at odds with mainstream political communication research. The claims closely resemble a "hypodermic needle" model of media effects, whereby media purportedly injects ideas into the body politic and thereby have a direct impact. That view [has] been largely discredited after more than four decades of empirical research. […] Second, the strong claims found in the literature on Rwanda imply a simplistic and improbable model of agency. […] [M]ost discussions of Rwandan media effects attribute little or no agency to listeners. […] Third, most discussions of media effects are not situated in the broader discussion of the dynamics of violence or of an assessment of rival explanations (Straus, 2007: 614-615).

He continues by suggesting that current accounts also suffer from empirical weaknesses:

> The most common method of analysis in the literature on Rwanda is nonsystematic content analysis. One exception is a study by Kenyan journalist Mary Kimani who conducted a detailed content analysis of RTLM transcripts. Even so, Kimani and other studies do not systematically address questions of

> timing […] or audience selectivity […]. Perhaps the most glaring absences are questions of exposure and reception. […] Moreover, with the exception of Li and Mironko, the existing literature does not assess media effects through interviews or survey research. […] In short, despite very strong causal claims about media effects commonly found in commentary on Rwanda, the supporting evidence is weak (Straus, 2007: 615-616).

Straus proceeds to fill the lacuna in the existing research and uses multiple methods to examine the relationship between RTLM and violence in the Rwandan genocide. He considers the levels of direct exposure to RTLM – and concludes that it is not clear that RTLM actually reached all areas where violence occurred, or that the levels of direct exposure were high. He further shows that violence did not always follow RTLM broadcasts – and that "the mapping analysis indicated that broadcast range does not correlate well with onset of genocidal violence in different regions" (Straus, 2007: 619). He complements these findings with an analysis of the relationship between inflammatory broadcasts and levels of violence in the genocide. He categorises the genocide in two periods: "high period" genocide (April 6th to May 7th, 1994) and "low period" genocide (from May 8th to early July 1994) (Straus, 2007: 621). He conducts a quantitative analysis of the content of RTLM's broadcasts – he looks into how often RTLM used the words *vigilant, kill/fight, defend, exterminate, cockroach* – during the high and low period of genocide. He finds that during the high genocide period the usage of these words was less often than in the low genocide period. Broadly speaking, he argues that broadcasts were less inflammatory in periods when levels of violence were high, and that broadcasts became more hateful as levels of violence started decreasing. He suggests that this is a mistake that researchers and experts often make – they do not trace when propaganda was more or less inflammatory, and consequently, mistakenly correlate pre-May high levels of violence with the post-May inflammatory propaganda. Finally, Straus conducts interviews with direct genocide perpetrators – he speaks to 210 people who were sentenced and self-confessed direct killers. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyse these interviews, Straus concludes that "radio was not the main vector of mobilization. According to the respondents, radio was neither the primary cause for their individual participation nor for the genocide as a whole" (Straus, 2007: 628). From his analysis, Straus concludes that "radio broadcasts had more marginal and conditional effects." And whilst Straus is willing to acknowledge that some perpetrators could have been encouraged by RTLM propaganda, he argues that other factors played a more important role in the 1994 genocide (for further details see: Straus, 2015).

Straus's analysis is successful in demonstrating that propaganda did not matter in the way in which the ICTR or journalists suggested. Indeed, I agree with Straus – those who claim

propaganda matters rarely analyse the broader context of the conflict, and other factors that played a role in facilitation of violence. It is also true that scholars of propaganda often assume little or no agency to the listeners. However, the fact that the ICTR's understanding of propaganda's role in the Rwandan genocide may not be correct, does not automatically imply that propaganda played no role in the genocide. For example, even if one does not make the mistake of attributing little or no agency to individuals, the question that remains is whether propaganda can affect the actions of independent agents. Agency could plausibly be constrained by external factors – such as exposure to only one source of information (RTLM in the Rwandan case) rather than multiple competing media outlets. Furthermore, propaganda need not function on the "hypodermic needle" model, and people need not believe *everything* that the media is saying, in order to successfully encourage people to engage in violence, or at the very least, support regimes advocating violence. It is plausible that propaganda instead sometimes acts as a form of what Howard (2016: 25) terms *moral subversion* ("to subvert an agent's moral capacities is to interfere with the agent's practical reasoning in ways that increase the likelihood she will culpably choose to act wrongly") which is not incompatible with – indeed relies on – them also possessing agency.

The second problem with Straus's paper is the approach he takes when interviewing perpetrators of violence. Straus (2007: 629) asks them questions such as "Did the radio lead you to take arms?" or "Did you listen [to the radio] and go out to attack?". Whilst it is true that most of the respondents that he cites in the paper firmly answered "no" to these questions, I do not think that this constitutes strong enough evidence that RTLM did not matter, for three reasons. First, the fact that people did not *subjectively* perceive that propaganda encouraged them to commit violence does not mean that propaganda did not *objectively* matter in this process. Second, Straus's questions only really test for a direct, immediate intention to engage in violence following exposure to propaganda, akin to the picture of propaganda found in many legal notions of incitement or instigation. However, it does not test for the long-run impact that propaganda may have had, and how beliefs have been shaped over time by extensive propaganda aired on RTLM. Third, Straus places too much emphasis on effects of *direct* exposure, however, as other scholars show, propaganda's influence can go beyond direct exposure – some people could be influenced by propaganda *indirectly*, through social interactions, or word-of-mouth exposure to inflammatory messages. Consequently, Straus's findings do not decisively demonstrate that propaganda did not matter in encouraging genocidal or other forms of violence. What it does show is that popular understandings of propaganda's role in Rwanda are not sufficiently rigorous.

Seven years after Straus's research, Yanagizawa-Drott used econometric modelling and quantitative methods to examine the role of propaganda in the Rwandan genocide. Contrary to

Straus's findings, Yanagizawa-Drott suggests that around 50,000 Tutsi lives could have been saved had the international community jammed RTLM's transmitters. He argues:

> that mass media could have fuelled participation in the violence via two broad mechanisms. First, in line with the literature on persuasive communication, the broadcasts could have had a direct persuasion effect by convincing some listeners that participation in the attacks on Tutsi were preferable to nonparticipation. […] Second, following a long tradition in the social sciences on the role of social interactions in general, and their importance in intermediating mass media effects in particular, a direct persuasion effect could influence the spatial diffusion of violence, even beyond the immediate areas of radio reception. […] Put simply, the broadcasts may have affected overall violence via local spillover effects, in addition to direct effects from exposure (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014: 1948-1949).

He goes on to examine RTLM's influence on what he terms *militia violence* – committed by "members and accomplices of organised forms of violence, primary from local militias" (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014: 1949) – and *individual violence* – "carried out by perpetrators who are not members or accomplices of any of the organised groups in the first category" (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014: 1949-1950). He finds that both of the above-mentioned mechanisms have increased militia violence, and that RTLM had both a *direct* effect in the villages that had radio reception, but that such reception, through *spillover* effects, influenced levels of militia violence in nearby villages (that were not necessarily directly exposed to RTLM propaganda). As for the individual violence, direct exposure made a difference, but Yanagizawa-Drott (2014: 1950) finds that: "[t]here are no spillover effects on individual violence, suggesting that local complementarities or information diffusion among ordinary citizens were weak or non-existent, at least relative to that among members of organized militias."

Yanagizawa-Drott's conclusions cast doubt on Straus's findings, particularly since he attributes more importance to social interactions and indirect exposure than Straus, and his findings provide us with a reason to think that propaganda mattered. However, his paper also suffers from several problems. First, he never engages with Straus's analysis, nor attempts to contrast the two conflicting findings – presumably leaving it to readers to evaluate between the two papers. Second, Yanagizawa-Drott himself acknowledges that it is unclear how exactly social interactions and spillover effects matter, and suggests that studying the mechanisms involved should be part of further research. Finally, as he also indicates, the results in the paper "provide some suggestive evidence on the conditions under which propaganda is more effective in inducing violence. […] [but] additional fundamental factors beyond the scope of this investigation are likely to be just as important, such as pre-existing ethnic animosity and a history of civil war" (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014: 1990). Hence, the scholarship is in need of further analysis of the

relationship between the mechanisms through which propaganda encourages violence, as well as the relationship between propaganda and other factors associated with mass atrocities.

The inconsistency between the two papers could potentially be explained by different subjects of analysis. Straus mainly focuses on refuting contemporary understandings of propaganda's role in Rwanda, whereas Yanagizawa-Drott examines the role of propaganda in the genocide more generally. As a consequence, Straus's findings that propaganda did not influence people through the "hypodermic needle" model (or through other mechanisms, usually assumed in the literature and ICTR's findings on Rwanda), do not show that propaganda had *no role* in facilitating violence in the 1994 genocide, or even that the role was marginal and conditional. At the same time, whilst Yanagizawa-Drott's findings tentatively show that propaganda mattered, his research tells us very little about the exact *mechanisms* through which it changed people's perception about the permissibility of violence against Tutsi. Thus, whilst a comparative advance in rigour, even these two papers leave the study of propaganda incomplete.

Methodology

Research Questions

As demonstrated thus far, the scholarly study of propaganda, and its role in war and violence, remains fragmented, with scholars often reaching conflicting and even mutually exclusive conclusions. Subsequently, my key aim was to contribute to these scholarly debates and provide a more detailed and empirically rigorous account of propaganda's role in war. Notably though, at the start of this doctoral thesis, I was convinced that examining whether propaganda plays any relevant role in war would solely involve researching whether propaganda can successfully motivate violence. To me, this seemed like a logical course of action, since most scholars studying propaganda only really focused on propaganda's potential ability to incite violence. However, over the course of these four years, my research led me to realise that propaganda can serve a variety of functions in war – many of which are not focused on inciting or motivating violence. Consequently, I also recognised that asking "whether propaganda plays an important role in conflict" is a much broader question than "whether propaganda can successfully incite violence." Moreover, my research led me to realise that propaganda cannot become hateful and derogatory overnight, as that it takes time for regimes to assert total control over media outlets disseminating propaganda. Moreover, it seems implausible that groups that previously coexisted relatively peacefully could accept hateful and derogatory portrayals about other citizens so quickly.

Thus, in light of these findings, the focus of my research changed. Instead of trying to prove (or disprove) the importance of propaganda in war, I decided to primarily examine how

propaganda works in war and, more specifically, the plethora of functions propaganda can serve in war – many of which are not related to the propaganda's potency in motivating violence. Thus, the key research questions of this thesis are:

1. **How do media outlets disseminating propaganda work** (i.e. how regimes assert control over such institutions; what kind of influence do regimes exert over journalists and media outlets they use as propaganda-vehicles; how such control evolves over the course of the war; what kind of views and perceptions are held by people working for such media outlets)?

2. **What functions can propaganda serve in war and how do those functions evolve or change over the course of a war**? (i.e. how regimes deploy propaganda as part of a strategy that enables them to acquire and maintain power or achieve specific political aims; how do those functions change and evolve depending on regime's aims and/or external circumstances)?

3. **What does war propaganda look like** (i.e. what kind of discourses are developed in a regime's attempt to use propaganda effectively; what kind of techniques are used by media outlets as they disseminate discourses and aim to increase the chances of those discourses being deployed by the relevant audiences; how, if at all, does propaganda adapt to external circumstances)?

I suggest that this research contributes to a wide range of key debates and issues within propaganda and conflict studies. First, I will further substantiate rationalists' claim that elites use propaganda as a strategy by detailing how exactly elites use propaganda to achieve their aims. Second, my research also complements the literature on mobilisation and participation in violence by explicating the role propaganda plays in such processes. In particular, I show how propaganda creates the kind of pressures that situationalists discuss, as well as how ideas and information impact people's willingness to engage in violence and support regimes advocating for such violence. Finally, it adds to the current literature on propaganda's role in mass atrocities by detailing the variety of functions propaganda serves in war; the discourses media outlets develop and disseminate; and the specific techniques that media outlets use to make their discourses more persuasive. Notably, I briefly address the possible mechanisms through which propaganda fuels war and violence, although I suggest that the examination of those mechanisms and overall effectiveness of propaganda in such processes should be part of further research. As I show in the

following chapter, before beginning to examine the possible power of propaganda in altering people's views and behaviour, it is necessary to understand the specific functions propaganda serves in a given conflict. Otherwise, we are faced with a risk of misunderstanding the specific aims propaganda has and mistakenly concluding that propaganda plays a marginal role in war.

Why a Case Study Approach?

I use RTS's propaganda during the Yugoslav Wars between 1991 and 1995 as a case study to address these questions. In principle, a wide range of methods and approaches can be used to analyse propaganda, however, there are several advantages in using a case study approach to examine the specific questions I am interested in.

As George and Bennett (2005: 20) note, case studies are better suited for researching phenomena that are complicated to code and measure (e.g., democracy, propaganda, or ideology). To invoke their example, quantitative research can tell us that democracies do not wage wars against each other, but struggle to tell us which features of democratic regimes are responsible for this "democratic peace" – a case study approach, by contrast, allows us to trace the processes linking particular variables to peaceful outcomes. In my thesis, I am not primarily interested in estimating the relative causal weight of propaganda on violence – I am also not confident that the data to reliably establish this exist. Moreover, as the contrast between Yanagizawa-Drott's and Straus's findings illustrate, testing for the causal weight of propaganda's effects on violence requires a prior theoretical framework that explains the causal mechanisms through which propaganda potentially encourages violent behaviour. More importantly, prior to even establishing such causal mechanisms, it is also necessary to understand the specific functions propaganda serves in a given war. Consequently, this thesis focuses on producing such a framework, which explains the functions propaganda serves and tentatively assess the evidence that RTS made any difference in the violence.

Furthermore, while quantitative approaches may test the direct impact that propaganda could have on perpetrators of violence, they struggle to analyse how exposure to certain ideas and discourses over a long period of time may subsequently influence people's perception about the legitimacy of the war in question and violence. This problem is deepened by the fact that mere exposure measurements tell us nothing about what messages people are exposed to – even if we know that a vast majority of people watched RTS, that tells us little about what RTS was saying or how discourses propagated through this channel made people more prone to support the war or accept the violence committed by Serbian forces in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia.

Furthermore, quantitative approaches would struggle to explicate why and how elites deployed propaganda to acquire and maintain power, as well as the processes through which elites exerted influence over RTS. Such research complements the current scholarship on propaganda and violence. For example, Yanagizawa-Drott's approach provides suggestive evidence that propaganda has an effect on the levels of violence – in my thesis, I aim to tentatively suggest the mechanisms through which propaganda fuels violent behaviour, and how such mechanisms interact with other factors associated with mass atrocities. Along the similar lines, by examining how propaganda works, I also provide insight into the relationship between propaganda and other factors usually associated with war and violence. Obviously, no method is without its limitations, and different methods are better suited for different kinds of intellectual endeavour. What is required is that a researcher is aware of such limits, and rigorous in applying a method to produce findings to which it is suited.

Finally, my choice of the Serbian case and RTS is guided by three factors. First, while the Yugoslav Wars and violence committed by Serbian forces are frequently invoked in contemporary conflict scholarship, there are relatively few detailed studies of this case, leaving uncertainty over the driving forces behind the conflict. In my thesis, I hope to contribute to the scholarly understanding of the motivations for the violence that occurred in this region between 1991 and 1995. Second, as a Serbian citizen, I have access to various documents, archives, and individuals that non-Serbian academics either do not have or have limited access to (if for no other reason than because they do not speak Serbian).

Third, I specifically focus on RTS for several reasons. As the national broadcaster, RTS had the widest reach. Gredelj and Todorović (2001: 41) find that around four million Serbs regularly tuned in to watch RTS's Dnevnik 2. Such high viewership should not be surprising. This is because very few alternative sources of information existed at the time – as the media scenery of Serbia was still developing.[7] Furthermore, the relatively limited alternative media outlets did not have a national reach. Outlets like Studio B, B92, or Radio Index were only accessible to the citizens of Belgrade, whereas RTS was available across the country.[8]

It is worth noting that even alternative outlets rarely contested the discourses that RTS pushed. Instead, most media outlets were controlled by the government and reported in line with Milošević ideology (e.g. newspapers such as Politika or Radio Pink founded in 1994). The few independent or oppositional media outlets found their work obstructed and reach limited by the

[7] Indeed, many media outlets, such as Blic or Danas were only founded after the Dayton Agreement was signed. For further details see: Todorović and Gredelj, 2001.

[8] Available at: https://www.icty.org/x/cases/slobodan_milosevic/prosexp/bcs/rep-srb-b.html accessed 04/03/2021.

Milošević government. For instance, Yutel television, which was created in October 1990, faced continued and steady attack from the regime. Only a few months after it was founded, Yutel's offices were demolished, and its staff harassed by the Serbian paramilitary troops White Eagles.[9] As de la Brosse (2003: 6) reports:

> Heavy taxes and fines were imposed, broadcasting licences withdrawn, permits for more powerful transmitters were refused, supplies of equipment necessary for newspapers and radio stations were stopped, strong-arm operations were organised to restrict and sometime wipe out the independent media's capacity to provide Serbian public with alternative information.

Thus, my decision to focus on RTS specifically was, in part driven by the belief that through analysing its Dnevnik 2, I would get the most accurate insight into the kind of discourses that Serbian audiences were exposed to.[10] Furthermore, the state ownership structure of RTS plausibly allowed elites to easily use RTS for their own ends (which was perhaps more difficult with privately owned media). This allows me to examine how elites used propaganda in more detail. Lastly, on the April 23rd 1999 NATO bombed the headquarters of RTS and justified it by claiming that RTS was inseparable from Milošević's political and military apparatus, and that RTS propaganda was prolonging the war. This was one of the most prominent cases in which Western military forces deemed media organisations 'legitimate' targets of bombing. However, RTS did not become such a propaganda machine overnight, but through a process of political consolidation in which RTS became one of the tools Milošević used to maintain power and mobilise supporters. Studying the evolution of this institution could reveal more about the processes in which media outlets or national broadcasters become propaganda-vehicles, which could, in turn, carry important implications for drafting preventive policy measures that could tackle the production of hateful propaganda.

Research Design

I propose a novel way for examining how elites used propaganda – one which focuses on the dynamics within the media outlet airing such propaganda (in this case RTS). I suggest that deep analysis of the decision-making and propaganda-production processes within the institution (one that methodologically relies on process tracing and in-depth interviews with journalists, reporters,

[9] Available at: https://www.icty.org/x/cases/slobodan_milosevic/prosexp/bcs/rep-srb-b.htm accessed 04/03/2022.

[10] Other Serb-led media outlets existed, especially in Bosnian and Croatian territories dominated by the Serbian population. However, analysing those media outlets and the content of their broadcasts exceeds the scope of this thesis, and could indeed be a thesis in itself. Subsequently, I focus on the most relevant and most reputable Serbian media outlets – RTS.

editors, politicians, and other figures that appeared on RTS broadcasts and took part in the Serbian political life at the time) exposes the degree to which elites perceived propaganda as important, as well as the particular mechanisms through which they exerted control over the broadcasts. I examine to what extent elites controlled the exact content of individual broadcasts, what (if any) orders they issued to journalists that reported from the war fronts, what (if any) strategies they used when trying to ensure that the journalists would report as told, and how their influence over the broadcasts evolved over time. Such analysis can shed light on the rationalists' claim that propaganda is merely one of many strategies elites deploy in their attempt to acquire and maintain power. Those that see propaganda as relatively unimportant often see it as straightforwardly governed by political elites' basic interest in power. But is that right? And does the influence of political elites derive from coercion, authority and the capacity to distribute benefits, or genuine sympathy from those who directly produce propaganda?

I further my examination of the dynamics within RTS with an analysis of the role journalists played in the creation of propaganda, and similarly, use process tracing and in-depth interviews for this inquiry. Some existing research suggests that it is implausible that journalists exercise no relevant independent agency in propaganda's creation – even when political elites exert high levels of influence and pressure. Zhou (2000: 600) conducts interviews with Chinese journalists and finds that contradictions within Chinese journalism were often a consequence of *choices* journalists made in their attempt to reduce the cognitive dissonance triggered by "the dying Communist ideology and a new, vague opposing ideological system." I wish to further this research and examine how RTS employees and journalists made the decisions (not) to publish or report certain events, how they coped with the fact that they were (perhaps consciously) misinforming people, and how they managed any dissonance between their private views and the public narratives they were required to promote. Beyond the fact that such analysis further informs my understanding of how elites used propaganda, it also helps me identify different motivations that journalists may have had, but also how their motivations potentially changed over time. For example, it is possible that they were afraid of losing their job, and consequently decided to engage in the creation of such propaganda. Alternatively, it is also possible that under the social pressures, akin to those that situationalists discuss, some journalists engaged in behaviour they would otherwise consider morally and professionally unacceptable. Finally, it is plausible that some of the journalists were eventually convinced by propaganda they produced.[11]

[11] Indeed, according to the cognitive dissonance theory such an outcome is likely (Festinger, 1957; Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959).

In total, I conducted 20 formal interviews with different journalists, editors and technical staff members who worked in Serbia between 1991 and 1995. I also spoke with three direct perpetrators of violence during the Yugoslav Wars, all of whom wished to remain anonymous. I spoke to some individuals, most notably Milorad Vučelić (former RTS Director) and Vlado Mareš (former RTS journalist) more than once – as they felt comfortable in me asking them additional questions as my research progressed.

I primarily relied on the snowball method when recruiting journalists. "The Snowball Sampling Method […] is a technique for finding research subjects where one subject gives the researcher the name of another, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on. […] In this method, the sample group growls like a rolling snowball." (Cohen and Arieli, 2001: 424).[12] I chose to rely on the snowball sampling method as that was the only open avenue for me to gather participants due to the high level of mistrust towards foreign-based scholars and researchers. Subsequently, the most efficient way of gaining people's confidence and their consent for the interview was through a recommendation of someone who the participants knew. My very first, informal, conversation with Milica Pešić (former RTS journalist) led to my first formal interview with Branka Mihajlović (former RTS journalist) who then put me in touch with Gordana Suša and Nadežda Gaće, who then connected me with other oppositional journalists, and so on.

The biggest downside of the snowball sampling method is the self-imposed bias. As Cohen and Arieli (2011: 428) argue: "representativity is the central limitation of [snowball sampling method]. Convenience sampling, by definition, is usually not random or representative, so it often results in selection bias and external and internal validity limitations." And indeed, most oppositional journalists only really associated themselves with other oppositional journalists, and barely, if at all, spoke to those who supported Milošević's regime (as I show in the following chapters, political affiliations were a common source of conflict among RTS journalists). To overcome this problem, I obtained contact details of several pro-Milošević journalists, and the former RTS Director. Despite my best efforts, my ability to interview people who could be considered as pro-Milošević was limited. Except for two individuals, most others rejected my invitation. I came close to interviewing Milorad Komrakov (by far the most popular RTS journalist at the time, who was also beaten up on several occasions following the 5th of October overthrow)[13] – however, in the very last minute he decided against speaking with me, and according to his friend (who helped me contact him), Komrakov was uncomfortable speaking about the matter, and was

[12] For further details on how to use snowball sampling method in conflict environments, as well as its upsides and downsides see: Cohen and Arieli 2011: 423-435).
[13] For further details see: https://rs.n1info.com/vesti/a75531-pretucen-milorad-komrakov/, accessed 19/01/2022.

somewhat concerned about how I would interpret his actions and whether he would face any further repercussions.

Due to my inability to convince pro-regime journalists and editors to speak to me, one could raise questions about the representativeness of my sample – and indeed, I acknowledge that the sample, ideally, would have been more diverse. This lack of diversity implies that I do not have a perfect insight into how or why these journalists decided to disseminate hateful propaganda. However, I suggest that I am still able to produce an important and novel insights into the techniques used by authoritarian regimes as they seek to gain control over media outlets (both through the interviews I conducted, and by relying on a vast literature on the matter as well as my analysis of the broadcasts). Nevertheless, it is my hope that future researchers will be more successful in obtaining consent of these individuals and conduct in-depth interviews with them.

My reliance on in-depth interviews could raise several specific concerns that I briefly address here. First, my Serbian nationality, gender, and age potentially raise thorny questions concerning positionality in interviewing, and unconscious biases. Further questions could be raised by the use of interviews as a technique for studying historically distant events, as they may be remembered incompletely or inaccurately, which is particularly likely in the context of complex and traumatic events. Finally, my research is based on interviews with respondents who have strong reputational incentives to misrepresent the facts due to their participations in the events I am researching, and their ongoing careers in Serbia. However, such challenges are not new, and have been recognised and researched by the academic community. Qualitative researchers have developed a rich and sophisticated literature offering guidance for addressing such concerns that I rely on and use extensively (including, but not limited to: Bayard de Volo & Schatz, 2004; Chaitin, 2003; Driscoll & Schuster, 2017; Fujii, 2009; Fujii, 2010; Fujii, 2017; Ganga & Scott, 2006; Harvey, 2010; White, 2000).

I proceed to analyse the content of RTS propaganda and the nature of the political discourse during the Yugoslav Wars. I use archival materials from RTS – sampling from a corpus of around 1,634 video news broadcasts (each of which was aired daily from 7.30 PM and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes). However, before I explicate the methods I used when analysing the broadcasts, I believe it is important to explain the difficulties I faced in accessing this vast archive.

For my thesis accessing the archive was crucial, but there were multiple challenges involved in obtaining the broadcasts. First, RTS was (and remains) one of the most important institutions in Serbian political life. The Serbian government's influence over the broadcaster is strong (for further details see the Conclusion). Moreover, as I discuss throughout this thesis RTS's role in the war remains complex, with many institutions, international organisations and individuals explicitly

blaming it for the intensity of violence in the former Yugoslavia. Consequently, RTS was reluctant to share the materials and broadcasts with researchers and non-governmental organisations – and I have not met a single scholar who had access to the entire archive.

In November 2017, when I first contacted RTS, they claimed that the materials I was seeking were destroyed in the 1999 bombing of RTS by NATO forces – an argument which I found extremely unpersuasive, especially as they also argued that the entire archive is disorganised. However, they offered to let me look through their online archive documentation to see which broadcasts were lost in the bombing. For the following three months, I spent most of my days visiting RTS's online archive, manually checking the tape number for every date, and reading the brief descriptions of every broadcast in order to identify the specific minutes in which war-related topics came up. In the end, I produced a 124-pages Excel spreadsheet which basically organised five years of their archive. I was promised that should I do this, they would provide me with a digital copy of the broadcasts.

However, in early months of 2018, RTS changed their tune – and claimed that despite me organising their archive (while also identifying that most broadcasts were still in the archive rather than destroyed in the bombing), they have no technical means of providing me with digital copies of the materials. Furthermore, RTS representatives also argued that they are unable to allow me to sit in the archive and watch the footage myself – similarly suggesting that they have no technical or staff support for that task. While it is plausible that RTS does suffer from technical and staff shortages, in this instance I found their arguments unpersuasive – especially since no one mentioned any resource shortages back in November 2017 when we agreed that I was to manually organise the archive.

In the months that followed, I managed to get a contact of someone who knew insiders at RTS well and was willing to negotiate with RTS on my behalf. Ultimately, this person successfully got RTS to allow for their archivist to digitise the materials and provide me with digital copies. The process itself lasted for around a year – since the digitisation was done real time i.e. the length of the Dnevnik was equal to the amount of time needed to create a digital copy. Importantly, while RTS agreed to provide me with the access, they continuously obstructed the archivist's effort to help me. For instance, they requested him to digitise the materials as slowly as possible, in the hope that I would quit seeking the materials due to the sheer time needed for me to get the copies. However, his perseverance and desire to help me prevailed – and within a year I had digital copies of all the broadcasts located in the archive. In total, I gained access to around 1,634 broadcasts (which amounted to a similar number of total hours) – the content of which was previously sampled by me identifying which parts of the broadcasts were related to the Yugoslav Wars. This

story communicates just how closed and difficult to access RTS remains, and how much effort and resources they invest into preventing people from researching the most important part of our people's history since the Second World War.

As for the analysis of the broadcasts themselves, I primarily rely on process-tracing and qualitative discourse analysis with visual methods to examine the content of these broadcasts. I interpret them in light of the linguistic, cultural, and political context in which the broadcasts were produced to most reliably identify the most likely ways in which they were understood by relevant audiences. I used both purposeful and randomised sampling to determine which of the broadcasts I will analyse for each of the conflict respectively (and provide specific details on the sizes of the samples in the empirical chapters). I relied on the same methods when analysing the purposeful and randomised sample, since I wanted to examine whether the dynamics of propaganda analysed over the course of four years is similar to the dynamics which operated within single events.

In my analysis of the broadcasts, I examine the discourses surrounding the warring parties, the types of justifications offered in favour of excessive violence against Croats and/or Bosniaks, the depictions of different battles, episodes of ethnic cleansing, and genocide in Srebrenica, and the portrayal of the international community's involvement in the war. Additionally, I also analyse how all of the developed discourses evolved over time as the political circumstances changed. Finally, I also examine the specific techniques used by RTS throughout the war as they tried to make their discourses more persuasive. As I show in the empirical chapters, my findings from the Serbian case (while not producing a silver-bullet argument that propaganda matters in war) cast doubt on the argument that propaganda mainly served as a post-hoc rationalisation of violence.

Lastly, I produce tentative conclusions about the role propaganda played in facilitating violence in Yugoslavia. Given the dependence of the population on RTS, if it is the case that RTS heavily misinformed people and portrayed the war and violence as legitimate, it is likely that exposure to such discourse had an effect on people's beliefs about the legitimacy of violence against Croats and/or Bosniaks, and possibly their willingness to engage in such violence. To investigate these hypotheses, I relied on psychological research which suggests that exposure to certain discourses, over a sustained period of time, does have an impact on people's views and behaviour. Importantly, I do not analyse propaganda in isolation, but alongside other important factors that contributed to the outbreak of violence and are considered relevant in the scholarship on both Yugoslavia and political violence more generally. It is my sincere hope that this thesis will help scholars appreciate three things: (1) the complexity of propaganda, (2) the plethora of functions propaganda can serve in a war, and (3) the variety of discourses and techniques available to media professionals involved in the strategic use of propaganda.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis comprises seven further chapters. In the following chapter, I present my framework for analysing propaganda. I explain how it can help scholars who study propaganda and its role in conflict, while also highlighting some of its possible shortcomings. In chapter three, I provide an overview of the break-up of Yugoslavia, thereby laying the empirical foundation for the analysis of Serbian media in the period 1991-1995. Chapter four is an in-depth analysis of RTS – the national broadcaster in Serbia. There I explain how, when, and why this media organisation became an essential part of Milošević's authoritarian regime. The chapter's findings are largely based on extensive interviews I conducted with RTS editors, journalists, and technical staff. Subsequently, the chapter provides novel insights into this institution, but it also discusses the views and perceptions held by its former and current employees. In Chapters five to seven, I empirically examine the framework proposed by analysing propaganda aired on RTS during the Slovenian 10-day War, the Croatian War of Independence, and the Bosnian War, respectively. These chapters revolve centrally around my analysis of well over a hundred RTS broadcasts that aired between 1991 and 1995.

With my analysis, I seek to make two distinct contributions. First, in those chapters, I provide evidence that the framework proposed in this thesis is useful for studying how propaganda works in war and other violent settings. Second, these chapters provide a unique and novel insight into RTS broadcasts – which were thus far unavailable to the academic community. In the concluding chapter, I summarise the argument of the thesis, explain its possible usefulness in the future studies of propaganda, and suggest the direction of possible future research on propaganda's role in conflict.

Chapter Two: How Propaganda Works

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, current research on propaganda's impact on people's views and behaviour and the role it plays in conflict remains inconclusive. I argue that disagreements in the literature are partially caused by a general lack of understanding of the variety of roles that propaganda has in conflict. Thus far, scholars primarily focused on propaganda's potency in inciting and instigating violence during wartime. However, I argue that propaganda can and was used for a variety of other purposes – many of which do not aim to motivate people to engage in violence. Consequently, our current understanding of propaganda's role in conflict is incomplete.

In this chapter, I aim to show that propaganda can serve many functions in war, and that an examination of its efficacy must, therefore, begin with an analysis of what is propaganda trying to achieve. To develop this argument, I draw on the existing literature and build a framework for analysing propaganda which details its *phases* and *functions,* as well as the *discourses* and *techniques* used by elites and media outlets in their attempt to effectively disseminate their ideology. I argue that this framework can help scholars understand the roles propaganda serves in a conflict, which in turn, can inform their examination of propaganda's efficacy in altering people's views and behaviour.

The chapter consists of six sections. In the first section, I explain the framework and demonstrate the ways in which the framework can inform our inquiry of propaganda's role in war. In the second, I identify and explicate the three key *phases* of propaganda, which I term: *escalation, maintenance,* and *de-escalation.* In the following section, I build on the existing literature to argue in favour of six key *functions* propaganda serves in war, specifically: *building identity, legitimating violence, recruiting fighters, brutalising perpetrators, disincentivising opposition,* and *pacifying the population*. The fourth section details the six key discourses elites and media outlets develop as they try to enhance propaganda's potency in altering people's views and behaviour, namely: the discourse of *threat, guilt, dehumanisation, humanisation, victimisation,* and *valorisation*. In the fifth section, I argue that a successful dissemination of propaganda requires a set of media *techniques*. I identify five key techniques that media outlets rely on, namely: *inventing, framing, manipulating, denying,* and *mirroring.* In the final section, I briefly consider three key mechanisms through which propaganda appears to impact people's views and behaviour. This section primarily serves as a possible starting point for further research into assessing the effectiveness of propaganda in war. The theoretical model proposed in this chapter is then applied and examined in chapter five to seven, in which I conduct

an extensive empirical analysis of RTS propaganda disseminated during the Slovenian 10-day War, the Croatian War of Independence and the Bosnian War respectively.

Explaining the Framework

There is widespread agreement amongst scholars that people struggle to engage in acts they would, all things being equal, consider morally abhorrent. For instance, psychologists argue that when individuals act in ways that they would generally consider unacceptable, they often find themselves in a state of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957; Monroe, 2001: 498).[14] According to psychologists, people cannot exist in such a state for an extended period of time and must find ways to overcome it. Subsequently, such people are faced with the following choice: either cease engaging in actions that stand in contrast to their beliefs or find ways to justify their behaviour so as to make it compatible with their views and values (Littman and Paluck, 2015: 88; Zhou, 2000; Monroe, 2001: 498).

Engaging in violence, especially against unarmed civilians, is an example of a situation in which people may find themselves in a state of cognitive dissonance. This is because people are generally told that violence is only justified under a specific set of circumstances. On an individual level, such justifications are usually grounded in self-defence, while on a group level violence is usually perceived as justified in war. But even in wartimes, there is a specific set of rules that defines legitimate usage of violence. Violence against unarmed civilians is hard to justify on either of those grounds. It seems difficult to argue that an unarmed individual is threatening to a point where violence against them can be seen as self-defence [Leader Maynard, forthcoming]. Furthermore, attacking civilians clearly falls outside the rules that determine legitimate warfare. Subsequently, scholars argue that perpetrators are in need of alternative justifications of violence against civilians, otherwise they may struggle to engage in such violence. As Bellamy (2012: 163) puts it: "actors may be inhibited from employing mass atrocities, or may delay their employment, because it is difficult to justify and because they fear that the perceived illegitimacy of their actions will lead to the imposition of costs that prevent them achieving their goals. As such, legitimacy and the process of justification are important components of the politics of mass atrocity."

Building on the point above, scholars suggested various reasons and motivations that people may have when deciding to engage in violence, with ideological explanations and propaganda gaining an increased prominence in conflict and genocide studies [Leader Maynard, forthcoming]. In their attempt to clarify the role of ideology in violence against civilians, scholars

[14] Understood as an instance in which a person holds contradictory beliefs or ideas. Alternatively, understood as a state in which an individual is engaging in types of behaviour that stand in contrast to that person's views or values.

produced models and typologies which aimed to categorise the specific features and characteristics of such genocidal propaganda or ideologies. Alternatively, they suggested models and typologies which detailed patterns or causal mechanisms through which propaganda or ideology justify and motivate violence. For example, Leader Maynard [forthcoming] identified "six recurring justificatory mechanisms of mass killing which [he labels], with varying degrees of originality: i) threat construction; ii) guilt attribution; iii) deidentification; iv) valorisation; and vi) the destruction of alternatives." He then argues that: "[h]uman beings are able to sincerely support mass killing, to at least some degree, when they internalise such ideas, and this is the core way of getting inside most perpetrators' understandings of their own actions."

Along the similar lines, Bellamy (2012: 160-1) suggests that "three basic pathways have emerged from the justification of mass atrocities. The first is simply denial. Perpetrators may argue that evidence of massacres were fabricated […] The second approach invokes the principle of military necessity and holds that it is sometimes legitimate to kill civilians […] The third pathway […] holds that there are certain groups of people who, by dint of some assigned characteristic, ought to be excluded from the moral and legal protections normally owed to humans."

Richter, Markus and Tait (2018) suggest a typology they name "the 5Ds+ of incitement" and suggest that the key mechanisms through which incitement successfully motivates people to engage in violence are dehumanisation, demonisation, delegitimization, disinformation, denial, threats, and glorification of terror. And according to Murray (2014), there are five common ideological characteristics shared by anti-nation and genocidal ideologies. In Murray's view such ideologies often make claims to the homeland in question; use religion; highlight alliances; use economic and social background; and finally, often invoke examples of historical animosity between the conflicted groups.

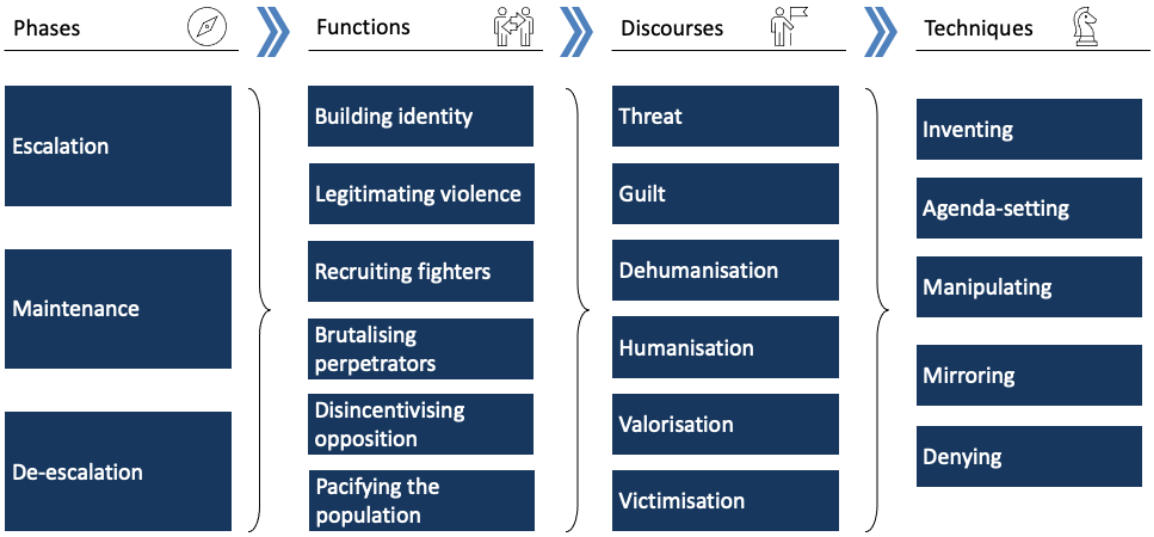
All of these, as well as many other, typologies and models offer useful insights into the concepts and mechanisms that encourage and motivate violence. Subsequently, they represent an important addition to the study of propaganda's role in conflict. However, all of them suffer from shortcomings. Many of these typologies (such as the one suggested by Bellamy, Murray and Leader Maynard) only focus on the mechanisms through which ideology justifies violence. However, propaganda is a method through which ideology is disseminated, and subsequently their models do not discuss various other mechanisms and strategies through which ideology is shaped and disseminated – all of which, as I argue below, matter in the process of justifying violence.

Other typologies, which place more focus on propaganda, such as the one suggested by Richter, Markus and Tait, suffer from three key issues. First, they often fail to rigorously delineate between the concepts. For example, it is unclear what conceptually distinguishes dehumanisation

from demonisation. Second, and more important, all of these typologies only focus on one of propaganda's phases – the one I term, escalation. As I argue below, the kind of dehumanizing or demonizing language analysed in these typologies is only really present during the escalation phase – that is, when regimes actively try and motivate people to engage in or support violence, or when they brutalise the direct perpetrators of such violence. However, I argue that propaganda in war goes through three phases – many of which do not contain, or even actively discourage, such hateful speech. Such phases, as well as the relevant mechanisms used in them, are largely missing from these frameworks, typologies, and models. Finally, most of these typologies do not really discuss the techniques media outlets rely on when disseminating propaganda. And as I argue below, understanding such techniques would broaden our understanding of propaganda's role in conflict.

Thus, in my attempt to advance our understanding of propaganda, I am suggesting a new framework for analysing propaganda which tries to overcome some of these shortcomings. Before elaborating on the framework, several points are worth noting. First, as Leader Maynard [forthcoming] argues "there is no single 'correct' way of typologising." Nevertheless, this does not mean that there are no ways for scholars to increase validity of their models and typologies. Thus, in my research, I relied on extensive and detailed research from various disciplines – ranging from conflict studies to psychology – in order to develop a framework that could be useful for studying propaganda across cases. Second, it should also be noted that while I think this framework has much to offer to future researchers, it should not be treated as a definitive guide to propaganda. I am not arguing that following the framework will produce irrefutable conclusions about propaganda's role in conflict. I acknowledge that context matters greatly – i.e. how exactly propaganda operates and works will differ across cases. Nevertheless, I suggest that my framework will help shed new light on various aspects of propaganda that have been thus far neglected in the scholarship. Finally, I am not arguing that the framework is exhaustive – perhaps new discourses or functions of propaganda can be identified. In fact, I assume that it is highly likely that new techniques and discourses will emerge in light of the rise of social media platforms. However, my research is also not unqualified – the list of phases, functions, discourses, and techniques suggested is based on extensive research of the relevant literature and backed by my empirical examination of the Yugoslav case.

Figure 1 – The Framework



First, I argue that propaganda in war can be divided into three distinct **phases**, which often, although not always, occur chronologically: *escalation, maintenance,* and *de-escalation*. The second important level of the framework are **functions** of propaganda. Propaganda can serve to *build identity*; *recruit* people to fight; to *brutalise* the perpetrators; to *legitimate* violence; to *disincentivise opposition* (both among the fighters and the general population); and finally, propaganda can also be used to *pacify* the population if the aim of the regime is to end the war or decrease the levels of violence.

In order to successfully fulfil the key functions of propaganda, media outlets have to develop, (re)shape, and promote various discourses which ought to impact people's views and behaviour in a desired way. My research has led me to conclude that there are six recurring **discourses** that appear across cases, three of which usually target the in-group, and the remaining three usually target the out-group. The three that target the in-group are *humanisation, victimisation, and valorisation*. The latter discourses that target the out-group are *dehumanisation, threat, and guilt.*

The final level of the framework focuses on the **techniques** used by media outlets in their attempt to effectively disseminate the developed discourses and persuade people to believe in them. I identified five recurring techniques, which I term, with varying degrees of originality: *framing*, *inventing*, *manipulating, denying,* and *mirroring*. Overall, I argue that only when all these categories are taken into account, can we begin to really examine the efficacy of propaganda.

Phases

The first phase of propaganda is escalation. The beginning of this phase usually coincides with regimes' decision to enter a war and/or with political elites increasingly believing that violence is the best strategy available to them. Subsequently, political leaders and media outlets start developing and shaping discourses, which aim to persuade people that war and violence are legitimate and/or necessary. As the term itself indicates, throughout this phase, propaganda tends to escalate in order to provide appropriate justifications for the intensifying war and violence. Ultimately, it is in this phase that propaganda shapes into the kind of hateful and derogatory speech usually studied in genocide and propaganda scholarship.

The second phase I term *maintenance*. The key feature of this phase, which distinguishes it from escalation or de-escalation, is that discourses do not evolve or change throughout this phase. Instead, regimes tend to ensure that the already established discourses are repeated. Maintenance phase usually beings when political elites no longer have an interest in escalating propaganda further. There are several potential reasons for the shift to maintenance. First, it is possible that during the escalation phase, propaganda has persuaded a sufficient number of people that violence is justified. Subsequently, there is no need for regimes to escalate propaganda further. Second, as McDoom (2020: 124) suggests, violence itself radicalises people, and "[i]ndividual attitudes and beliefs may transform through the acts of violence itself." Along the similar lines, Littman and Paluck (2015: 86-88) argue that violence begets violence – and point to a variety of psychological experiments which confirm the argument.[15] Consequently, it is possible that by engaging in violence, a sufficient number of people become persuaded in its legitimacy. If this is true, there is no need for the regimes to further escalate propaganda. Third, it is possible that due to other (perhaps the international community's) pressures, the regimes can no longer afford to escalate propaganda. For instance, as I show in the following chapters, following the Sarajevo Agreement reached in January 1992, Milošević needed to present himself as the key peacemaker in the Balkans, and continued escalation of anti-Croat propaganda would stand in stark contrast with such imagery. Nevertheless, due to the unresolved question of Croatia's territory, Milošević could not afford to completely de-escalate propaganda. Thus, maintaining the discourses seemed like the best course of action.

Finally, as political elites decide to end a war (or are forced to do so by external circumstances), propaganda tends to *de-escalate*. During this phase, the intensity and frequency of dehumanising and derogatory discourses is decreasing. In addition, more positive imagery of the

[15] For further details see: Martens et al., 2007; Martens, Kosloff and Jackson, 2010; Anderson et al., 2010; Greitemeyer and Mugge, 2014; Littman and Paluck, 2015)

out-group and/or discourses praising peace efforts tend to gain prominence, as regimes try to pacify the population. The exact order of the phases, the specific times when they may begin and end, as well as the ways in which they evolve are all context dependent – i.e. it will vary across cases.

The three-phase framework of analysis provides conceptual clarity to the study of propaganda in general, and propaganda in war specifically. First, this way of analysing propaganda can shed light on the multiple and distinct functions that propaganda can, and does, serve in wars. Second, it can also help us understand how the relative importance of different functions changes as propaganda varies between the phases. To illustrate, it may be trivially true that propaganda usually serves the purpose of recruiting people to join the fighting troops and/or legitimate violence. However, what is perhaps less obvious is the fact that in the initial stages of the war (as propaganda enters the escalation phase) recruiting perpetrators and disincentivising opposition is far more relevant than legitimating violence. Similarly, as the regimes successfully recruit troops, legitimating violence becomes increasingly important. Finally, as regimes decide to end a conflict or decrease the levels of violence, propaganda has to correspondingly de-escalate, and it becomes reasonable to assume that pacifying the population becomes relevant. Thus, understanding the three phases can help us make reasonable assumptions about the aims of the regime. Equally, identifying which of the phases is taking place can assist us in predicting which of the functions is likely to become more prominent. All of these findings not only help us understand propaganda better but are also useful for thinking about possible policies that could counter such hateful propaganda.

Functions

The next level of the framework attempts to provide a list of the functions[16] that propaganda can serve in conflict. It is a list based on a wide review of the relevant literature, and my empirical examination of the Yugoslav conflicts.

There were two other approaches I could have used when developing the list of functions. However, I find that both suffer from several shortcomings. First, I could have examined the *effects* propaganda has in war and develop a list of functions based on those. For instance, I could have followed Straus' (2007) approach – and interview as many direct perpetrators as possible while trying to understand what, if any, effect did propaganda have on their willingness to engage in violence. Depending on the answers I received, I could have produced a list of functions propaganda had. However, such analysis would come with a built-in assumption that propaganda

[16] Understood as distinct purposes propaganda is meant to serve.

influences people's views and behaviour – and that, conversely, we can produce a list of functions based on those effects. Alternatively, such analysis confuses purpose with outcomes – since, the failure of propaganda to produce certain effects does not mean that propaganda was not meant to produce certain effects. To illustrate, it is possible that the purpose of RTLM propaganda was to incite violence in Rwanda, but that it failed to do so – in which case, by relying on effects to establish functions of propaganda, we would mistakenly conclude that propaganda did not have a function to incite violence in Rwanda, rather than it simply failed to do so. Thus, I decided against this approach when developing the list of functions.

Second, I could have analysed the *intent* of the relevant propagandist(s) – e.g., politicians, editors-in-chief, or journalists. For instance, when speaking to Milorad Vučelić, RTS Director between 1992 and 1995, I could have focused on the ideology he seemingly deployed and base the list of functions on his worldview and political aims. Ultimately, I would probably conclude that the key function of propaganda was to disseminate views supportive of the creation of Greater Serbia. However, there are several issues with this approach. First, as I show in chapter four, Vučelić's views could be interpreted in various different ways – on one hand, he could be perceived as a true committed ideologue, alternatively, he could be perceived as an opportunist who did not really believe many things he subscribed to during his career in the 1990s. And indeed, there are no reliable or rigours methods through which I could ascertain his (or anyone else's) intent. Subsequently, a list of functions based on people's intent was likely to be inaccurate. Second, relying on intent to develop the list assumes that there is a single authority that disseminates propaganda (which is often not true, as the process of dissemination involves multiple decision-making figures, from politicians to journalists themselves). Finally, relying on intent also fails to appreciate the ways in which external events impacts the trajectory of propaganda – and that occasionally, original intents that propagandists may have had must be changed in light of the evolving circumstances.

Thus, relying on the available literature coupled with an empirical examination of the Yugoslav case seemed like the best available strategy to infer the most probable and plausible list of functions. In the end, I identified six distinct functions of propaganda.

Identity building

Many scholars argue that building a sense of common identity and manipulating ethnic sentiments plays an important role in outbreaks of civil conflict and violence against civilians (Tilly, 2004; Fearon and Laitin, 2000; Moshman, 2007; Oncioiu; 2016; Oberschall, 2000; Wendt, 1994). Identity building, particularly in war time, often involve creating a distinction between the *in-group* and the

out-group. Oncioui (2016: 27) summarises it: [i]n cases of extreme forms of violence, there is a pattern: there is 'us' – the superior, almighty us – and there is 'them', the inferior, dangerous 'them' who must be eliminated." Along the same lines, Moshman (2007: 115) claims that genocide "is an extreme result of normal identity processes." He (2007: 115) continues to argue that there are four overlapping phases in extreme identity building. The first he terms dichotomization which: "elevates one dimension of identity over others, and, within that dimension, sharply distinguishes two categories: us and them."

In line with the argumentation offered by such scholars, identity building, understood here as creating a distinction between *us* and *them*, plays an important role in war, as it both creates internal group cohesion, and clearly defines the enemy.[17] Furthermore, by distinguishing between *us* and *them*, regimes often successfully create two distinct set of rules and rights owed to each group respectively. Various discursive strategies can be used to achieve this aim. For instance, dehumanisation can be particularly useful to deploy, as it defines *them* as subhuman. Such definition of *them* allows the propagandist to clearly excludes *them* from the universe of obligations owed to people by the virtue of their humanity (Fein, 1979: 9). Such dehumanisation, in turn, often justifies treating the out-group in ways that would otherwise be considered morally abhorrent.

Propaganda is particularly important for a successful fulfilment of identity building – as other methods, suggested by rationalist scholars for instance, are unlikely to yield results in distinguishing between *us* and *them* – in part since offering rewards is unlikely to change how people differentiate between groups. Thus, propaganda is well suited for the processes through which *us* are portrayed as heroic and honourable, while *them* are portrayed as dangerous or threatening. While ideology often underlies this distinction, propaganda remains the crucial tool through which this separation of groups can be disseminated.

Finally, it is important to note that the distinction between *us* and *them* can be changed depending on the regime's aims. For instance, as I show in the empirical chapters, during the escalation phase, RTS built this distinction along the ethnic lines – i.e. those considered *us* were people of Serbian ethnic origin, whereas *them* were all of those who belong to other ethnic groups (and in some conflicts, most notably Slovenia, RTS distinguished between Slovenian civilians who were not necessarily portrayed in a negative manner, and the Slovenian fighting forces who were portrayed as dangerous and threatening). However, as Milošević realised that instituting a sustainable peace deal must be a top priority, propaganda began de-escalating. During the de-escalation phase, RTS changed how it differentiated between *us* and *them* – namely, all of those

[17] It should be noted, identity building as a concept is also discussed in non-war contexts, and indeed, involves more than mere dichotomisation and us-them division. However, for the purposes of brevity, I am only focusing on arguments focused on the role of identity building in war times.

who supported Milošević's peace efforts were considered *us*, whereas all of those who opposed the peace deal (even if they were Serbs), were considered as *them*.

Legitimating violence

As mentioned above, there is a widespread agreement among scholars that in order for people to engage in or support violence, they must perceive it as legitimate (Bellamy, 2012). Furthermore, the set of circumstances in which violence is perceived as legitimate is usually narrow and often only applies to instances of self-defence. Alternatively, people may consider violence committed during war as just, but even then, there is a set of conditions that must be fulfilled for people to hold such a view. First, people must believe that the causes and the aims of the war are themselves just. Second, there is a set of rules that define legitimate conduct during warfare[18], and if these are not followed, it is likely that people will perceive violence as illegitimate. Hence, states must invest effort in order to portray violence as legitimate. This is particularly important in instances where the in-group is the one initiating violence (since self-defence becomes less apparent in such situations) and in instances where the victims of violence are civilians – since targeting civilians both falls outside the scope of legitimate conduct in warfare and is harder to justify through the self-defence argument.

Thus, perhaps the most important function propaganda serves in war, which has also received the most attention so far, is to legitimate violence. Legitimating violence is necessary for a successful military campaign, since otherwise it is likely that people will not engage in or support violence to a sufficient degree. Second, unlike with other functions – whose importance may vary depending on the phase of the war and other external circumstances – for as long as violence is taking place, there is a need to legitimate it. To illustrate, the importance of recruitment (discussed below) tends to rise in the run-up to a war and decrease once the necessary level of manpower is established. However, since violence usually takes place throughout a war, the regimes must continuously invest efforts in legitimating it.

Third, it seems that to legitimate violence the state can only rely on propaganda, since it does not have other tools at its disposal that could successfully legitimate violence. For instance, the mechanisms offered by the rationalist scholars may as well successfully motivate people to join the fighting troops, because they crave the reward or fear punishment. However, such methods do very little, if anything, in the process of changing people's views on the legitimacy of violence they commit. This is partly because by offering rewards or threatening with punishments regimes are not attempting to portray violence as legitimate or just. Instead, through such methods, regimes

[18] For further details see: Lee, 2012: 165-173; Walzer, 2000: 151-159; Christopher, 2004.

are trying to fulfil more strategic and practical aims (from recruiting the fighters, to disincentivising opposition) in order to secure sufficient manpower necessary for a successful military campaign. Rationalist scholars may argue that legitimation of violence is not necessary for a successful military campaign – thereby undermining the importance of propaganda all together. However, a vast bulk of research – which shows that people struggle to engage in behaviour they perceive as unjust – casts doubt on this argument (Monroe, 2001; Festinger, 1957; Littman and Paluck, 2015).

One could argue that ideology is sufficient in the process of legitimating violence, since it offers frameworks through which people could become convinced that violence is justified. Indeed, Leader Maynard [forthcoming] provides a detailed set of mechanisms through which ideology justifies violence. However, the most effective tool regimes have to widely disseminate and communicate ideology is propaganda. By using propaganda, regimes are able to develop discourses – through which they can effectively structure ideology. In addition, relying on the techniques discussed below, regimes are able to ensure the most effective interpretation and dissemination of discourses so as to ensure that ideology is communicated in a way which is likely to legitimate violence. Thus, while ideology plays an important role in the process of justifying violence, its power to alter people's views and behaviour depends upon adequate use of propaganda.

Recruiting fighters

The third function propaganda often serves in war is to recruit fighters. Trivially, to fight in any war or battle, and have a chance to win, the regimes need to have a sufficient amount of people willing to fight. However, people are faced with at least two motivational obstacles to joining the fighting forces. First, most people are reluctant to abandon their lives and expose themselves to the risk of death or severe injury. Second, most ordinary people find direct engagement with violence repulsive and would not engage in it, all things being equal. In Littman and Paluck's (2015: 79) words: "[f]or an ordinary person, participation in violence is often an aversive and distressing experience […]." Subsequently, propaganda serves to provide reasons that would assist people in overcoming these two motivational obstacles.

There are two possible ways to challenge the importance of propaganda in recruiting fighters. One could argue that the state can simply conscript and need not rely on propaganda to recruit the fighters. However, there are many other non-state actors (e.g. insurgencies) that may need to recruit fighters and do not have the ability to conscript soldiers. Subsequently, such actors are more likely to need propaganda to motivate people to fight. Furthermore, even in cases where actors can rely on conscription to gather sufficient manpower, propaganda can be helpful in

ensuring that the fighters on the front feel motivated to fight. Namely, it is likely that if people are not persuaded that the causes of the war or violence are just, they will attempt to evade conscription – as seen in the Slovenian case.

Secondly, many rationalist scholars argue that state and non-state actors have a variety of other tools available at their disposal which could motivate people to join the war and need not use propaganda for that purpose. For example, such actors could rely on providing material rewards to those who fight, or alternatively, excessively punishing those who desert troops or evade conscription. However, empirical analysis of the Yugoslav wars casts doubts on this argument. For example, in its attempt to disincentivise soldiers from deserting the troops, the government and the Federal Army explicitly stated that all of those who desert the troops or evade conscription would face severe legal punishments – as announced by Lieutenant General Marko Negovanović on a RTS broadcast aired on August 21st 1991. Despite such threats, the Federal Army struggled to recruit soldiers. I am not claiming that offering rewards or threatening with punishments has no effect on people's willingness to join the fighting troops. Instead, I am merely claiming that such methods of recruitment may not always be sufficient, and that propaganda can also be used as another tool in state's (and other actors') attempt to increase the size of its fighting forces.

The relative importance of the recruitment function depends upon various factors. For example, if the regular troops already contain sufficient manpower the state may not need to extensively focus on recruitment, and subsequently propaganda may not be as relevant in this process. However, it is important to highlight that even in such circumstances and in peace times, both propaganda and the prospects of rewards and punishments play an important role in recruitment. States always have a need to motivate people to join the army, and usually rely on various methods to successfully do so: from offering people financial and other benefits should they join the army to often promoting discourses suggesting that joining the army is an admirable thing to do. Thus, both propaganda and the factors suggested by rationalist scholars matter in the process of recruitment – it is the relative importance of them that varies across cases depending on external circumstances.

Brutalising perpetrators

The fourth important function propaganda may serve in war is brutalisation of the perpetrators. Ever since the Holocaust, scholars have been examining the profiles of individuals who engage in the most atrocious and brutal violence, particularly when their victims are civilians. Initially, it was suggested that such kind of violence can only be perpetrated by abnormal and psychologically

impaired individuals. Such views were somewhat supported by an actual claim of insanity by Rudolf Hess (Hitler's former Deputy Fuhrer) at Nuremberg, and by the discovery of a degenerative brain condition in Robert Ley, the Nazi head of the German Labour Front, after his suicide in 1945 (Waller, 2007: 60-2). However, over the years, researchers have demonstrated that there was nothing extraordinary about Nazi soldiers who executed the Jews, and that in fact ordinary people, under a specific set of circumstances, are capable of engaging in the most brutal violence imaginable (on this point most notably see: Arendt, 1963/2006).

Despite this seminal finding, the question remained – how do ordinary people become willing to engage in such violence? This question is particularly interesting when one considers the levels of brutality committed by ordinary people that go beyond just the execution of civilians, and range from mass rape, body mutilations, to various other forms of torture. I argue that we can partly explain such behaviour through the concept of brutalisation. I suggested that during the war, soldiers and fighters are brutalised to the point where extraordinary acts of violence starts appearing as ordinary, common, and justified – thereby assisting perpetrators in overcoming cognitive dissonance and other psychological barriers to violence. This, in turn, convinces the soldiers to engage in acts they would otherwise consider morally unacceptable.

There are several ways in which one can brutalise perpetrators. First, some are brutalised through the model of obedience to authority, as suggested and examined through Milgram's experiments. Inspired by Adolf Eichmann's trial and his defence, Milgram examined the relationship between obedience to authority and personal conscience (Milgram, 2010). During his trial in Israel, Eichmann argued that he was following orders issued by a higher authority (Arendt, 1963/2006). Many other Nazis attempted to justify their behaviour along the similar lines. For instance, Major Wilhelm Trapp, the commander of the Reserve Police Battalion 101, in 1942 stated that while killing the Jews may be an unpleasant task, the order came from the higher authorities and therefore must be obeyed (Browning, 1992/2001: 2). Subsequently, Milgram conducted a series of experiments in order to show that obedience to authority numbs people's ability to make moral judgements about their actions. The experiments showed that people are more likely to follow orders if they came from an authoritative figure. Despite these findings, Milgram acknowledged that internalization of the violent ideology increases people's willingness to engage in violence. Along the same line, Browning (1992/2001: 176) argued "[i]f they accept authority's ideology, actions follow logically and willingly."

Second, people may become more brutal due to their tendency to conform, as demonstrated through experiments conducted by Solomon Asch in 1950s. Asch's experiments examined the extent to which individuals are likely to conform to majority's opinions or beliefs.

In the first session of experiments, participants (almost all of whom were actually actors and knew the aim of the experiment) were given two cards: one which had one line on it, and the other, which had three lines on it. The participants were then asked to say which of the three lines from the second card matches the length of the line from the first card. The actors knew which answers they were supposed to give – since the aim was to see whether participants would follow their own opinion or conform to the majority's opinion. The experiments demonstrated that majority of the participants were willing to suppress their own opinion, and conform to majority's observations (Asch, 1956).

Third, as McDoom (2020: 124) argues: "negative beliefs or attitudes towards the victim group [are] not only an antecedent to violence but also a consequence of it." Thus, it is also possible that mere engagement in violence also increases people's willingness to be brutal, as their perception of the out-group becomes increasingly negative. Finally, it is also possible that perpetrators are willing to treat their victims brutally if they believe that such behaviour will be rewarded or that a lack of such behaviour would be punished. Put simply, it is possible that motives akin to the one offered by rationalist scholars further regimes' efforts to brutalise the perpetrators.

In addition to such arguments, I suggest that propaganda also plays a role in the process of brutalisation in three primary ways. First, it can serve as a tool through which orders are issued – akin to the way in which RTLM was used in the Rwandan genocide (Misser and Jaumain, 1994; Li, 2004: 12). Regimes are able to tap into people's tendency to obey orders coming from those they perceive as superior. Second, regimes can also use propaganda to disseminate the information and/or (alleged) attitudes of the majority in order to create an image in which the majority (supposedly) supports brutal violence, and thereby further people's tendency to conform and engage in brutal behaviour. Third, through propaganda regimes have the ability to create, shape, and disseminate discourses, which aim to create a negative imagery about the out-group, which in turn can further brutalise the perpetrators. Along similar lines, regimes also often create discourses which portray brutal instances of violence as heroic and further legitimising, and possibly encouraging, brutal violence. Finally, through propaganda regimes are also able to communicate the rewards for engaging in brutal behaviour (or punishments for lack thereof), thereby further increasing the chances that people will choose to act brutally.

Disincentivising opposition

The fifth important function propaganda serves in war is to disincentivise opposition, which could be expressed in broadly two ways. First, the opposition to war and violence could come from the soldiers and fighters who decide to desert the troops and refuse to fight, or at the very least, refuse

to follow specific orders. Second, opposition to war and violence could come from the general population and political parties who organise rallies, protests, and resistance movements. Thus, disincentivising such opposition is vital for regime's ability to successfully wage a war.

Soldiers are faced with multiple motives to desert throughout a war. First, during a war, they are continuously exposed to a risk of severe injury or death, which in the long run may trump the desire for rewards or fear of punishment, as well as the arguments offered in favour of the war. Second, on the war front soldiers are exposed to the full realities and horrors of war, which are often far worse than what people may anticipate when they decide to join fighting forces. The actual experiences of the war may in turn increase soldiers' willingness to desert, especially if they believe that it is unlikely that they will get caught, or if they are not persuaded that the aims of the war are legitimate.

For instance, during the Slovenian 10-day War, the JNA struggled with high levels of desertion among its troops, while the Slovenian TO forces did not experience such problems. I suggest that the usage of adequate propaganda can explain the motivational gap between the JNA and Slovene TO soldiers. As discussed in chapter five, Milošević and RTS invested little to no effort in disseminating discourses which would encourage JNA soldiers to fight or justify the violence taking place in Slovenia. At the same time, the Slovenian government invested huge resources into promoting the idea that the Slovenians must join the fighting forces in order to protect their land from, what they often called, a foreign invader. As Niebuhr (2004: 95) argues, "[o]ne thing that kept the Slovene independence movement alive was its high spirits in the face of destruction. […] Slovenes, by and large, described the JNA battle for Slovenia as an act of occupation and not a civil war. Furthermore, Slovene believed that they were, 'defending the Slovenian independence'[...]."

Third, soldiers are often exposed to a variety of familial or societal pressures to desert. For instance, if the general public is not supportive of the war, and stops perceiving army membership as admirable, some soldiers may decide to desert because they no longer enjoy the respect they anticipated when they joined the fighting forces. Similarly, soldiers are often pressured by their families to desert. In some cases, such pressures could be the result of family members' genuine concern for the lives and safety of their children.[19] Alternatively, familial pressures could also be politically motivated, and such pressures were particularly relevant for the Yugoslav case due to the ethnically heterogenous composition of the JNA. Niebuhr (2004: 94-95) provides a useful illustrative example. He discusses a story published by the New York Times which details the

[19] A good example of which are the protests of parents of Serbian soldiers based in Slovenia, who demanded that the government allows their immediate return to Belgrade (TV Dnevnik 2, 02/07/1991).

position of a JNA soldier of Serbian ethnicity during the Croatian War of Independence. As New York Times reported:

> "The pilot's Croatian wife had called him from Zagreb demanding that he take off his uniform and desert, or she would jump from their 14th-story apartment with their child. The pilot then called his Serbian mother in Novi Sad, who told him that if he took off the uniform of the Yugoslav Army, he could never cross her threshold again" (Binder, cited in Niehbur, 2004: 94-95).

However, it is not only the fighting forces that express opposition to the regime. Instead, oppositional political parties as well as the general public could also rebel against war and violence. It is important for regimes to engage with such resistance for several reasons. First, if the levels of opposition to the regime are high – from either the general public or the military – it is likely that the internal cohesion, often necessary for a successful military campaign, will be damaged. Hence, to be able to focus most of its efforts on defeating the external enemy, states often resort to eliminating and/or substantially decreasing level of resistance coming from within. Second, extreme opposition from the general public, especially in countries that hold multiparty elections, could be dangerous for the governments, as they may face a loss in elections. In authoritarian states, such regimes could face (a potentially violent) overthrow, if opposition to the regime is sufficiently strong. Third, vocal and strong opposition to the regime is likely to undermine many other functions that propaganda usually serves, as it offers an alternative worldview which people can conform to and follow.

Regimes and political elites have various tools at their disposal to disincentivise opposition. On one hand, they can offer great benefits to all of those who comply with the orders. On the other hand, regimes can also introduce various punishments for all of those who oppose their rule. I suggest that on top of these, political elites often use propaganda to disincentivise both the fighters and the general public from opposing the regime and its aims. There are several reasons why propaganda is effective in disincentivising opposition. First, through propaganda, political elites can create and disseminate discourses through which they can communicate the rewards for compliance and/or punishments for disobedience or explicit expression of opposing views. Thus, propaganda can further enhance some of the mechanisms discussed by rationalist scholars. Second, through mass dissemination of pro-war discourses, portrayed as enjoying widespread support, the regimes can create an atmosphere in which people think that the majority of their co-citizens support the war. This, in turn, may increase the pressure on people to conform to the pro-war attitudes, as they believe that expression of any opposition to the government carries high costs. The same logic would apply to soldiers – who would be much less likely to desert if they

thought they would be confronted by other soldiers or criticised by the general public. Thus, propaganda independently can be a useful strategy to disincentivise opposition.

Pacifying the population

The final function propaganda often serves in war is to pacify the population. While the previous functions received a varying degree of analysis in the relevant literature, the usage of propaganda to pacify remains largely neglected in the literature.[20] Its absence in the current literature may reflect the negative connotation that the term propaganda usually carries – leading scholars to ignore its possible positive functions. However, in this thesis, I deployed a definition of propaganda that relies on the presence (or absence) of intent to change people's views and behaviour. According to this view, propaganda can also be used for legitimate and morally justifiable aims. Subsequently, I argue that propaganda can be (and has been) used to pacify the population and promote discourses that support peace. Furthermore, I suggest that in war propaganda often serves the function to pacify, since regimes are eventually bound to reach a point in which ending the war is in their best strategic interest. I supplement my argument in the empirical chapters, in which I show that during the de-escalation phase, propaganda was used to pacify the population in all three cases examined.

Pacification of the population is important for two primary reasons. First, it assists regimes to effectively end a war. Having spent months or years telling its viewership that war and violence are justified, necessary, and desirable, media outlets need to find a way to persuade the population that peace is increasingly becoming a preferable outcome. However, convincing people that violence is justified is a time-consuming process, and not something that can happen overnight. Along the same lines, it takes time to persuade people that peace is a desirable outcome, especially if it comes at the cost of certain territorial and other loses (like it did in the Yugoslav case).

Second, pacification is also important for the sustainability of the peace and ceasefire agreements. As shown in the Croatian chapter, for example, throughout 1991 (which I categorise as the escalation phase, during which regimes aimed to persuade people that violence was legitimate and necessary), 14 ceasefire deals were signed, but none lasted for a sustainable period time. And even the one signed in January 1992, when propaganda entered the maintenance phase, only held ground due to the immense pressure and control exerted by the international community coupled with the fact that it was in neither Milošević's nor Tudjman's interest to continue fighting.

[20] I have listed in the previous chapter studies which discuss peace campaigns and their possible effects on people's views and behaviour. However, most of such studies only really analysed the potency of such campaigns in peaceful or post-conflict times, and during electoral campaigns. I, however, examine propaganda's power to pacify the population during wartimes – an area largely neglected in the relevant scholarship.

However, as discussed in chapter three, it was clear to all the relevant actors that the Sarajevo Agreement was unlikely to indefinitely remain in place and that the question of Croatia's borders would be reopened in the future (as it indeed was in 1995). Subsequently, it was only when propaganda entered the de-escalation phase in 1995, and when Milošević began prioritising peace negotiations over territorial gains, that a final arrangement was reached and accepted by the relevant audiences. A very similar set of events also took place in Bosnia, as I show in chapter seven.

For the purposes of fulfilling this function, regimes tend to use propaganda in a similar way to the other functions. Namely, they develop and shape discourses, and use techniques which promote peace and condone violence, as well as all of those who support violence. Occasionally, the process of pacification may go hand in hand with identity building. In the Yugoslav case for example, during the de-escalation phase, when propaganda's primary function was to pacify, the in-group and out-group members were no longer delineated along the lines of ethnicity. Instead, the in-group members were all of those who supported Milošević and his peace efforts, whereas the out-group consisted of those who supported further war and violence (including the Croatian Serb and Bosnian Serb leadership and their supporters).

I am not arguing that pacification through propaganda is the sole cause of peace deals and their sustainability. Various other factors – from the involvement (or lack thereof) of the international community to the military strength of the fighting parties – also matter and heavily impact whether and what kind of peace agreement(s) are signed. Instead, I am arguing that propaganda is a factor that impacts this process, because it has the power to persuade people that peace is desirable and justified – thereby making it more likely that people will support it and follow the peace deal signed. Some scholars may not be persuaded by the power of propaganda to alter people's views and decrease the levels of violence when used to pacify the population. However, McKinney's (2002) finding from Bosnia – that jamming transmitters decreased the levels of violence – casts doubt on such exclusionary conclusions. Thus, as with other functions, while propaganda is not the sole cause of peace, or the only mechanism through which violence is justified, it certainly does play a role in all of those processes and as such is a useful tool to be deployed by the regimes.

Discourses

As argued throughout the chapter, in order for propaganda to adequately fulfil its functions, media outlets must develop discourses which will alter people's views and behaviour. However, such discourses are not created out of thin air. Instead, I argue that more often than not, media outlets

rely on pre-existing discourses, and re-shape them to increase their chances of adequately fulfilling propaganda's functions. Depending on the specific context of a given war, some discourses are going to be more persuasive than others, and it is the context and the pre-existing discourses that determine the shape and form of the development of discourse. Subsequently, when analysing the discourses developed during the Yugoslav Wars, I rely on Foucault's understanding of discourse analysis. For Foucault "discourse analysis is concerned with analysing statements […], that is, with specifying sociohistorically variable discursive formations, systems of rules which make it possible for certain statements and not others to occur at particular times, places and institutional locations. A discursive formation consists of 'rules of formation' for the particular set of statements which belong to it […] (Melrose, 2005: 75). As I show in the rest of this chapter and in my empirical chapters, the discourses developed by RTS were heavily influenced by the historical and social context.

For example, the discourse of threat (discussed below) was not created by RTS. Portraying others as threatening has been a common discourse across the globe and in various times of history. Moreover, the discourse of threat is not even solely present in war contexts – for instance, I would identify a competitor for my job as a threat to my professional career. Thus, RTS did not invent a discourse of threat during the Yugoslav Wars, instead they took a pre-existing discourse and re-shaped it so as to make it serve its intended purpose. Furthermore, when portraying the Croats as a threat, RTS did not invent the nature of the Croatian threat. RTS relied on a set of pre-existing discourses – namely those created as a consequence of World War II. Subsequently, the discourse of threat pertaining to the Croats heavily resembled and relied on the stories, narratives, and discourses developed during and in the immediate aftermath of World War II. As I explicate below, such discourse formation should not be surprising. Given the context of the region such an interpretation of the Croatian threat was likely to resonate with audiences. Finally, such discourse formation is not uniquely related to RTS and the Yugoslav Wars, instead this is something which occurs across conflicts. For instance, the discourse of antisemitism pre-dates Nazi Germany – subsequently, the Nazis did not invent the antisemitic discourse, instead they re-shaped it and developed it in a context-specific way so as to make it more persuasive.

It is therefore important for scholars to consider and account for the context when conducting discourse analysis and/or when trying to predict what kind of discourses are likely to be successfully propagated. However, if scholars were to focus extensively on the context it would be difficult to make any contributions that extend beyond a single-case analysis. Thus, in my thesis, I have aimed to find discourses which are likely to be common across cases. My empirical examination of the Yugoslav case coupled with my research of the relevant literature – ranging

from conflict studies to psychology – helped me identify six distinct discourses media outlets create during war. Three of those discourses, namely: the discourses of *threat, guilt,* and *dehumanisation* – are targeting the outgroup, while the remaining three: the discourses of *valorisation, victimisation and humanisation* – target the in-group. The relative importance of a given discourse often depends upon the phase and function of propaganda.

And as with the list of functions, this is by no means an exhaustive list, and equally, it is not the case that all discourses will be developed in each and every case of war. Instead, the relative importance of a discourse vis-à-vis another is a context-sensitive issue. For instance, as I show in the three empirical chapters, dehumanisation (bar minor exceptions) was not particularly used in the Yugoslav case. Instead, the discourses targeting the Slovenes, Croats and Bosniaks primarily aimed to portray them as threatening to the wellbeing of the Serbs and/or guilty for the current and past suffering of the Serbian people. Conversely, dehumanisation was crucial in other instances of war, mass atrocities, and genocide. For example, during the Rwandan genocide, many political leaders, prominent figures, and media representatives constantly referred to Tutsis as cockroaches (Neilsen, 2015). Similarly, a senior Ottoman doctor under the Young Turks often stated that he thought of Armenians as microbes, and that it was his duty as a doctor to eliminate them (Mann, 2005: 172). And during the Herero genocide in German South West Africa, General Von Trotha (senior commander of German forces) declared that: "No war may be conducted humanely against nonhumans" (Hull, 2003: 154).

Threat

There is a widespread agreement among the scholars that portraying the out-group as threatening is a commonly used strategy by the regimes who initiate or engage in war and violence (McDoom, 2012; Leader Maynard, forthcoming; Littman and Paluck, 2015; Greenberg and Kosloff, 2008; Pyszczynski et al., 2006; Hirschberger, Pyszczynski and Ein-Dor, 2015). As McDoom (2012: 119) argues: "the power of security threats to mobilize social groups against each other is well known. Distrust and fear characterise relations between large segments of identity groups that have engaged in ethnic conflict in diverse regions of the world: Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka; Serbs and Bosniaks in the former Yugoslavia; Arabs and Jews in Palestine; Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda." I argue that such common usage of this discourse should not be surprising given that portraying the out-group as threatening does indeed boost propaganda's power in the process of fulfilling the discussed functions. First, it helps legitimate the violence committed by the in-group since it portrays it as self-defence. As Leader Maynard [forthcoming] suggests:

> The most ubiquitously recognised justification for violence is individual or collective self-defence. The assertion that killing is a necessary form of (perhaps pre-emptive) self-defence is central in all cases of mass killing, and stressed by virtually all scholars. Those who initiate, carry out or support mass killing perceive it and/or portray themselves as in extreme peril from dangers – whether military, biological, cultural, economic, or demographic – emanating from or fundamentally linked to civilian victim groups.

Along the same lines, Littman and Paluck (2015: 89) suggest that: "[g[roup leaders can also increase motivation to engage in collective violence by playing up the threats faced by one's group." Such legitimation of violence, in turn, furthers other functions of propaganda. For instance, it is plausible to argue that recruitment will be easier if people believe that the out-group is threatening to the well-being of the in-group's population. Furthermore, if people hold the view that the out-group is threatening, and that violence is a proportionate and necessary response to such a threat, they will be less likely to oppose the war or the regime advocating war. Finally, depending on the exact nature of the threat, it is also possible that the discourse of threat may brutalise the perpetrators. For instance, it is plausible that revoking the imagery of World War II – in which RTS particularly highlighted the brutality of Ustaše fighters – encouraged some soldiers on the ground to be equally or more brutal towards the Croats. The power of this discourse in encouraging violent and brutal behaviour is further supported by the testimony of the direct perpetrators of violence. Direct perpetrators of violence in Yugoslavia that I spoke to suggested that they perceived the Croats as threatening, and that they decided to join the fighting troops because they wanted to prevent the history from repeating itself (interview 16, interview 17, interview 18, 2018). Psychological research also confirms the importance of threat construction in war and conflict settings. Greenberg and Kosloff (2008) find evidence that perceptions of threat, and reminders of death in particular, encourage aggression towards the out-group. Castano (2004) found that primming people with death makes them more likely to discriminate against the out-group, as well as all of those who look more like the out-group.[21]

Importantly, just as the discourse of threat can serve to encourage violence, I suggest (and show in the empirical chapters) that it can also serve to pacify the population. To use threat construction in this way, regimes and media outlets need to change what is portrayed as threatening. In the Yugoslav case, RTS simply argued that it was no longer the Croats or Bosnian Muslims that were threatening to the Serbian population. Instead, they suggested that war and violence, as well as all of those who supported it were threatening to the well-being of the Serbian

[21] And indeed, there are more laboratory experiments conducted by psychologists which also confirm the power of threat in encouraging aggressive behaviour. For further details see: Brambilla, Sacchi, Pagliaro and Ellemers, 2013; McPherson and Joireman, 2009; Pyszczynski et al., 2006.

population. Thus, the power of threat construction to alter people's views and behaviour goes beyond mere encouragement to engage in violence. Instead, this discourse can also be used in the process of pacifying the population.

Dehumanisation[22]

The second discourse used by regimes as they try to initiate and escalate violence is dehumanisation. Many scholars have emphasized the role of dehumanisation in a diverse range of cases, including Rwanda (Neilsen, 2015), Guatemala (Brett, 2016), Cambodia (Williams and Neilsen, 2016), and Darfur (Hagan and Rymond-Richmond, 2008). Despite the sheer size of the literature discussing dehumanisation, dehumanisation is surprisingly under-theorised. Most importantly, even what the concept itself constitutes remains unclear. For instance, people tend to conflate any language which invokes animalistic metaphors with dehumanisation. However, as Smith and Panaitu (2015: 80) suggest: "one might refer to a person as a non-human animal without meaning to exclude them from the category of the human. For example, one might call someone a pig in order to denigrate that person by calling attention to certain of his or her characteristics that are conventionally associated with pigs (for example, gluttony) without believing that the object of one's slur is, literally, a nonhuman animal." Thus, to assume that animalistic rhetoric is always dehumanising seems wrong.

A complete study and analysis of dehumanisation exceeds the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, I wish to suggest a different definition of dehumanisation:

> *Dehumanisation is a process through which a category of individuals is portrayed as having lower moral significance due to purported features of their biological and/or psychological makeup (as opposed to, for example, the social relationships in which they stand to others, or the past actions they have committed).*[23]

Having defined dehumanisation, I now turn to discussing its relationship with war and violence. I argue that the discourse of dehumanisation can both legitimate violence and brutalise the perpetrators, with extensive empirical research supporting my claim.[24] Much of this research has been conducted in experimental settings by psychologists. For instance, in a landmark study, Bandura, Underwood and Fromson (1975) examine the role of dehumanisation and diffusion of responsibility in encouraging aggression. Their experiments show that exposure to brief (and

[22] This section of the thesis is building on the previous research I conducted as part of my MPhil in Politics: Political Theory, at the University of Oxford. For further details on my research on dehumanisation see: Ivanov, 2017.
[23] As part of my MPhil research, I arrived at this definition of dehumanisation. For my further analysis of the features of this definition, as well as its defence against other definitions of dehumanisation see: Ivanov, 2017.
[24] For further details on the relationship between dehumanisation and violence see: Kelman, 1973; Haslam, 2006; Waller, 2007; Semelin, 2007; Smith, 2011; Čehajić et al., 2009.

apparently accidental) dehumanisation significantly increased the level of aggression expressed towards the dehumanised group.

Maoz and McCauley (2008) also use an experimental approach in examining how dehumanization can increase support for retaliatory aggressive policies in asymmetric conflict. They focused on the conflict between Israel and Palestine and found that the level of support their Israeli Jewish subjects would give for both concrete coercive actions towards Palestinians, and more hypothetical plans for Palestinian population transfers, rose considerably when their subjects were exposed to dehumanizing characterizations of Palestinians. Goff et al. (2008) examine whether, and to what extent, white people tend to analogize black people with apes, and whether such association impacts perceptions about the acceptability of violence against black people. They concluded "that Black-ape association can alter participants' judgement about violence against a Black target. Participants were more likely to believe that the beating of the Black suspect was justified when primed with images of apes than with big cats" (Goff et al., 2008: 302). Rudman and Mescher (2012: 743), meanwhile, examine the relationship between dehumanization of women and conclude that: "[t]aken together, our results support theorists' assumptions that dehumanizing women as animals and objects plays a role in male sexual aggression."

In light of such research, I argue that dehumanisation excludes the out-group from the universe of moral obligations owed to humans by the virtue of their humanity and thereby legitimates violence (Fein, 1979: 9). At the extreme, dehumanisation can also brutalise the perpetrators – who no longer perceive their victims as humans, towards whom brutal behaviour is perceived as morally unacceptable. Other perpetrators, who perhaps are not persuaded by the dehumanised imagery disseminated, could feel pressured to conform to what they believe is the view of the majority (as demonstrated by Asch's experiments discussed above).

In addition, I argue that such altered views on the legitimacy and brutality of violence, as well as the perception of the out-group as subhuman or inhuman, also furthers other functions of propaganda. Similarly, as with the discourse of threat, dehumanisation can be quite effective in disincentivising opposition. If most soldiers consider their victims as subhuman, it is less likely that they will be revolted by the violence they commit – consequently, they will be less likely to desert. Furthermore, if most people internalise the dehumanised image of the out-group, and/or believe that most of their co-citizens hold such a view, they are less likely to create or join resistance movements or create the kinds of incentives which could motivate soldiers to disobey orders or resist the troops. Along the similar lines, dehumanisation can be effective in recruiting fighters, as it persuades them that the potential victims of their violence are not even human – thereby, further assisting people in overcoming motivational obstacles to joining fighting troops and engaging in

violence. It should be noted, however, that unlike most other discourses discussed in this thesis, on the basis of my empirical examination of the Yugoslav case[25] and the relevant scholarly literature, I did not find evidence that dehumanisation can help pacify the population.

Guilt

The third discourse targeting the out-group is the discourse of guilt. Through this discourse, the guilt for the current or past suffering is attributed to the out-group. While similar in many ways to the discourse of threat, guilt attribution nevertheless taps into a different set of conditions under which people tend to perceive violence as legitimate. Through threat construction, people come to think that violence committed by the in-group is legitimate (and possibly pre-emptive) self-defence. Through guilt attribution, people tend to think that those who committed crimes are now recipients of a just punishment. And as Leader Maynard [forthcoming] suggests, most ordinary people would accept that "criminals and wrongdoers can and should suffer violent punishment." And as Eidelson and Eidelson (2003: 190) argue, "transformations in group mindsets may be directly implicated in the dynamics of intergroup conflict. For example, shifts in group perceptions toward greater presumptions of superiority or intensified convictions of injustice may precede or follow the onset or escalation of hostilities." They continue to argue that "[l]eaders often play an important role in promoting a group's adoption of the injustice worldview. An effective leader can persuade group members that their current situation is not only unjust but also intolerable – and that change, perhaps even violent change is necessary" (2003: 185). And indeed, as shown in the empirical chapters, the Serbian regime and the corresponding media outlets, continuously portrayed the Slovenes, Croats and Bosnian Muslims as guilty of the suffering of the Serbian population, and subsequently the Serbs as victims of terrible and intolerable injustices.

I suggest that there are two ways in which the out-group can be blamed. First, the regimes can use media outlets to spread news about the current suffering of the in-group and blame the out-group for it. Alternatively, the media can air stories about past events (usually portrayed as unfinished) and previous suffering of the in-group and, yet again, blame the out-group for those past injustices. Placing the blame on the out-group for either current or past suffering of the in-group assists several functions propaganda serves in war. First, it helps legitimate violence. As Leader Maynard [forthcoming] suggests, through guilt attribution, people may come to believe that violence is a proportionate punishment for the allegedly committed crimes.

[25] While examining the Yugoslav case specifically, I analysed whether (during the de-escalation phase) all of those who opposed Milošević's peace efforts were dehumanised, in which case I could have perhaps argued that dehumanisation is sometimes used in the process of pacifying the population. However, I did not find any dehumanising rhetoric in the reports that criticised all of those who opposed Milošević and his peace efforts.

Second, on top of legitimating violence, the discourse of guilt also helps in the process of recruiting people to fight. It does so by tapping into people's desire to seek revenge. To illustrate, direct perpetrators of violence suggested to me in interviews that they were willing to join the fighting troops and perceived their acts as a legitimate response to the crimes committed by the Croats in World War II (interview 16, 2018; interview 17, 2018; interview 18, 2018). In their opinion, the Croatian nationals deserved to be the victims of violence because they subjected the Serb civilian population to the same kind of violence in the past (interview 16, 2018; interview 17, 2018; interview 18, 2018). These findings are in line with the argument made by Leader Maynard [forthcoming]. In his words: "Mere perception that other members of one's ingroup have suffered at the hands of members of an outgroup appears to be capable of generating intense desires for 'vicarious retribution'."

Third, it is also possible that guilt attribution further brutalises the perpetrators of violence. By airing stories of the monstrous acts (allegedly) committed by the out-group, media outlets implicitly legitimate excess brutality. For example, one broadcast from Serbian media claimed that "Muslim extremists invented the most horrific crime on the planet. Last night they fed Serb children to the lion at the Sarajevo Zoo." (Anderson, 2017: 84). If people and the fighters were persuaded that such heinous crimes actually took place, it is possible that people also considered brutal treatment of the Bosnian Muslims as a proportionate response to the crimes Bosniaks allegedly committed. Finally, if most people deploy the image of the out-group as guilty for the current or past suffering of the in-group's members, it is also likely that there will be fewer, if any, incentives to oppose the regime that wages, what is perceived to be, a just war.

That guilt attribution has such an impact on people's views about the legitimacy of violence towards the guilty party is further confirmed in psychological research. For example, Carlsmith, Darley, and Robinson (2002) examine why people think that punishing wrongdoers is justified. They contrast two rationales offered as a justification for punishment. In their words (2002: 284), "[o]ne popular justification for punishments is the just desert rationale: A person deserves punishment proportionate to the moral wrong committed. A competing justification is the deterrence rationale: Punishing an offender reduces the frequency and likelihood of future offenses." They (2002: 284) conducted three studies and concluded that "despite strongly stated preferences for deterrence theory, individual sentencing decisions seemed driven exclusively by just deserts concerns." They further show that in instances in which the wrongdoer had an intention to commit the wrongful act, the moral outrage was greater, and subsequently, people became more comfortable with inflicting a harsher punishment (Carlsmith, Darley and Robinson, 2002). Thus, if media outlets successfully persuade people that the out-group has (intentionally)

caused the in-group's suffering, it is likely that in-group members would think that punishing them proportionally is justified. Finally, guilt attribution can also pacify the population. The only thing that regimes and media outlets need to do is shift who is being blamed and/or what are the wrongdoers being blamed for. In the Yugoslav case, this is exactly what RTS did in 1995. As propaganda started de-escalating, RTS began praising Milošević's peace efforts, and blamed all of those who opposed them for the current suffering of the Serbian people.

Humanisation

On top of the three discourses targeting the out-group, media outlets often disseminate discourses which target the in-group. These discourses often serve to support the discourses orientated towards the out-group and boost their power in fulfilling the functions propaganda serves.

Regimes often aim to further humanise the members and especially the victims who belong to the in-group. Just as dehumanisation serves to exclude the out-group from the universe of moral obligations, humanisation often helps to highlight the human side of the in-group's members – thereby further increasing the stark contrast between the in-group and the out-group. Such gap in the humanness of the in-group and the out-group is often a fertile ground for justifying severe mistreatment of the out-group and a growing concern and demands for rectification for the unjust position of the in-group. As I show in the empirical chapters, such humanisation usually occurred during reports in which RTS interviewed distressed Serb civilians and/or reported on the Serbian casualties. By providing extensive and personal details of the people interviewed or deceased, RTS particularly highlighted the human side of the subjects of their reports.

Primarily, humanisation serves to assist the general audiences in identifying with the suffering of the in-group's members. Such identification is important for various functions propaganda serves in war. For instance, identifying with victims of violence often leads to an increase in the public's outrage and demands for those injustices to be rectified and those responsible for the injustices to be punished (Carlsmith, Darley, and Robinson, 2002). Coupled with the discourse of guilt – through which the out-group is explicitly blamed for the unjust position of the in-group – it becomes increasingly likely that such rectification and punishment may include violence. Thus, through humanisation of the victims, the regime is likely to legitimate violence. Humanisation is also likely to further disincentivise opposition among both the general population and the soldiers. If the soldiers are able to identify with the pain and the suffering of their victims, they are less likely to desert the troops. Similarly, if most people identify with the pain of the in-group's members and consider their circumstances unjust, the people are less likely

to create or join resistance movements and are in fact more likely to support the war and the regime waging it.

Using the same logic, one could also conclude that humanisation is likely to boost state's efforts to recruit fighters. If individuals are able to identify with the suffering of the in-group and perceive the treatment of the in-group as unjust, it is more likely that they will choose to join the troops. In fact, I argue that humanisation enhances recruitment efforts through two mechanisms. First, by highlighting the suffering of the innocent humans, the regimes implicitly justify the causes of war (since protecting innocent victims is likely to be perceived as just). This, in turn, helps people overcome motivational obstacles to engaging in war and violence. Second, due to the general public's outrage (caused by an increased number of reports detailing the suffering of the in-group's members), the prospective soldiers are likely exposed to social pressures to join the troops, or at the very least, anticipate that they may face social sanctions should they evade recruitment.

Victimisation

The second discourse which targets the in-group aims to portray the members of the in-group as victims of unjust or discriminatory policies, and at the extreme, illegitimate violence. There are two important aspects to victimisation. First, victimisation portrays the current circumstances of the in-group as unjust, thereby implicitly suggesting that the in-group has a legitimate right to engage in necessary activities to rectify those injustices. Second, the suboptimal and unjust conditions of the in-group are never portrayed as a consequence of the in-group's behaviour. Instead, victimisation often serves to support the discourse of guilt – with media outlets often highlighting a direct causal link between the out-group's behaviour and in-group's suffering. For example, in the initial stages of the Yugoslav Wars, RTS stressed the unfair treatment of the Serbian population. The station reported the apparent unfairness of the international community accepting declarations of independence for Croatia and Slovenia, while denying that right to the Serbian population. In such reports, RTS ensured to especially emphasise the suffering of the Serb population caused directly by the denial of their right to self-determination.

Victimisation is a particularly useful discourse since it is easily subject to change, depending on the regime's aims and the function propaganda is serving. As such, it is well suited to support many functions propaganda can serve during wartime. First, it helps legitimate violence, as it portrays it as a necessary solution to the unjust position of the in-group. Second, it can help disincentivise opposition and recruit fighters, as it portrays the aims of the regime and the war as a just response necessary for the rectification of injustices. Along the same lines, it can enhance

state's effort to recruit fighters by portraying the causes of the war as just – thereby helping people overcome motivational obstacles to violence. Finally, victimisation can be particularly useful for pacifying the population as the war and violence come to an end. The discourse of victimisation appears to have played this role in the Yugoslav Wars. As I show in the empirical chapters, once Milošević realised that it was in his interest to end the war, RTS moved from arguing for the recognition of the Serbs' right to self-determination, to portraying the continuation of war and violence as the primary source of suffering for the Serb population.

Valorisation

The final discourse developed by the regimes is valorisation. As discussed thus far, people are faced with various motivational obstacles to engage in violence, and especially violence against unarmed civilians. In part, this is because such acts are usually perceived as morally abhorrent and fall outside of the realm of instances in which the usage of violence is legitimate and justified. Subsequently, people who engage in such violence will likely face social sanctions – as people tend to sanction morally dubious behaviour, or at the very least, they do not actively praise it. Furthermore, it is difficult for people to engage in acts they themselves perceive as morally repulsive – as explicated through the cognitive dissonance theory. To assist people in overcoming these motivational obstacles, other discourses discussed thus far try and place violence inside the realm of instances in which its usage is legitimate. For instance, the discourse of threat does so by portraying the violence as a legitimate form of self-defence. Alternatively, through guilt attribution, violence is portrayed as a legitimate punishment for the (alleged) crimes committed by the out-group. However, none of these discourses are actually focusing on portraying the violence as morally desirable or praiseworthy.

Nevertheless, my empirical examination of the Yugoslav case, but also my analysis of the relevant literature, clearly showed that regimes have a tendency not only to justify violence by portraying it as necessary, but also by portraying it as desirable – and I argue that regimes do this through the discourse of valorisation. Through this discourse, the regimes valorise violence and tend to frame it as "an admirable, glorious, praiseworthy act indicative of the virtuous, rather than evil, character of those who carry it out." [Leader Maynard, forthcoming]. As I show in the empirical chapters, RTS often used tropes which aimed to valorise the violence and the behaviour of the Serbian troops more generally.

Such valorised portrayals of violence help legitimate it as people's perception about violence as morally unacceptable is reframed. As Leader Maynard [forthcoming] argues "at a minimum, valorisation promotes a mental representation or social definition of violence which

disassociates it from morally problematic categories of murder, barbarism or atrocity." Furthermore, such valorisation not only removes the negative associations that violence usually carries. Instead, it also portrays it as an act of heroism and demonstration of loyalty and patriotism. Subsequently, valorisation further assists people in overcoming psychological barriers to violence and makes it easier for people to engage in it, or at least support it. Even in instances in which valorisation cannot persuade people to support or engage in violent behaviour, it can at the very least, disincentivise people to oppose it either because people are genuinely persuaded that such violence (while unpleasant) is necessary or because they think that opposing it would be perceived by the majority as an act of disloyalty.

Moreover, valorisation can also further the regime's efforts to recruit people to fight and disincentivise opposition to violence and the regimes advocating it. As Leader Maynard [forthcoming] suggests: "most individuals feel intense motives to establish both positive moral self-identity and social self-esteem and valorisation links participation in violence to both." At the extreme, valorisation could encourage brutal behaviour, by portraying it as legitimate and heroic rather than morally unacceptable. Finally, valorisation can also play an important role in pacifying the population. By shifting what is being valorised, the regimes can use this discourse for all sorts of aims. As I show in the empirical chapters, RTS decreased its praise for the Serbian troops and the violence they committed. Instead, RTS increasingly valorised Milošević's peace efforts as its reporters aimed to pacify the population and prime them for the Dayton peace agreement.

Techniques

In this section, I examine the main techniques used by media outlets in their attempt to increase the persuasiveness of their discourses. I distinguish between five different techniques: *inventing*, *agenda-setting*, *manipulating, mirroring,* and *denying*.

Inventing

Inventing in this thesis is understood as a process through which media outlets outright fabricate stories and news, or substantially alter the facts of an event. Inventing is a common technique used by regimes, particularly in wartime. Fujii (2004: 100) argues that during the Rwandan genocide, Hutus often staged events and possibly made them up to prompt the killings of Tutsi. While extensively used in wartime, it is worth noting that news fabrication is a technique also often used in peace times. For instance, Bellamy (2012: 177) discusses various examples of news fabrication and widespread dissemination of conspiracy theories during Stalinism. He continues to argue that such reports were often used to legitimate attacks on all of those who were disloyal to the regime.

Similarly, Osborn (2008) shows how fake news in Kenya ultimately led to the closure of all pubs in the run up to elections. As Osborn (2008: 310): "[o]ne remarkable rumour that gained credence within Kibera was that Odinga's supporters would be prevented from voting by the poisoning of *pombe* (beer) throughout the many bars. […] Implausible though this scenario was, the bars in Kibrea were closed on December 25th and mostly remained closed until after the polls on December 28th."

Importantly, most of these examples focus on the immediate impact of news fabrication. However, there is evidence that news fabrication leaves long-term consequences on people's beliefs, and that even retraction often fails to change people's minds following their exposure to fake news (for further details see: Ayers and Reder, 1998; Ecker, Lewandowsky and Tang, 2010; Lewandowsky et al., 2012). As I show in the empirical chapters, RTS frequently relied on this technique to alter people's views and behaviour.

Through invention, the regimes and media outlets are able to increase the validity of the discourses. For example, by airing completely false or somewhat inaccurate stories, media outlets are able to overstate the guilt, or the threat (allegedly) posed by the out-group. During the first part of the Croatian War of Independence in 1991, RTS aired a (what turned out to be a false) report that around 40 Serbian babies were executed by the Croatian forces in Vukovar. Despite my best effort, I was unable to identify a retraction of the story in Dnevnik 2 (aired at 7.30 PM on a daily basis), although some of my interviewees suggested that it may have been on Dnevnik 3 (usually aired after midnight). Subsequently, it is reasonable to assume that very few, if any people, were exposed to the retraction (and even for those who were, in light of the research mentioned above, it is questionable what, if any, impact a retraction had). Consequently, if most Serbian people believed that the Croatian forces engaged in en-masse execution of Serbian children, it is reasonable to expect that most Serbs perceived the Croats as threatening to the Serbian wellbeing and/or guilty for the suffering of the Serb population in Croatia. As I show in the empirical chapters, this is not an isolated example. For instance, according to Lalić (1995: 77) RTS also claimed that "the Croatian fighters in Vukovar were using several thousand people as human shield." Thus, inventing was often used as RTS attempted to ensure that its discourses would be deployed by the relevant audiences.

Agenda setting

Media outlets often use agenda setting, understood as a process through which media outlets can increase or decrease the relative importance of certain events and stories. Depending on the regimes' aims and functions of propaganda, media outlets may substantially increase (or decrease)

the breadth and frequency of reporting about certain events and topics. Agenda setting is a particularly useful and widely used technique in both war and peace times. Its usefulness stems from the fact that media outlets can overwhelm their viewership with a particular discourse whose prominence is necessary due to the specific function that propaganda serves. As such, it helps propaganda fulfil the intended functions.

As I show in the empirical chapters, during the escalation phase, discourses of the Croats' and Bosniaks' threat and guilt, as well as stories promoting such discourses, dominated RTS broadcasts. Nevertheless, as propaganda entered its de-escalation phase in 1995, and as signing a peace deal in Dayton became a priority for Milošević, those discourses evaporated from RTS broadcasts. Instead, extensive amount of airtime was devoted to discourses that valorised Milošević's peace effort and portrayed those who supported violence as threatening to the Serbian wellbeing and as guilty for the suffering of the Serbian people. Moreover, during the de-escalation phase, the stories pertaining to the war in Bosnia and Croatia (which used to dominate the broadcasts between 1991 and 1995) were replaced with stories discussing foreign political issues or the economic position of the country – as Milošević aimed to pacify the Serbian population and prepare it for the Dayton Peace Agreement. And importantly, a vast quantity of research confirms the importance and power of agenda setting in the process of altering people's views and behaviour (see: McLeod, Becker and Byners, 1974; Ball-Rokeach and deFleur, 1976; Iyengar and Simon, 1993).

Manipulating

Third, media outlets often manipulate their audience. They can do so in two broad ways. First, they sometimes air reports in which multiple actors from different backgrounds confirm their stories and discourses. For instance, when aiming to increase the validity of the threat construction discourse, RTS aired reports in which ordinary civilians, politicians, doctors, soldiers, and many other people testified that Croats were a threat to the wellbeing of the Serbian people. This form of manipulation is particularly effective for three reasons. First, it increases the chances that people will believe a story by increasing the number of sources that confirm its validity. For instance, individuals may not trust politicians, but could place a lot of trust in military authorities and find a story plausible because military figures confirmed it. Second, this form of manipulation increases the validity of stories and discourses because it possibly taps into people's tendency to obey authorities. In line with Milgram's experiments, when seeing a military, political, or other authoritative figure confirm a story or a discourse, people may be increasingly likely to accept it as accurate. Third, in line with Asch's experiments, reliance on multiple actors tends to increase the

pressure on people to conform to apparently dominant beliefs. By airing reports in which a large and diverse set of people confirms a story or a discourse, media outlets create (perhaps a false) sense that the story or discourse in question has been accepted by the majority.

Alternatively, media outlets can use history to manipulate its viewership. During conflict, particularly in instances in which a war is waged between historically connected entities, manipulating past events and portraying them as unresolved is often a powerful strategy that promotes various discourses discussed. As Das (1998) shows, this technique was especially used in a conflict between Sikhs and Hindus. Similarly, Li (2004) shows that historical myths were often used to justify violence against Tutsi in Rwanda. Fujii (2004) further confirms that during the Rwandan genocide, RTLM often relied on and invoked history in their genocidal messages. Finally, as I show in the empirical chapters, RTS often invoked World War II, in their attempt to portray the Croats as threatening but also as guilty of the past suffering of the Serbian population. In such reports, RTS always ensured that the events of World War II were interpreted as unresolved in order to persuade the general audiences that the Croats were, but crucially remained, an existential threat to the Serbian population. And as Eidelson and Eidelson (2003) show, manipulating past events breaks trust between communities and could possibly lead members of the in-group to become paranoid. Such mistrust and paranoia can motivate a group to take decisive (and often violent) action to protect their interests.

Mirroring

Fourth, media outlets often use mirroring. Marcus (2012) explains that this strategy usually involves accusing the out-group of committing (or planning to commit) acts in fact committed (or planned) by the in-group. This is a technique commonly used across cases – for example during the Rwandan genocide, RTLM often "described gruesome acts of violence attributed to Tutsi as a means of implying what should be done to them […]" (Li, 2004: 12). On top of the Rwandan genocide, Marcus (2012) highlights the role of mirroring in Yugoslavia and Nazi Germany. Since mirroring often involves disseminating stories about attacks and their aftermaths, this technique is particularly useful for furthering the image of the out-group as threatening and guilty. Through this strategy, media outlets are able to increase the validity of the discourses of threat and guilt, which in turn, assists many of the relevant functions of propaganda. First, it helps legitimate violence committed by the in-group, by portraying it as either a necessary pre-emptive response to the planned attacks by the out-group or as a proportionate response to the attacks allegedly committed by the out-group.

Second, it also can help brutalise the perpetrators – since airing stories about brutal attacks allegedly committed or planned by the out-group, could indicate to the in-group, that a brutal response would be a proportionate response. Along the similar lines, mirroring can help recruit the fighters and disincentivise opposition, since it helps regimes portray the out-group as a genuine threat which requires a fierce response. Given the wide plethora of discourses that this technique can support, it should not come as a surprise that regimes and media outlets often resort to it. As I show in the empirical chapters, RTS was no exception, and in fact, often accused Croats and/or Bosnian Muslims of attacks committed by the Serbian forces.

Denying

The final strategy used by media outlets is denial. Namely, media will often deny that certain events or atrocities took place or deny that they were committed by the in-group. Through this technique, the media often aim to portray the in-group's violence as proportionate and legitimate, rather than excessive and illegitimate. This technique is particularly important in instances in which certain episodes of violence would hardly be perceived as proportionate irrespective of the out-group's behaviour – and as such, it is usually relevant in instances where genocide or mass rape takes place. Given the atrociousness of these crimes, it is often difficult for regimes to justify genocidal policies – even by appealing to the, say, alleged threat that the out-group poses. Similarly, it would be difficult for regimes to argue that unarmed women could pose a serious threat, and even if they could successfully do so, it would be difficult to argue that mass rape is a justified response to such a threat. Subsequently, the most effective technique regimes have is to deny that such crimes ever took place.

Various genocidal regimes or regimes waging war and violence used this technique (for further details see: Bellamy, 2012; Moshman, 2007; Richter, Markus and Tait, 2018). As I show in the empirical chapters, the Yugoslav case is not an exception. Before concluding this section, it is worth noting that denial (like many other techniques) is not exclusively used in wartime. In fact, to this day, the Serbian government refuses to accept that genocide took place in Srebrenica (often referring to it as a mass atrocity). Moreover, to date, there are those in Serbia who deny that the number of victims is around or over 8000, arguing that the data itself was manufactured with the aim of falsely portraying the Serbian side as genocidal. Finally, to date most Serbs, including the Serbian political elites, would not admit that concertation camps operated in Bosnia and that in many of them, mass rape took place.

The Impact of Propaganda[26]

Finally, I want to outline three possible mechanisms through which propaganda may alter people's views and behaviour. While there is a range of evidence that propaganda has both direct and indirect impacts on people's views and behaviour,[27] theorists have rarely explicated the mechanisms through which propaganda operates – yet this is necessary if we are to think clearly about potential ways to respond to propaganda. On the basis of my model, the empirical examination of the Yugoslav case, as well as the literature, I found that propaganda can: a) lead to the creation of an *explicit belief* in whatever is being propagated, b) motivate *feelings of indifference* towards the suffering of the targeted group, or c) *signal to individuals* that most other people in society accepted the propagated discourses. For reasons of scope, this section is not as theoretically dense, nor are its implications empirically examined in detail in the following chapters. Nevertheless, this section could serve as a good starting point for thinking about the mechanisms through which propaganda changes people's views and behaviour. In addition, this section may provide mechanisms for future research on the effectiveness of propaganda.

First, through the constant presence of propaganda some people may genuinely *adopt the explicit belief* in whatever is being propagated. Semelin (2007: 250-1) argues that people tend to internalize ideology and, as an illustrative example, points to the letters that Walter Mattner, a clerk recruited in the Nazi *Einsatzkommando,*[28] wrote to his wife in which he explicitly justified his role in the process of killing civilians. Mattner tried to explain why and how he could kill children, despite being a father himself. In the letter, Mattner claimed that whilst Jewish kids may appear human, they were not truly human at all. Mattner thus demonstrates an explicit internalization of the dehumanising discourse: he adopted beliefs and images of the Jews as subhuman. This may have directly motivated him to commit violence, or at least functioned as an effective rationalization for his ongoing participation in violence. Mattner is not an isolated example. The available evidence suggests that many members of the German SS and Army internalised the dehumanised discourse, and many major military influences explicitly espoused dehumanised beliefs. For instance, one of the army manuals in Nazi Germany stated:

> [The Jew] wants to live among us as a parasite who can suck us dry… Who can believe it possible to reform or convert a parasite (a louse for example)? Who can believe in a compromise with the parasite? We are left with one choice only, either

[26] This section builds on the research I have done as part of my MPhil in Politics: Political Theory at the University of Oxford. For further details see: Ivanov, 2017.
[27] For a more detailed analysis of that literature see above and the Introduction.
[28] A sub-group of five Einsatzgruppen – mobile killing squads – whose mission was to exterminate all of those who were deemed undesirable by the Nazi regime.

> to be devoured by the parasite or to exterminate it. The Jew must be exterminated wherever we meet him! (Aronsfeld, 1985: 48)

Explicit adoption of the discourses propagated is particularly relevant for several of the functions propaganda serves in war. For instance, those who genuinely deploy the dehumanising discourse of the out-group are more likely to engage in violence, perhaps even brutal violence, against its members. Similarly, adoption of the beliefs that the out-group is threatening and/or guilty for the in-group's suffering is likely to significantly enhance state's efforts to recruit and disincentivise opposition. Finally, adoption of explicit beliefs can help regimes pacify the population – especially if most people genuinely believe that the cost of the war is greater than any possible territorial or other gains.

However, many will not adopt the beliefs that are propagated. Propaganda, nonetheless, can be effective through making individuals *indifferent* towards the suffering of the out-group. Individuals may become increasingly "emotionally distant" from their victims and could be less likely to experience the typical responses from seeing suffering – which could either facilitate participation or generate feelings of indifference towards the violence committed by the members of their community (Bernard et al., 1971: 112). Put simply, it is unlikely that ordinary German citizens were all anti-Semitic and enjoyed executing the Jews to the point of their complete extinction – the claim controversially proposed by Daniel Goldhagen in his 1996 book *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. It seems more plausible that most ordinary Germans simply did not care whether the Jews continue to live or not, in part due to their exposure to the dehumanising propaganda targeting the Jews. And indeed, Browning's research demonstrates that many did not find active pleasure in killing the Jews, but that their sense of guilt and empathy was numbed – partly, because they latently deployed the propagated imagery of the Jewish people (Browning, 1992/2001). Thus, propaganda can make some citizens more likely to participate in violence by anaesthetising their ability to care for the wellbeing of the out-group.

On top of legitimating violence, brutalising the perpetrators, and motivating recruitment, this mechanism is particularly important with respect to the general public of the genocidal country – those who do not necessarily commit genocidal violence, but silently accept it. As such, it plays a vital role in disincentivising opposition. By numbing people's feelings of empathy and their general concern for the wellbeing of the out-group, propaganda makes such individuals less likely to engage in activities that could actually prevent genocide from occurring. This is a familiar phenomenon, and not uniquely found in cases of genocide and mass atrocities. Looking at the way in which people from the West respond to terrorist attacks on their soil as opposed to attacks that regularly occur in the Middle East or focusing on the reaction of the people from the West in

respect to accepting refugees, points to the conclusion that certain types of propaganda and portrayal of a group of people can impact the level of empathy people experience (Graham, 2015).

Finally, some people may not adopt sincere beliefs nor lose their sense of empathy, however the discussed discourses and their widespread dissemination may nevertheless *signal* to them that most people in society have accepted such discourses and imagery of the out-group. Such a signal can have real implications. First, people can anticipate that exploiting or mistreating the out-group will not receive social sanction – and subsequently decide to join the fighting forces and engage in (perhaps brutal) violence against the out-group. Second, people can assume that showing solidarity or support towards the out-group is likely to be ineffective or even carry costs – which, in turn, disincentivises opposition.[29] Propaganda, as Leader Maynard [forthcoming] argues, not only works through persuasion, but by shaping people's perceptions of what everyone else thinks. Such perceptions create incentives to conform to apparently dominant social beliefs – going against those apparent beliefs carries costs, whilst going with them may be personally beneficial. Findings from Asch's experiments (1956) further support this claim.

The above three mechanisms suggest that we can perceive propaganda as a form of what Howard terms *moral subversion*. As Howard (2016: 25) explains: "to subvert an agent's moral capacities is to interfere with the agent's practical reasoning in ways that increase the likelihood she will culpably choose to act wrongly."[30] The critical point emphasized by the research that I surveyed is that propaganda is not only effective in encouraging those who enthusiastically embrace demeaning conceptions of the out-group to engage in violent behaviour. On the contrary, due to conditions of information asymmetry and epistemic dependence (Hardwig, 1985), *most people* are vulnerable to being influenced by propaganda. In sum, while propaganda is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for violence against civilians, both experimental studies of propaganda and the verdicts of key research on real world cases, show that propaganda encourages violence.

Importantly, I am not arguing that the relationship between propaganda and violence is unidirectional. Instead, just as propaganda can potentially lead to violent outcomes, it can often be shaped by violence and other external events. As I show in chapters five to seven, the functions of propaganda and the corresponding discourses were partially shaped by events taking place on the ground. For instance, the increasing pressure of the international community coupled with draconian sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia forced Milošević to make territorial concessions and

[29] See also Waldron, 2012: 1-3.

[30] Howard (2016: 31) distinguishes two forms of such subversion: a) *motivational* which "transpires when an agent either creates a reason for another agent to act wrongly, or strengthens the practical force of a temptation the agent faces to act wrongly (such as through incitement)" and b) *epistemic* which "transpires when an agent causes the formation of false beliefs in another agent."

prioritise making a sustainable peace deal with his counterparts in Bosnia and Croatia. Consequently, propaganda had to de-escalate, and its primary function became to rebuild identities (with ethnicity no longer being the criteria that delineates between the in-group and the out-group) and pacify the population, thereby priming the Serbian audiences for the Dayton Peace Agreement. Understanding the circular relationship between propaganda and violence is particularly important as it gives us insight into how propaganda comes to serve specific functions or why media outlets develop certain discourses. For instance, one could be surprised by the fact that RTS propaganda was de-escalating as violence against Croatian Serbs was escalating during the Operation Storm in 1995 (for further details see chapter six). However, when one understands Milošević's political aims at the time (created by various external pressures) it becomes clear why de-escalation was the best strategy available.

Conclusion

Jowett and O'Donnell (2006: 7) tell us that the defining feature of propaganda is its focus on altering people's views and behaviour so as to achieve the intended response of the propagandist. However, much of the scholarship analysing propaganda failed to explain how this process of altering people's views and directing their behaviour works – i.e. through what mechanisms propaganda actually changes people's minds. More importantly, the contemporary study of propaganda is surprisingly ignorant of the various functions propaganda can serve in war – the understanding of which is a necessary precondition for an adequate examination of propaganda's efficacy. In other words, if we do not know what propaganda is trying to achieve, we cannot begin to examine whether propaganda is effective.

Subsequently, the key aim of this chapter was to provide conceptual and theoretical clarity to the study of propaganda. More specifically, I focused on analysing how propaganda works in war settings and produced a framework for analysing propaganda which ought to provide more insight into this question. In the framework, I detailed and analysed three different phases and six distinct functions of propaganda in war, as well as the six discourses and five techniques used by media outlets in their attempt to effectively disseminate propaganda. Moreover, I explicated the relationship between the four layers of the framework, with the aim of clarifying why certain discourses are more (or less) suitable for specific functions, and why certain techniques are well-suited for an effective dissemination of propaganda. Finally, I produced a tentative framework that details the three key mechanisms through which propaganda could alters people's views and behaviour.

However, sustained analyses of propaganda's role in real world cases are still somewhat

lacking, leaving a broad range of open questions regarding how propaganda works, and how we should respond to it. In the remainder of this thesis, I will apply my framework to the Yugoslav case and analyse RTS propaganda during the Slovenian 10-Day War, the Croatian War of Independence, and the Bosnian War. While findings from a single case study should not be overstated, they can both increase the validity of the framework I proposed and serve as a starting point for future scholars researching propaganda.

Chapter Three: From 'Brotherhood and Unity' to Genocide in the former Yugoslavia (1974-2000)

"A znate li zbog čega se vodi ovaj rat, ova bitka?"
"A otkud znam, koliko ja kužim tu, ovi kao 'oće da se otcepljuju, a mi im kao ne damo."
["Do you know why people are fighting in this war, this battle?"
"Ah, I dunno. I reckon these guys sorta wanna secede, and we sorta won't let'em."]

Bahrudin Kaletović, a 19-years old Yugoslav People's Army soldier, in an interview for Yutel television during the Slovenian War in 1991

The Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (re-named in 1963 to Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – SFRY) was founded in 1945 in the aftermath of World War II. Yugoslavia was ruled by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, and comprised of six Republics (Serbia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia) and two autonomous regions in Serbia (Vojvodina, and Kosovo and Metohija) (Gow, 1997: 12).[31] The Communist regime, led by Josip Broz Tito, adopted the slogan of 'Brotherhood and Unity' as it aimed to unify different ethnicities, resolve the tensions created by the events of World War II, and promote a shared Yugoslav identity (Kurspahić, 2003; MacDonald, 2003: Ch. 3; Sells, 1996: 5-7).

After Tito's death on May 4th 1980, political and intellectual elites of the individual Republics started emphasising ethnic differences. That process re-invoked the tensions and 'unsettled debts' of World War II, with leaders arguing for independence of their respective Republics (MacDonald, 2003: Ch. 3; Marijan, 2005: 295; Bakić, 2011: 79). The wars that followed led to an estimated 140,000 people dead, and around four million people displaced (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009: 1). The Croatian War of Independence in 1991 produced "more than 200,000 refugees, approximately 20,000 dead, and more than 350,000 displaced persons" (Woodward. 1995: 1).[32] The Bosnian War was the deadliest conflict of all (Rutar, 2013: 14). As the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)[33] reports:

[31] For the reasons of brevity, in the reminder of this thesis, I shall use the term 'Bosnia' to refer to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 'Kosovo' to refer to Kosovo and Metohija.
[32] Similar figures are suggested by Mojzes, 1994: 207.
[33] The ICTY was formed by the UN Security Council in May 1993, in order to prosecute all of those who broke international law on the territory of the former Yugoslavia starting from 1st January 1991 (for further details see: Kaliterna, 2013: 56-60). In addition, according to the ICTY, there were around 16,000 war criminals in the former Yugoslavia – most of them from Serbia (Kaliterna, 2013: 119).

> More than 100,000 people were killed and two million people, more than half the population, were forced to flee their homes as a result of the war that raged from April 1992 through to November 1995 when a peace deal was initialled in Dayton. Thousands of Bosnian women were systematically raped. Notorious detention centres for civilians were set up by all conflicting sides: in Prijedor, Omarska, Konjic, Dretelj and other locations. The single worst atrocity of the war occurred in the summer of 1995 when the Bosnian town of Srebrenica, a UN-declared safe area, came under attacks by forces led by the Bosnian Serb commander Ratko Mladić. During a few days in early July, more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were executed by Serb forces in an act of genocide. The rest of the town's women and children were driven out.[34]

While there are extensive debates over the causes of the wars, most leading scholars now accept that Yugoslavia was not a powder keg of ethnic animosity prior to the conflicts of the 1990s (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002; Gow, 2003; Kurspahić, 2003; Gagnon, 2004; Cigar, 1995; Gagnon, 1994/5; Hodson et al., 1994; Massey et al., 1999; Gordy, 1999: 4). As Gagnon (2004: 33) puts it: "[w]hat becomes clear from [the] data is that the image of ethnic hatreds seething below the surface is an inaccurate one. In fact, ethnic relations in the most ethnically mixed regions of the country tended to be very good [prior to the conflicts]." Moreover, as Gow (2003: 33) notes "[t]he diversity in Yugoslavia as a whole was especially notable in Bosnia, where Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim populations coexisted until the country was enveloped by political tension, and eventually, armed hostilities in 1990s." Similarly, Ramet writes that "Muslims, Serbs and Croats had lived in peace for *most* of the 500 years they cohabitated in Bosnia-Herzegovina" (Ramet, 1996: 243, my emphasis).

During Communist rule, coexistence and tolerance were not only part of the official public life but extended to private relationships. This is reflected in the high number of 'mixed marriages' between Muslims, Croats, and Serbs (Kurspahić, 2003; Gow, 2003; Woodward, 1995; Hodson et al., 1994; Cigar, 1995: 13; Slack and Doyon, 2001: 146; Malešević, 2006: 176). As Kaliterna (2013: 41) reports a third of Yugoslav children were born into mixed marriage families. However, only a decade after Tito's death, the ideology of 'Brotherhood and Unity' heavily propagated by Tito's regime was replaced by nationalistic rhetoric and hateful propaganda and Yugoslavia became a warzone. As Ullman (1996: 9) tells us, "[a]fter [Tito's] death in 1980, control gradually shifted into the hands of provincial demagogues who styled themselves as democrats and who quickly discovered that beating the drum of ethnic nationalism was the surest way to accumulate more personal power."

[34] Available at: http://www.icty.org/en/about/what-former-yugoslavia/conflicts, accessed 05/05/2021.

Naturally we must ask how people came to perceive their former neighbours and friends as enemies; why they thought violence against them was justified; why they engaged in such violence or supported regimes advocating such violence; and why, for example, women in Bosnia were often raped by people they knew or used to work with prior to the wars (Stiglmayer, 1994: 82-170)? Thus far, many scholars have offered compelling arguments which provide answers to some of these questions. Nevertheless, the role propaganda potentially played in the Yugoslav wars is largely neglected, and as discussed, my aim is to fill this lacuna in the existing literature. However, before attempting to explain the role propaganda played in the Yugoslav wars, we need a clear perspective on what exactly happened in Yugoslavia prior to and during the Wars.

It should be noted, I do not aim to provide a new account that explicates *why* Yugoslav wars occurred – as vast literature on the matter exists. Instead, in this chapter I provide a historical overview, detailing the key actors, and events that occurred in the run-up to and during the Yugoslav Wars by integrating and drawing on a few touchstone analyses already published by experts in the field.[35] I am aware that effort to produce this chapter may come across as tendentious to some readers - both because more detailed studies of the conflict exist and the story of the Yugoslav wars is tainted with various controversies. Nevertheless, I believe that such a chapter brings value to the thesis, especially for those less familiar with the conflict and the background to the events surrounding the violent breakup of Yugoslavia. Thus, it is my hope that this overview should help the reader appreciate the ways in which RTS framed the key actors and events of the wars in the former Yugoslavia.

This chapter has four main sections. Section one provides an overview of the key events that took place in the run-up to the wars of the 1990s, starting from 1974 when the new constitution was implemented. In section two, I analyse the Slovenian 10-day War. Section three considers the Croatian War of Independence that started in the summer of 1991 and ended in 1995. In section four, I provide details of the bloodiest conflict of them all – namely, the Bosnian War that raged from April 1992 until 1995 when the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed. In the final section of this chapter, I provide a short overview of the aftermath of the Yugoslav Wars. This chapter's primary purpose is to familiarise the reader with the context of the wars and key events that are analysed in subsequent chapters. Consequently, the details of many other events that took place during the Yugoslav Wars are omitted from this chapter.

[35] When writing this chapter, I occasionally relied on the literature produced by regional scholars, and in some cases, such research also received financial support from state institutions. Consequently, there are potential risks about the objectivity of such research. Nevertheless, I am of a view that bringing forward regional perspectives also carries benefits. Subsequently, whenever using any sources from the region I cross-checked their accuracy with foreign sources.

The Road to Wars

Arguably, the slow and painful death of Yugoslavia started as early as 1974 with the implementation of a new constitution, the purpose of which was to satisfy the rising demands for greater autonomy and decentralisation made by the Republics[36] of the Yugoslav Federation (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: 43; Gow, 2003: Ch.2; Glenny, 1996; Duffy and Lindstrom, 2002). Thus, the new Constitution, amongst other things: "introduced the consensus among Republics and provinces in decision-making, including the decision to amend the Constitution. The right to self-determination and secession was legalised, but it remained unclear whether this right belonged to the peoples or Republics."[37] The Constitution also introduced an eight-member collective presidency – comprising from one representative from each Republic and autonomous province, and Tito who was designated President for life (Slack and Doyon, 2001: 142; Gow, 2003: 39). Additionally, "the 1974 Constitution also specified a system whereby (after Tito's death) the title of President would pass annually from one member of the collective presidency to the next in preset sequence" (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: 43). Finally, through the 1974 Constitution, Tito attempted to calm the ever-increasing tensions in Kosovo and, thus, both Kosovo and Vojvodina received substantially increased autonomy (Bennett, 1995: 71-77; Lampe, 1996: 338-9).[38]

The attempt to maintain Yugoslavia proved futile, and the vagueness of the newly introduced elements of the 1974 Constitution were damaging since they allowed political elites of different Republics to use the 1974 Constitution as a tool of mobilising nationalistic sentiments (Gow, 1991: 296; Gow, 1997: 16; Kataria, 2015: 120). Bennett (1995: 74) provides a helpful and concise summary of the 1974 Constitution, writing that "[w]ith 405 clauses it was the world's longest constitution, and, probably on account of its absurd length, was virtually untranslatable and largely nonsensical." And as Gow (2003: 39-40) suggests "[t]he mechanisms of the 1974 Constitution appeared to work while Tito was alive, mostly because his personal authority enabled him to intervene in and settle disputes."[39] And indeed in 1981, only a year after Tito's death, problems erupted when Albanians in Kosovo started demanding independence from Serbia, leading the Yugoslav Army and Federal Police to intervene and crushe the protest (Silber and

[36] The most notable example of which occurred in Croatia in 1971. For further details on the events nowadays referred to as The Croatian Spring or MASPOK (*Masovni Pokret* – Mass Movement) see: Bennett, 1995: 70-77; Petričušić and Žagar, 2007: 5; Ramet, 2005: 71; Bellamy, 2003: 55-6.

[37] Available at: http://www.arhivyu.gov.rs/active/en/home/glavna_navigacija/leksikon_jugoslavije/konstitutivni_akti_jugoslavije/ustav_sfrj_1974.html, accessed: 05/05/2021.

[38] For a more detailed analysis of the 1974 Constitution and its implication see also: Popov, 1996: 399-425.

[39] Similar argument was suggested by Slack and Doyon, 2001: 142; Bakić, 2011: 76; MacDonald, 2003: Ch.3; Rutar, 2013: 12.

Little, 1997: 34-5; Rutar, 2013: 12; MacDonald, 2003: Ch.3; Bennett, 1995: 89; Sekelj, 1992: 229; Thompson, 1992: 128; Sells, 1996: 55; Ramet, 1992: 82). Over the next decade, the number and intensity of such conflicts would increase, and spread across Yugoslavia.

Adding fuel to the fire was the infamous Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU)[40] controversially leaked on September 24th 1986 in Večernje Novosti, a popular Serbian daily newspaper (Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.1; Cigar, 1995: 23-4; MacDonald, 2003: Ch.3; Bakić, 2011; 84; Crnobrnja, 1994: 97; Draganich, 1997: 67; Glaurdić, 2011: 17-8; Bellamy, 2003: 56). The SANU Memorandum was a draft document written by the members of the Academy – which included many of the most reputable scientists and artists in Yugoslavia (Kataria, 2015: 122; Cviic, 1995: 61-2; Denitch, 1996: 116). On top of critiquing the political and economic organisation and situation of the country more generally, the authors of the Memorandum heavily criticised the 1974 Constitution. They suggested that nationalism and separatism "have been made ideologically possible by the Constitution", and that the Constitution brought to life a historically unnatural process – by turning a federation into a confederation – which in their case was the one and only time in history that such process has occurred (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1986). They further argued that insistence on consensus decision-making severely damaged the efficiency of the political system and encouraged Republics to focus on their own interests rather than the interest of Yugoslavia as a whole.

The authors of the Memorandum also claimed that the Constitution damaged Serbia's already disadvantaged position, writing that "[t]he Constitution of 1974, in fact, divided Serbia into three parts. The autonomous provinces within Serbia were made equal to the Republics, save that they were not defined as such and that they do not have the same number of representatives in the various bodies of the federation. […] The political and legal position of Serbia proper is quite vague – Serbia proper is neither a Republic nor a province" (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1986). The authors argued that Serbia's unequal and disadvantaged position was partly a consequence of the anti-Serb alliance amongst other Republics and the two autonomous provinces (who for different reasons had an interest in oppressing Serbia), but also the dominant ideological motto of Yugoslavia "weak Serbia means strong Yugoslavia" (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1986).

Most dramatically, the authors claimed that genocide was being perpetrated against the Serb nation and argued that "[t]he physical, political, legal and cultural genocide perpetrated against the Serbian population of Kosovo and Metohija is the greatest defeat suffered by Serbia in the

[40] At the time, the President of SANU was Dobrica Ćosić, a prominent Serbian academic. He denied any contribution to the Memorandum, although he defended it when it came under attack (Silber and Little, 1997: 32).

wars of liberation she waged between Orašac in 1804 and the uprising of 1941" (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1986).[41] Similarly, they argued that Serbs in Croatia were subjected to extreme forms of discrimination, and that Serbian cultural and linguistic heritage was being destroyed. In their words:

> Except during the period of the NDH (the Independent state of Croatia, proclaimed in 1941 by the pro-Nazi Ustaše), Serbs in Croatia have never been as endangered as they are today. The resolution of their status must be a top priority political question. If a solution is not found, the consequences will be damaging on many levels, not only for relations within Croatia but also for all of Yugoslavia." (cited in: Silber and Little, 1997: 31-2).

On top of the discourse legitimated by the SANU memorandum, the (exaggerated) stories of Serb oppression, torture, and rape by the Kosovo Albanians exploded across Serbian media (particularly RTS), and further contributed to what was an already tense atmosphere (Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.2; Oberschall, 2000; Woodward, 1995: 73-9). To calm the situation down, on the April 24th 1987, Milošević[42] went to Kosovo Polje/Kosovo Field, one of the most important monuments of Serb history and mythology – the site of the Kosovo battle of 1389 in which Prince Lazar chose heavenly kingdom (fighting to death) over earthly kingdom (surrender), where the Serbs were defeated by the Turks (Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.2; Office of Russian and European Analylsis, 2002: 44; Thomas, 1999: 44; Denitch, 1996: 113-4; Draganich, 1997: 71). It was there that Milošević made the historical statement to the Kosovo Serbs that "[n]o one should dare to beat you" (Silber and Little, 1997: 37; MacDonald, 2003: 65; Lampe, 1996: 339; Kent, 2006: 21; Rogel, 2004: 17-8; Milošević, 1997: 41). Whilst there were no immediate signs that his visit would change the course of history – especially as this sentence was said in passing as Milošević got caught in a middle of an angry crowd – this ended up being "the first time Slobodan Milošević donned the mantle of protector of all Serbs" (Silber and Little, 1997: 37). Soon after, on September 22nd 1987, Milošević consolidated his power in Serbian politics during the 8th Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia.[43]

Over the following two years, Milošević successfully instituted himself as the key figure in Serbian political life. Through what came to be known as the Anti-bureaucratic revolution, he purged political offices in Vojvodina, Kosovo, and Montenegro of those not loyal to him and replaced them with his allies (Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.4; Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Ch.1; Glenny, 1996: Ch.2.; Bakić, 2011: 82; Thomas, 1999: 45-51; Glaurdić, 2011:

[41] This somewhat incoherent sentence is faithfully translated from the original document.
[42] At the time, Milošević was the President for the League of Communists of Yugoslavia's Serbian branch Central Committee.
[43] For further details on the Session see: Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.2.

29-35; Ramet, 2005: 56).[44] According to Cvetićanin (1997: 57), Milošević utilised the media during the Anti-bureaucratic revolution, and the outlets he controlled played an important role in his acquisition of power in this period. Furthermore, following a series of rallies in Kosovo, in which the police and the Army eventually intervened, Milošević secured another victory – on March 28th 1989, Serbia's parliament adopted amendments to the Serbian constitution which effectively stripped autonomy from the two provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo (Woodward, 1995: 98; MacDonald, 2003: 66; Bennett, 1995: 115).

The changes made by the Milošević regime sparked reactions across Yugoslavia (Mojzes, 1994: 187). Most notably, it increased support for decentralisation and independence in Slovenia (Gagnon, 1994/5; Gow, 2003: 31-51), and in Croatia it further contributed to Franjo Tudjman's popularity and pushed Croatian population further to the right of the political spectrum (Gow, 2003: 31-51; Duffy and Lindstorm, 2002). The tensions culminated during the 14th Extraordinary Party Congress on January 23rd 1990 when, following several disputes,[45] the Slovene and Croat delegations walked out (Lampe, 1996: 346-7).[46] This was the last Congress attended by all Republics and marks the beginning of the end for the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Silber and Little, 1997: 79-80; Woodward, 1995: Ch.5).

Following the fracturing of the Communist Party, the dissolution of Yugoslavia became imminent, as the Party had been one of key structures that was holding it together. And indeed, throughout 1990, the Republics that comprised the SFRY held their first multi-party elections. Slovenia was the first Republic to organise elections on April 8th 1990 in which centre-right DEMOS coalition defeated the former Communist party, and Milan Kučan was elected President (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: 50; Judah, 2009: 164; Bennett, 1995: 119; Baker, 2015: 41; Glaurdić, 2011: 81-9). Croatia followed suit, and HDZ (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica* – Croatian Democratic Union) led by Tudjman won 205 of 356 seats. It should be noted that HDZ did not win that many votes compared to the reformed Communists – however, they won such a vast majority of seats due to the first-past-the-post electoral system (Bennett, 1995: 119; Karaula, 2007: 8; Silber and Little, 1997: 90; Judah, 2009: 164; Bellamy, 2003: 56-7). It is even more important to note that Croatia, unlike Slovenia, was not an ethnically homogenous country – in fact, more than 600,000 Serbs lived in Croatia in 1991 (Silver and Little, 1997: 90; Bellamy, 2003: 56). As soon as HDZ was founded, the Serbs of Croatia founded the Serbian Democratic Party

[44] Such purges were usually triggered by a series of pre-arranged rallies – always portrayed as spontaneous expressions of the will of the people. In fact, however, Milošević's regime often offered various incentives to individuals for attending such rallies, such as money, food, or days off from work.
[45] For further details see: Silber and Little 1997, Ch.5.
[46] For further details on the 14th Extraordinary Party Congress see also: Glaurdić 2011, 69-73.

(*Srpska Demokratska Stranka* – SDS) in the southern Croatian town of Knin (Malcolm, 2002: 215). However, SDS did not perform well in the first multi-party elections in Croatia, although it would soon rise to be the most important political organisation for the Serbs in Croatia (Marijan, 2006: 218; Glaurdić, 2011: 81-9).

In Bosnia, Alija Izetbegović founded the Party of Democratic Action (*Stranka Demokratske Akcije* – SDA) in May 1990 (Burg and Shoup, 2015: 66), which resulted in the Bosnian Serbs founding the Serbian Democratic Party (*Srpska Demokratska Stranka* – SDS), effectively a branch of the Croat Serb party, with Radovan Karadžić as its leader. The Bosnian Croats followed suit and founded a Bosnian Croat branch of HDZ (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Ch.15; Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.15; MacDonald, 2003: 223).[47] Even though the Muslim SDA, Bosnian Serb SDS, and Croatian HDZ had completely different, if not even mutually exclusive, objectives, they also had a common enemy – the reformed Communist Party. To defeat the common enemy, the three parties agreed to unite against the reformed Communists in elections, scheduled for November 18th 1990.

Despite attempts to prevent nationalists from winning the elections, including Ante Marković (at the time the Federal Prime Minister) running as the head of the Reformed Communist Party, SDA, SDS and HDZ dominated the first multi-party elections in Bosnia (Silber and Little, 1997: 210; Slack and Doyon, 2001: 143; Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: 122). However, despite the success of nationalist parties, the Bosnian people showed greater interest in keeping the federation together than Croats or Slovenes.[48] As Judah (2009: 165) reports: "[…] a significant minority, 28 per cent of those who voted, cast their ballots against the three ethnically based parties."

Serbia was the last country to organise elections. Milošević founded the Socialist Party of Serbia (*Socijalistička Parija Srbije* – SPS) on July 17th 1990, naming himself as leader. On December 9th, Serbia held its first presidential elections in which Milošević won 65.34% of the vote. On December 23rd 1990 Serbia had its first parliamentary elections (under a majoritarian electoral system) in which SPS won 194 mandates.[49] Even though Milošević undoubtedly won the Serbian elections of 1990, there are several important caveats. First, the first multi-party elections in Serbia were hosted in unfair circumstances – with Milošević controlling all important sources of information and limiting the opposition's airtime (Glenny, 1996: Ch.2). Second, many oppositional candidates at the time raised a concern that elections were potentially rigged. As Glenny (1996: 45)

[47] For further details on political parties in Bosnia see: Thompson, 1992: 97-105.
[48] For further details on the first multiparty elections in Bosnia see also: Glaurdić, 2011: 101-7.
[49] Available at: http://www.parlament.rs/народна-скупштина/историјат/после-другог-светског-рата.126.html, accessed 05/05/2021.

points out: [n]obody really doubted Milošević's victory, but many doubted its extent." Thirdly, many Serbs opposed and actively rebelled against Milošević's politics – the most notable example of which were the massive demonstrations in Belgrade organised on March 9th 1991, and the student protests that followed. Such protests were not successful in bringing the Milošević government down, or preventing the Yugoslav Wars, but they did have some impact in the early stages of 1991. Most notably, as a consequence of the protests, Milošević was forced to (temporarily) re-engineer the governing and editorial board of RTS so as to make it more moderate and less nationalistic (for further details on changes within RTS see chapter four).[50]

Following the elections results, both Croatia and Slovenia quickly moved towards asserting sovereignty over their territory. "The new Slovene parliament voted on July 2nd 1990, to fulfil the campaign promise of the DEMOS coalition and declared complete sovereignty" (Woodward, 1995: 120). Similarly, the Croatian government redeployed the historical symbols of Croatian statehood, overwhelmingly those used during the Ustaše regime, between 1941 and 1945 (Woodward, 1995: 120; Bakić, 2011: 85-6). Most notably, instead of the Communist star, the new Croatian flag now had *šahovnica* (MacDonald, 2003: 103; Kataria, 2015: 123) – the "red-and-white checkerboard emblem, which had been the coat-of-arms in the pro-Nazi NDH in 1941" (Silber and Little, 1997: 82). Furthermore, Tudjman moved to de-Serbianise all relevant political and administrative institutions and limited the use of the Cyrillic alphabet (Woodward, 1995: Ch.5; Glenny, 1996: Ch.1; Bakić, 2011: 85-86; Almond, 1994: 217; Sells, 1996: 61-2). Finally, Tudjman invited the Croatian émigrés to return to Croatia – most of whom were supporters of the Ustaše ideology and consequently forced to leave the country under Tito's rule (MacDonald, 2003: 103; Bellamy, 2003: 71).

One should not be particularly surprised by Tudjman's decisions in the aftermath of elections. Long before he officially came to power, Tudjman expressed his sympathies towards the Ustaše regime and attempted to undermine the scale of atrocities the Ustaše committed. During the first Congress of HDZ, Tudjman, among other things, remarked: "*Thank God my wife is not a Jew or a Serb*" (Silber and Little, 1997: 86). Furthermore, on numerous occasions he attempted to rehabilitate the legacy of the Ustaše regime and undermine the scale of atrocities they committed during World War II. As the Office of Russian and European Analysis (2002: 81-2) puts it:

> Accurate figures will probably never be known, but it is clear that Pavelić's Ustashe massacred huge numbers of Serbs wherever they could be found. Countrywide, various estimates suggest that at least 200,000 and as many as 600,000 'undesirables' died at the hands of the Ustashe. At the Jasenovac camp alone,

[50] For further details on these protests and their impact see: Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.9; Glenny, 1996: Ch.2; Thomas, 1999: Ch.8.

> Croatian Fascist executed at least 120,000 Serbs, Gypsies, Jews and political prisoners. Many years later, however, President Franjo Tudjman would make an early name for himself by publishing a revisionist book claiming that Serbs had vastly inflated the numbers and that probably no more than 60,000 people had been executed in Jasenovac.

Such political climate seems to have contributed to the further alienation of Croatian Serbs. Croatian Serb political leaders started suggesting that in the ever-more likely event of Croatian secession from Yugoslavia, the Serb-dominated part of Croatia would secede and join Yugoslavia. Croatian Serbs placed logs around Knin in their attempt to blockade the roads between Knin and the rest of Croatia – in the event nowadays referred to as the 'Log Revolution' (MacDonald, 2003: 104; Bakić, 2011: 86; Kataria, 2015: 123). The rebellion was heavily condemned by the Croatian political leadership, and Tudjman made it clear that any attempt to carve up Croatia was unacceptable (Kataria, 2013: 123). Moreover, RTS was able to utilise Tudjman's political statements and decisions. As I show in chapter six, RTS extensively used the redeployment of NDH symbols and Tudjman's comments to justify Croatian Serbs' desire to secede from Croatia and join Yugoslavia.

There was one institution however, that was committed to Yugoslavia's unity and had the power and resources necessary for preventing secessionist Republics from leaving the federation – the Yugoslav People's Army (*Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija* – JNA) (Bakić 2011, Ch.2). Anticipating that Territorial Defence Forces (*Teritorijalna Odbrana* – TO) in both Croatia and Slovenia were increasingly becoming semiautonomous forces, primarily loyal to the Republics rather than the federation, the JNA leadership decided to disarm Slovene and Croat TOs (Cigar, 1996: 63; Cviic, 1993: 73). Thus, on May 17th 1990, the JNA started seizing weapons from the Slovene TO (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: 48-9; Judah, 2009: 172).

This date was chosen for two reasons. First, the newly elected Slovene government officially took office on that day. Second, the date corresponded with the mandatory annual change in the Federal Presidency (FP). On May 16th, Borisav Jović (a Serb and Milošević's closest ally) became the President of the FP, and replaced a Slovene, Janez Drnovšek (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Ch.1). Both of these meant that Slovenia was unprepared to respond effectively. However, once the Slovene President Milan Kučan received the information that the Federal Army was disarming Slovene TO, he prohibited the units from handing any weapons to the Army. Due to Kučan's prompt response, the JNA was able to seize only around 60% of the weapons – which would prove crucial for Slovenia's chances of winning the 10-day War in June 1991 (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Ch.1).

Following these events, it was only a matter of time before Slovenia would declare independence. And indeed by December 1990 the will of the Slovene people was clear – in an independence referendum the vast majority (88.2 percent of the electorate) of Slovenes voted to leave Yugoslavia (Bennett, 1995: 137; Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: 50; Glenny, 1996: 86). And as Bennett (1995: 137) reports, "[a]s soon as the result was official on December 26th, the Slovene parliament declared its intent to secede from Yugoslavia in six months' time if there was no progress towards a negotiated settlement of the country's future." No such settlement was reached.

Unlike in Slovenia, however, the JNA's attempt to disarm Croatian TO was relatively successful – between May 16th and 17th 1990, the JNA effectively seized all the weapons from the Croatian TO (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: 85; Marijan, 2005: 297; Lisičak, 2010; Judah, 2009: 172). Left with no other option:

> [t]he Croatians had to turn to the only government institution in Croatia that still had any arms – the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Ministarstvo Unutrašnjih Poslova – MUP) – as its first step in organising a national army. A year spent enlarging and training the MUP while seeking foreign dealers willing to sell it arms would give Croatia by the spring of 1991 a nascent army, the National Guard Corps (ZNG) [Zbor Narodne Garde], that would eventually grow into a true national army, the [Croatian Army] Hrvatska Vojska (HV)" (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: 85-6).

At the same time, the Serbs in Croatia (who already had their own political party – SDS) took further steps in organising and arming themselves, effectively preparing to leave Croatia if and when the Croats left Yugoslavia (Karaula, 2007: 9; Brigović, 2011: 417). In August 1990, Croatian Serbs held a referendum in which an overwhelming majority supported 'independent status' for Croat Serbs (Glenny, 1996: 17; Burg and Shoup, 2015: 81), and in December 1990 the Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina (*Srpska Autonomna Oblast Krajina* – SAOK, later re-named to Republika Srpska Krajina) was formally established and comprised eleven municipalities (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: 84-5; Marijan, 2006: 218).

These events were followed by an increase in the number of sporadic episodes of violence in Croatia, with the JNA getting involved. The most notable examples include the Pakrac clash in February 1991, where the JNA was deployed in Croatia for the first time with the aim of creating a buffer zone between the two sides (Marijan, 2005: 300; Marijan, 2006: 224; Mercier, 1995: 13); the Plitvice clash on March 31st 1991 in which the JNA was deployed again, and for the first time casualties were reported on both sides (Marijan, 2006: 224-5); and clash in Borovo Selo in May 1991 that left 12 dead and 21 wounded (Woodward, 1995: Ch.5; Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Ch.9; Glenny, 1996: Ch.3; Marijan, 2005: 302; Jovanovic, 1994: 7). In the immediate

aftermath of Borovo Selo clash, Croats held an independence referendum on May 19th 1991, in which "more than ninety percent [voted] for what amounted to outright secession" (Silber and Little, 1997: 147), although it should be noted that Croatian Serbs boycotted the referendum. Just over a month later, on June 25th 1991, both Slovenia and Croatia declared independence from the Yugoslav federation – the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had come to an end.

The Slovenian War

The literature on the Slovenian War, which lasted a mere ten days, is meagre. Very few scholars have researched the Slovenian conflict in depth or separately from other conflict during Yugoslav Wars. In contrast, vast quantities of academics analysing Yugoslavia's dissolution dedicated most of their research to either Croatian or Bosnian War (and often both). Given the disparity between the length of the wars and the number of casualties, the general lack of interest in the Slovenian conflict seems justified. However, analysing the Slovenian War is of importance for this doctorate, as this war served as a trial run for the Serbian media and RTS in particular.

As I show in the following chapters, during the Slovenian 10-day War RTS began creating, shaping, testing, and developing the discourses which would later serve as justifications for atrocities in Croatia and Bosnia. In the pages to come, I therefore provide sketch of the Slovenian 10-day War. This overview is designed to help the reader understand my analysis of RTS propaganda in chapter five.

The declarations of independence by Croatia and Slovenia were set to be announced on June 26th 1991. However, on June 25th Tudjman and the Croatian parliament (*Hrvatski Sabor*) announced their independence from Yugoslavia. Taken by a surprise declaration of independence by Croatia, Slovenia immediately followed suit, and thus declared its independence a day ahead of schedule (Glenny, 1996: Ch.3). The JNA, which still perceived itself as the main protector of the Yugoslav unity, used a decree of enforcement issued by the Federal Prime Minister, Ante Marković, as an authorisation to act against the Slovenes (Crnobrnja, 1994: 123; Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.12). Initially, the JNA did not plan for an all-out invasion, instead their aim was to seize control of the border posts and treated the intervention as a "limited policing action" (Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.12; Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Ch.4; Glenny, 1996: 96). The JNA initially informed the Slovene leadership about their moves (Bakić, 2011: 98), and under Silber's and Little's (1997: 155) account the Slovene leadership had "hourly communication with the Army." And indeed, as I show in chapter five, this is consistent with RTS's portrayal of the JNA's intervention in Slovenia – which was primarily justified on the grounds of the Army's constitutional obligations to protect the federation.

The course of the Slovene War shifted on June 27th. The Slovenian leadership decided to oppose the JNA and started surrounding JNA bases, cutting their communications, water, and food supplies (Bakić, 2011: 98). When the Slovenes shot down a helicopter bringing food to JNA soldiers, the JNA's perspective of the war changed – as they saw the incident as a declaration of war. Thus, the JNA decided on an all-out invasion of Slovenia with the aim of defeating the Slovene leadership and bringing the country back into the federation (Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.12; Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: 4). The JNA's plan partially depended upon the support from the Yugoslav and Serbian political leadership. However, by June 29th, Marković withdrew his (vague) support for the intervention, and given that Yugoslavia had no President (because the Serbs were blocking Stipe Mesić, a Croat, from assuming the role),[51] the JNA was effectively acting on its own (Bennett, 1995: 156; Cviic, 1995: 82). The day after, the JNA lost Serbian support as well, and on July 1st, the Serbs finally allowed Mesić to assume office of the President of Yugoslavia's Federal Presidency. The JNA tried, one last time, to launch an attack on Slovenia on July 2nd. Having failed again, the JNA agreed to the ceasefire on July 4th.

As the war was coming to its end, the JNA not only lost support from the political leadership, but they also irreparably damaged their reputation amongst international actors (Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.12). Furthermore, the JNA was humiliated by the Slovene TO, that (unexpectedly) was able to score victories against one of the largest armies in Europe – a fact that was not reflected in RTS broadcasts concerning the Slovenian 10-day War (for an extensive analysis of RTS portrayal of the second half of the war see chapter five) (Cviic, 1995: 74; Gow and Carmichael, 2000: 174-5).[52] Various factors could be seen as relevant for the JNA's defeat,[53] but its humiliation should in part be attributed to the soldiers' lack of motivation to fight their countrymen and to fight for a military aim most did not perceive as legitimate – which resulted in high levels of desertion from the Army (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Ch.5). In contrast, the Slovene TO fighters did not lack motivation to fight against what they perceived to be a foreign invader (Glenny, 1996: Ch.3).

The Slovenian War officially ended on July 8th, when a peace deal was brokered by the European Community (EC) in Brioni island (Woodward, 1992: 54; Bakić, 2011: 102; Almond, 1994: 219; Mercier, 1995: 19). The Brioni conference was attended by members of the EC, Yugoslavia, and Slovenia. It was agreed that the Slovene police would assume control over the

[51] Stipe Mesić was meant to assume the office of the President of the Federal Presidency already on May 15th 1991. For further details see: Gow, 1997: 19; Draganich, 197: 76; Cohen, 1992: 373; Gow, 1991: 291.
[52] For further details on specific victories and loses during the 10-day War see: Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Chs.4-5.
[53] For further details see: Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Ch.5.

borders, that customs revenue from the borders would be sent to the Yugoslav Federal Reserves, and that the JNA and Slovene forces were to withdraw and return to their bases (Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.12). And by July 18th "the Yugoslav government announced that all units of the JNA would begin their withdrawal from Slovenia" (Gow and Carmichael, 2000: 174). Importantly, "[t]he agreement imposed a three-month moratorium on the *implementation* of Slovene (and Croatian) independence, but not on the declarations of independence themselves" (Silber and Little, 1997: 165).

This last part of the agreement was the most controversial – particularly since Marković, Yugoslavia's Prime Minister, heavily opposed it – as he correctly foresaw it as the end of Yugoslavia. However, Marković was one of the few prominent politicians who still cared about preserving the federation – by that stage, even Milošević had agreed to allow Slovenia to secede (Glenny, 1996: Ch.3; Judah, 2009: 173). In fact, the Serbian political leadership was always somewhat comfortable with letting the Slovenes depart from Yugoslavia. As Judah (2009, 173) reports: "[…] a tacit secret deal was struck in January 1991 between Serbia and Slovenia. Milošević signalled to Kučan that the Slovenes were free to leave Yugoslavia so long as they did not oppose Serbia's plans for the rest of the country." This is not entirely surprising – compared to other former Yugoslav Republics, Slovenia was the most ethnically homogenous country, with around 88% of the country's 2 million people declared as Slovenes (Thomas and Mikulan, 2006a: 12; MacDonald, 2003: 79). Consequently, allowing Slovenia to secede was much less of an issue for Milošević, than say, allowing Croatia with its much larger Serbian population to secede from Yugoslavia.

Subsequently, on July 18th, the FP met and decided that the JNA should withdraw its forces from Slovenia. Although notionally the JNA's withdrawal was announced as only temporary, in effect, the JNA troops permanently left Slovenia. The Slovenian 10-day War took lives of 44 JNA soldiers and left 187 JNA soldiers wounded (Silber and Little, 1997: 166). The Slovenes suffered far fewer casualties, with only eight Slovene TO soldiers killed. On top of these figures, around 15 civilians died (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: 68). Importantly though, most civilian casualties were an accident – "most of them [were] foreign truck-drivers passing through, unaware of what was taking place and caught in the cross-fire" (Silber and Little, 1997: 166).

The Croatian War

The political and academic legacy of the Croatian War of Independence is controversial. To date, many people from the region would disagree about the appropriate name for this war. Many Serbs would argue that calling it a War of Independence carries an anti-Serb bias. For most Croats, calling

it anything but a War of Independence is unacceptable – any other term would label the person using it a sympathiser or defender of the Greater Serbia's nationalistic aspirations.

Operation Storm remains a source of extensive disagreements and frustrations. Many Serbs deemed the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) a politicised court whose decisions ought to be dismissed, in part because not a single Croat has been found guilty of the crimes committed against the Serb population during this operation, or the war more generally. Such a narrative was only exacerbated further following a controversial Appeals Panel decision that found the leading figure of Operation Storm, General Ante Gotovina, innocent of all charges by three votes against two (although in the first-degree verdict Gotovina was found guilty and sentenced to 24 years imprisonment). As I argue in chapter six, these controversies are in part a consequence of the extensive propaganda that took place during (and after) the Croatian War of Independence.

In this section, I rely on and integrate a variety of different sources and literatures in order to provide a short overview of the Croatian War of Independence. Such analysis is necessary, as it will introduce the reader to crucial actors and events that took place during this war – which will, in turn, help the reader understand how RTS utilised certain events in their attempt to develop propaganda targeting the Croats and their political representatives. In some part of this chapter, I use the literature provided by the Croatian and other regional academics. There are potential concerns over the objectivity and reliability of these sources, especially as the University of Zagreb (*Sveučilište u Zagrebu*) financially incentivised its academics to write about the war from the Croatian perspective. Subsequently, whenever using any sources from the region I cross-checked their accuracy with foreign sources.

Slovenia was prepared to depart from Yugoslavia, however, as Glenny (1996: 89) writes, "[b]y contrast, the Croat preparations for independence were furtive. The Croatian authorities had held their referendum on independence but a month before the declaration to catch the slipstream of Slovene secession." Furthermore, the ethnic balance of Croatia (which in 1991 had 600,000 Serbs living on its territory) meant that Milošević could not accept the secession of all of Croatia (Silber and Little, 1997: 383; Glaurdić, 2011: 125). Alternatively, Croatia's secession could be accepted under the condition that the Serb-dominated areas of Croatia remain in rump Yugoslavia. And indeed, violence broke out in Croatia even during the Slovenian War. As Bennett (1995: 161) reports: "[d]uring the war in Slovenia there was constant skirmishing in eastern Slavonia in villages around the towns of Osijek, Vukovar and Vinkovci, while Serb rebels from Knin launched an offensive towards Banija and Kordun" (Bennett, 1995: 161).

During the Slovenian War, the JNA started sending troops to Croatia to intimidate the Croatian leadership and force them to withdraw their declaration of independence. At the start of the Croatian War, most of the JNA high officials still perceived themselves as protectors of Yugoslavia's unity – although the justification for that position was weakened once the JNA and the political leadership of Serbia allowed Slovenia to secede (Glenny, 1996: Ch.3). Hence, "[d]uring much of the summer fighting in Croatia, the JNA was stuck in the middle, ordered to act as a buffer force (as it had at Pakrac, Plitvice, and Borovo Selo) yet distrusted by the Croatians and criticized by local Serbs for not helping more" (Office of Russian and European Studies, 2002: 91).

During the summer of 1991, the Croatian Serbs were primarily focused on seizing police stations, thereby eliminating any control that the Croatian government exerted across vital regions of Croatia. The fighting was continuous across the country: in Banija, Lika, Eastern and Western Slavonija, and Dalmatia, with Croat-held and Serb-held villages constantly exchanging fire.[54] The patterns of fighting were usually the same. Once the Serbs conquered the territory, usually with the help of various paramilitary units like 'Knin Ninjas' – *Knindže* led by Dragan Vasiljković known as Captain Dragan, or the Serb Volunteer Guard led by Željko Ražnatović Arkan (known as Arkan's Tigers), the JNA would be instituted to act as a buffer zone between the conflicted sides (Judah, 2009: 184-189; Silber and Little, 1997; Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Section III; Brigović, 2011; Judah, 2009: 181-189; Ramet, 1992: 86). Although, the JNA eventually abandoned its neutral approach to the conflict and openly sided with the Serbs (if for no other reason than because most non-Serbs deserted from the Army following its decision to disarm the Republics' TO forces). Broadly speaking, the first months of fighting were a major success for the Serbian side (Bennett, 1995: 167). As I show in chapter six, during this period, RTS propaganda reached the peak of its escalation, and often relied on portraying Croats as an existential threat to the Serbs to justify excessive violence that took place. Equating Croats with Ustaše was particularly common during this period, as RTS invoked the legacy of World War II and compared the political leaders of NDH with Tudjman.

Even though Croatian attempts to fight the Serbs often failed, the Croats scored an important victory in the summer of 1991 that would prove crucial for their chances of winning the war. The Croatian forces managed to seize control over several JNA barracks in Eastern Slavonija – most notably in Osijek, Vinkovci, and Vukovar (Lisičak, 2010; Brigović, 2011).[55] Upon seizure, the Croats cut off electricity, food, and water supply, and mined the access roads to the

[54] For further details see: Office of Russian and European Studies, 2002: Section III.
[55] For further details see: Office of Russian and European Analysis 2002, Section II.

barracks. From September 1991 they started attacking the JNA soldiers and seizing weapons from the besieged barracks. Given the arms embargo instituted by the European Community in July 1991 (and by the UN in September 1991), gaining access to weapons was crucial for Croatian chances of winning the war (Karaula, 2007; Lisičak, 2010: 78).[56]

The JNA engaged in several failed attempts to relieve the barracks in Osijek and Vinkovci. The attempt to relieve the Vukovar barrack on August 28th 1991 triggered one of the bloodiest episodes of the conflict (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2003: Annex 8; Cigar, 1995: 45-6; Crnobrnja, 1994: 171; Almond, 1994: 225). The plan to conquer Vukovar quickly was frustrated and the battle for the city lasted for two months (Kostović and Judaš, 1992: 217) – until November 9th – when the JNA managed to seize control over the key hill in Vukovar. The fighting continued until November 18th when the Croatian forces surrendered (Judah, 2009: 189; Mercier, 1995: 24). The Battle of Vukovar resulted in the loss of between 4,000 and 5,000 lives, and seriously damaged both Croatian and Serbian forces (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: 101). Even though the JNA won the battle, fighting in Vukovar was damaging for the JNA as well. First, the JNA's offensive plan was frustrated – as they lost two months on fighting in Vukovar that were meant to be spent in an all-out invasion of Croatia. Second, the JNA's already damaged morale, was further diminished. Third, the JNA's reputation was irreparably damaged, partly due to their decision to deploy paramilitary forces like Arkan's Tigers during the Battle of Vukovar (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: 99-102).[57]

The JNA's reputation was further harmed following the siege of Dubrovnik from October to early December in 1991 (Burg and Shoup, 2015: 83) – with the heaviest assault on the city taking place on December 6th (Marijan, 2005: 312; Baker, 2015: 51; Kent, 2006: 47). The shelling, looting, and destruction of one of the most beautiful and culturally important cities in the former Yugoslavia destroyed whatever positive image the JNA had left. During the siege of Dubrovnik, around 90 civilians lost their lives (Kent, 2006: 47). The JNA attempted to justify the attack on Dubrovnik by claiming that the Serbs living there were subjected to systemic persecution (Bennett, 1995: 168). This claim, however, was unsubstantiated, if not entirely inaccurate – as very few (if any) Serbs lived there (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: 103-5; Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2003: Annex 21; Bennett, 1995: 168).

[56] For further details on the Battle of Barracks see: Office of Russian and European Analysis 2002, Section II.

[57] And as I show in chapter six, RTS continuously aired reports about the notorious crimes allegedly committed by the Croatian forces against the Croatian Serbs and/or the JNA soldiers in an attempt to legitimate the excessive use of force in Vukovar. In the most notorious example, RTS accused the Croatian forces of slaughtering around 40 Serbian babies. Upon a detailed investigation, no evidence of such crime was ever found. Perhaps more interestingly, despite my best efforts, I was unable to identify a retraction in RTS broadcasts (for further details see: chapter six).

By December 1991, the Serbs held around one third of Croatian territory under its control (Ramet, 1996: 53; Cviic, 1995: 75; Maass, 1996: 27) and the Serb political leadership was satisfied with the gains they made and seemed willing to end hostilities. Plausibly, it was in both Milošević's and Tudjman's interest to end the war. Tudjman could not afford to lose more territory, while Milošević was satisfied with the advances made as the Serbs managed to establish control over most of the key territories in Croatia. Thus, the international community finally saw an opportunity to initiate a ceasefire. And indeed "a ceasefire between the Republic of Croatia and the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) was signed between Croatian Defence Minister Gojko Šušak and JNA General Andrija Rašeta in Sarajevo on January 2nd 1992, mediated by Cyrus Vance, the personal envoy of the United Nations Secretary General. The ceasefire [nowadays referred to as the Vance plan or Sarajevo Agreement] went into effect at 6:00 p.m. on January 3rd 1992" (Marijan, 2011: 103).

Unlike the previous 14 agreements, this ceasefire held for a sustained period (Baker, 2015: 51). The plan included the deployment of around 10,000 UN Peacekeeping troops – UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) that was to establish UN protected areas and acts as a buffer zone.[58] It should be noted though that: "[i]n Krajina, Milan Babić [the first President of Republika Srpska Krajina] ferociously opposed the Vance's plan. He feared that without the JNA to safeguard Krajina's future it would sooner or later be attacked and overwhelmed. He was to be proved right, but Milošević wanted to end the war and Babić was forced to give way" (Judah, 2009: 189).

As Babić feared, the Croatian War of Independence was resumed in 1995[59] when Croatian forces launched several operations in their attempt to regain territories lost to Serbian forces in 1991 – most of whom occurred between April and August of 1995.[60] In their final military operation, called Operation Storm (*Oluja*), Croats successfully captured Knin – the capital of Republika Srpska Krajina. As a consequence, in an event eventually deemed an episode of ethnic cleansing, around 150,000-200,000 Serbs that lived in that area were forced to flee their homes. The Serbs that stayed became the victims of a variety of crimes committed against them by Croatian forces (Rutar, 2013: 13). Despite this, Operation Storm was a major military success for the Croatian Army, and the final major battle in the Croatian War of Independence. Even though there were several mop-up operations after Operation Storm – the Croats achieved all of their military and strategic aims and regained all the territories they had lost to the Serbs under the Republika Srpska Krajina (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Ch.89; Rutar, 2013).

[58] For further details see: Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Ch.12.
[59] Although several battles did occur between 1992 and 1995, for further details on these events see: Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002.
[60] For further details see: Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Chs.74-75; Rutar, 2013; Daalder, 2000: 120.

And indeed, on November 12th 1995, the Croatian War of Independence was formally over when Erdut Agreement was signed.

The Bosnian War

In the wake of Yugoslavia's dissolution, Bosnia's ethnic composition was particularly complex – "[t]he 1991 Bosnian population consisted of 44 percent Bosnian Muslims, 31 percent Serbs and 17 percent Croats" (Burnbord, Lyngstad and Urdal, 2003: 231). Consequently, "[b]etween December 1990 and April 1992 the fate of Bosnia-Herzegovina hung in the balance" (Burg and Shoup, 2015: 62). Most notably, distinct preferences of different ethnic groups frustrated attempts to peacefully resolve the crisis in the country. At the start of the Yugoslav crisis in 1990, Bosnian Serbs wanted to remain in Yugoslavia at any cost, and the Bosnian Croats leaned towards joining the independent state of Croatia. The Bosniaks fluctuated between staying in Yugoslavia (on the condition that the country was reformed and turned into a confederation) and declaring independence (as they feared for their destiny should they remain part of a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia) (Slack and Doyon, 2001: 142-3; MacDonald, 200; Burg and Shoup, 2015: 70). And indeed, "[o]n June 3rd [1991] Izetbegović and Kiro Gligorov, his Macedonian counterpart, presented the rest of the federation with their own compromise model for Yugoslavia in a last-ditch attempt to stave off disintegration" (Bennett, 1995: 184).

As time passed "[i]ncorporating chunks of Bosnia-Hercegovina into Croatia and Serbia became central to the legitimacy of both [Croatian and Serbian] governments who pledged to unite Diaspora nationals throughout the region" (MacDonald, 2003: 220). Thus, as the war raged in Croatia and as foreign states began recognising the independent status of Slovenia and Croatia (making Yugoslavia's disintegration almost definitive)[61], the Bosnian leadership shifted its position and started preparing to separate from Yugoslavia. The Bosnian Serbs, simultaneously, were preparing for seceding from Bosnia. Karadžić proclaimed Serb-dominated regions of Bosnia independent from the rest of the country – in a similar fashion as Serbs did in Croatia (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: 123; Slack and Doyon, 2001: 143; Bennett, 1995: 183; Gow, 1997: 34; Burg and Shoup, 2015: 73). In November 1991, the Bosnian Serbs proclaimed the formation of a Serb Republic within Bosnia and Herzegovina (Cviic, 1995: 74) (later re-named to Republika Srpska, and officially proclaimed as such on January 9th 1992) (Magas, 2006: 121; Thomas and Mikulan, 2006b: 4). This proclamation came after a referendum in which "99 per cent

[61] For a more detailed account of the international community's stance and policies towards declarations of independence see: Silber and Little, 1997; Bennett, 1995.

of voters in an estimated 85 per cent turn-out backed the creation of a Serb Republic within Bosnia-Herzegovina if the Republic tried to break away from Yugoslavia" (Bennett, 1995: 185).

To gain international recognition as an independent state, Bosnia held its independence referendum between February 29th and March 1st 1992.[62] Violence erupted while the referendum was taking place on March 1st when a Serb, Nikola Gardović, who was attending a wedding in Sarajevo was shot dead by a Bosnian Muslim, Ramiz Delalić, "and within the hour masked Serb gunmen erected barricades around the city" (Bennett, 1995: 186).[63] Several other individuals were also killed on that day. The outcome of the referendum itself was announced on March 3rd, and the results were no surprise – an overwhelming majority voted for independence, although it should be noted that (as anticipated) Bosnian Serbs boycotted the referendum (Maass, 1996: 27). The reaction of the Bosnian Serbs to the referendum result was predictable, as they rejected its outcome (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Ch. 15).

Despite violence erupting in March, it is considered (although contested) (Bennett, 1995: 188) that the war in Bosnia officially started in April 1992. After Bijeljina fell to Bosnian Serb forces (backed by Arkan's Tigers) on April 4th, President Izetbegović issued an order of general mobilisation and called for the JNA to return the weapons seized in May 1990 – which the JNA refused to do (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Ch.19). The people of Sarajevo decided to take the matters to the streets – and protested the violence and ethnic tensions, whilst also demanding new elections. Violence erupted during the protests when Serbs opened fire, and by that evening the JNA started the bombardment of the city and seized control over the Sarajevo airport (Ramet, 1992: 79). The siege of Sarajevo officially started on April 5th 1992 and ended only on February 29th 1996 – the longest siege of a capital city in modern history (Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.16; Thomas and Mikulan, 2006b: 23). On April 6th 1992, the EC recognised Bosnia's independence (Malcolm, 2002: 234; Cviic, 1993: 78).

Soon after the recognition of Bosnia as an independent state, on April 27th, the SFRY officially seized to exist – on this day, the Federal Assembly announced the creation of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (*Savezna Republika Jugoslavija* – SRJ), the members of which were Serbia (with its two autonomous provinces) and Montenegro (Thomas, 1999: 120). Subsequently, "[o]n 19 May [1992] the JNA formally ceased to exist, being renamed as the Yugoslav Army [*Vojska Jugoslavije*] (VJ)" (Thomas, 1999: 122).

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[62] The newly-established Badinter Commission conditioned Bosnia to hold an independence referendum in order to receive international recognition. For further details see: Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.14; Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Ch.15

[63] The story of the killing on this wedding is also discussed in Almond, 1994: 263.

The Bosnian War was punctuated with campaigns of ethnic cleansing, in which the newly-created Bosnian Serb Army (*Vojska Republike Srpske* – VRS)[64] and paramilitary units seized one town after another (Cigar, 1995: 47-53). Such campaigns had similar patterns (although some episodes involved higher levels of violence than others) – the Serbs would attempt to seize control over the city. Following violent clashes Muslims would face a choice of leaving the town and weapons or face further repercussions. Usually, following such ultimatums, the Serbs would seize control of the towns they attacked.[65] The Serbs were able to score victories and "within the first month of fighting [Karadžić's] forces came to control about two-thirds of the Republic" (Bennett, 1995: 187). As a consequence of the ethnic cleansing campaign a massive refugee crisis emerged – with people fleeing to Croatia on-masse until July 1992, when Croatia announced they could not take more refugees (Silber and Little, 1997: 244; Bennett, 1995: 189-90). At that point the international community did very little to either prevent violence or take the refugees fleeing Bosnia – taking refugees was back then, as it is today, a political 'hot potato'.[66]

However, the behaviour of the international community changed following Roy Gutman's[67] and Penny Marshall's reports on detention camps established by the Serbs. As the people in the West saw the kinds of torture and murder taking place in camps such as Omarska or Keraterm, the pressure on the international governments to act grew. The first response was imposition of sanctions, "on May 30th, outraged by Serbian atrocities in Bosnia, the UN Security Council had imposed draconian economic and political sanctions on Belgrade" (Silber and Little, 1997: 259). Such a decision was grounded in the belief that Milošević had the ability to stop violence committed by Bosnian Serb forces in Bosnia. Thus, imposing severe sanctions on Serbia would, in the view of the international community, put political pressure on Milošević to end hostilities in Bosnia. However, both sanctions and other attempts by the international community (most notably the London conference held in August of 1992)[68] to stop the violence occurring in Bosnia proved futile. At the end of 1992 "[a]ll of Eastern Bosnia was occupied by the Bosnian Serb Army […] except for a few areas, including Goražde, Žepa and Srebrenica" (Brunhold, Lyngstad and Urdal, 2003: 232).

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[64] The story of VRS's creation indicates that the war in Bosnia had been planned months in advance. Milošević and Jović, in December 1991, re-engineered the ethnic balance of the JNA troops. They moved all non-Bosnian born JNA officers back to their native countries and moved all Bosnian-born JNA soldiers back to Bosnia. Thus, when the JNA officially withdrew from Bosnia in May 1992, many Bosnian Serb soldiers (former JNA soldiers) remained in the country and formed VRS. For further details see: Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Ch.16; Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.15; Thomas, 1999: 121-2.

[65] For further details see: Bennett 1995, 189-90.

[66] For further details on different proposals for resolving the refugee crisis by the EC states see: Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.15.

[67] Subsequently, Pulitzer-winning Gutman turned his articles into a book. For further details on camps in Bosnia and Gutman's reporting see: Gutman, 1993.

[68] For further details on the London conference see: Bennett 1995, 193-94; Baker 2015, 68-71.

1993 saw further violence in Bosnia and international community's greater involvement in the conflict. Most notably, during 1993, the UN Security Council declared Srebrenica, Sarajevo, Žepa, Goražde, Tuzla, and Bihać safe areas which were placed under the protection of UN peacekeeping units – UNPROFOR (Brunhold, Lyngstad and Urdal, 2003: 232; Baker, 2015: 67; Rohde, 2006: Draganich, 1996: 96). However, neither the establishment of safe areas nor a threat of NATO airstrikes were successful in initiating a ceasefire or protecting civilian lives. In their attempt to end the war, the international community proposed what came to be known as the Vance-Owen plan,[69] which was meant to:

> divide […] Bosnia in ten provinces […] It recognised Bosnia within its existing frontiers but granted substantially devolved powers to each of the ten provinces which were defined, primarily, on ethnic grounds: three of the provinces would have a Serb majority, two a Croat majority, three a Muslim, and one mixed Croat Muslim. The tenth province – Sarajevo – would retain power-sharing between all three ethnic groups. The Republic would retain a central government, but its powers would be minimal (Silber and Little, 1997: 276).

This plan was accepted by the Bosnian Croats, however, immediately refused by the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims. Nevertheless, the strategy of imposing draconian sanctions on Serbia proper showed effect. Namely, Milošević demonstrated extensive support for Vance-Owen plan as he went to Pale (Bosnia) to persuade the Bosnian Serb leadership to accept the plan. However, Milošević's efforts proved futile – as Ratko Mladić gave a speech in front of the Bosnian Serb parliament and successfully persuaded the Assembly to refuse to accept it – a decision which the citizens of Republika Srpska later on confirmed on a referendum. By the summer of 1993, the Vance-Owen plan was dead, as was Milošević's relationship with Bosnian Serb leadership. Among other things "Belgrade announced it was cutting off all supplies except food and medicine to Republika Srpska" (Silber and Little, 1997: 287). Furthermore, as I show in chapter seven, RTS's tone towards the Bosnian Serb political leadership began shifting – with Karadžić increasingly portrayed as a war-profiteer rather than a hero protecting the interest of the Serb people in Bosnia. 1993 also brought on a new conflict – between the Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats.[70]

As the war escalated, Washington stepped up its involvement. On March 1st 1994, the US brokered a ceasefire between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats through a peace deal known as the Washington Agreement (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: 54; Malcolm,

[69] Subsequently, Owen wrote a memoir in which he provides his recollection of events. For further details see: Owen, 1996.

[70] For the reasons of scope, the conflict between Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims is not analysed in-depth in this thesis. For further details on this war see: Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Section IV; Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2003: Section IV; Bennett, 1995: 198-204.

2002: 255-6). Furthermore, the US, alongside Russia, France, the UK, and Germany, worked on a peace plan that came to be known as the Contact Group plan – although this plan failed in a similar fashion as the Vance-Owen plan and further damaged relations between Milošević and the Bosnian Serb leadership.

Excessive violence continued throughout the year, with one of the most notable events taking place in February 1994 – the bombing of the Markale market in February in which 69 people lost their lives, and over 200 individuals were injured (Silber and Little, 1997: 309; Judah, 2009: 215; Malcolm, 2002: 255; Maass, 1996: 32). In this instance, "Karadžić and the Bosnian Serb authorities said that it [the bomb] had been fired by the government side in order to provoke a Western response. It was a frequent claim and according to Lord Owen, the EC peace negotiator, the UN told him that occasionally such things had happened" (Judah, 2009: 215-6). In this particular instance, the international community found the claim unpersuasive and "[t]he Bosnian Serb Army was given a deadline to pull out its heavy weaponry from around the city or have it bombed out by NATO. After much loud protestation that it would do no such thing, an eleventh-hour, face-saving deal was stitched together by the Russians" (Judah, 2009: 216).[71] On the whole, 1994 marks the beginning of the slow decline of the VRS and an ever-increasing involvement of the international community in the conflict. Finally, the international community managed to pressure Izetbegović and Karadžić to sign a ceasefire agreement on December 23rd. A week later, the Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serb leaders agreed to a 4-month cessation of hostilities (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: 29). This agreement, like many other ceasefire agreements before, did not end the war in Bosnia – as the atrocities of 1995 would confirm.

1995 was a long and bloody road to the Dayton peace agreement. Throughout the year, a growing conflict within the Serbian political and military leadership was ongoing. Accusations exploded on both sides – with Milošević accusing Karadžić of war-profiteering, and Karadžić accusing Milošević of abandoning the Serbs and failing to protect their interests (Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Ch. 76). Furthermore, the VRS continuously lost ground against Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat forces (Office of Russian and European Analylsis, 2002: Section VII). However, before losing the war, the VRS would engage in what is considered as the worst instance of atrocities committed during the Yugoslav Wars.

[71] As I show in chapter seven, the Bosnian Serb side (as well as RTS) often argued that Bosnian Muslim were attacking their own positions in an attempt to "internationalise the conflict" and get the international community to intervene militarily. Detailed inquiries showed that the shots were fired from the Serbian position. Interestingly though, when it came to the bombing of Markale Market in 1994, the evidence from the inquiry remained inconclusive. To date, there are disagreements as to whether the shots were fired from the Serbian or Bosnian side (for further details see chapter seven).

In 1995, the town of Srebrenica had as many as 40,000 citizens. Prior to the conflict the town had only 8,000 residents. Such an increase in population size could be attributed to the Resolution 819 adopted by the UN Security Council in 1993 which declared Srebrenica a 'safe area' (Honig and Both, 1996: 97) – as many desperate Bosnian Muslims fled there in the hope that the UN would provide them with security. In addition to declaring Srebrenica a 'safe area',"[a] Dutch contingent (DUTCHBAT) was posted in Srebrenica as peacekeepers, but it was small and lightly armed, and its mandate was unclear" (Brunbord, Lyngstad and Urdal, 2003: 232). Despite these efforts on behalf of the international community, most scholars now agree that the intervention in Srebrenica came too little, too late. For example, Rohde (2006: 135) shows us that it was naïve to assume that the DUTCHBAT could have helped the Bosnian Muslims in any substantial way since only "750 lightly armed Dutch were expected to protect the enclave's 40,000 Bosnian Muslims."

On July 6th, after a Muslim attack on two Serb villages around Srebrenica, Bosnian Serb forces started shelling the town. During the following three days, the Serbs managed to capture some Dutch peacekeeping soldiers and surround the town (Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.28). That same day, the Serbs issued an ultimatum: "the United Nations and the Muslims must evacuate the enclave within forty-eight hours" (Silber and Little, 1997: 347). As the Serbs continued to make advances towards the city no one responded to the outcry of people from Srebrenica – both the international community as well as the Izetbegović-led Bosnian government did nothing to stop what was to occur. Furthermore, "[t]he requested NATO air support was too late and too little and DUTCHBAT, which had neither the power nor the mandate to stop the attacks, also failed to protect the civilian population" (Brunbord, Lyngstad and Urdal, 2003: 232).

Consequently, starting from July 11th, the VRS, led by the General Ratko Mladić executed around 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys, in the event that was eventually deemed genocide by the ICTY (Baker, 2015: 74-5). Even though responsibility for the crimes committed in Srebrenica primarily fall on the Bosnian Serbs, they proved humiliating for the international community as well. The failure to intervene and prevent the atrocities in Srebrenica led to the wider recognition amongst the international community that "the world stood by and watched the biggest single mass murder in Europe since the Second World War" (Silber and Little, 1997: 350).

As some academics now suggest that the events of 1995 provided a sense of relief to the international community – since finally "the messy, unresolved matter of the eastern enclaves, which cluttered up the peace-makers' maps, had at last been settled" (Silber and Little, 1997: 350). Thus, in November 1995, the leaders of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia met in Dayton (Ohio, US) to agree upon a peace settlement that ended the Bosnian War (Daalder, 2000: 117). The conference

was led by Warren Christopher (US Secretary of State), and Richard Holbrooke[72], alongside Carl Bildt (EU representative), and a Russian politician Igor Ivanov. After a series of negotiations and arguments (in which, Milošević appeared to be the easiest to persuade and negotiate with – in part as he desperately needed the international community to lift sanctions), the three Yugoslav leaders finally agreed upon a division of Bosnia that was acceptable to all (Rutar, 2013: 15).

Bosnia was divided into two entities: The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (divided into ten cantons and consisting primarily of Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats) and Republika Srpska (consisting primarily of Bosnian Serbs) (Rutar, 2013: 15). The political order of the country remains highly complex, and rests on a form of power-sharing between the two entities. McKinney helpfully summarises the key elements of international community's role in Bosnia following the Dayton agreement:[73]

> Under the Dayton Accords, NATO forces were given a strong mandate to enforce the military agreement. NATO forces were allowed to use force when necessary. The Dayton Accords also hammered out provisions for civilian aspects of restoring peace to the war-torn region. The Accords established that the Organization for the Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and office of CSCE, would organise the upcoming national elections, the UN would oversee the creation of an unarmed civilian police force to monitor the police in each entity, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) would oversee the return and resettlement of refugees who fled due to the fighting (McKinney, 2002: 133).

Another important aspect of the Dayton agreement pertains to the requirements and restrictions imposed on the media in Bosnia. In the view of the international community, the media in Bosnia played a huge role in instigating violence and prolonging the conflict. Thus, in order to ensure free and fair elections, the OSCE "established the Media Experts Commission (MEC). MEC issued a set of rules and regulations to which Bosnia media were expected to comply" (McKinney, 2002: 134). Amongst other things, the Bosnian media were required to restrain themselves from airing hateful propaganda and/or inaccurate information.

The Dayton agreement was officially signed on December 14th 1995 in Paris, and this day marks the end of the Bosnian War. However, the Dayton agreement did not secure peace in the region, and further interventions on behalf of the international community occurred during the second half of the 1990s. For example, the Bosnian government failed to implement sections of the Dayton agreement pertaining to the media regulations, and NATO forces (more precisely,

[72] Holbrooke later on wrote a memoir in which he detailed his recollection of the Dayton conference. For further details see: Holbrooke, 1998.
[73] And for a helpful map detailing the Civilian Implementations Structure under the Dayton accords see: Daalder, 2000: 158.

NATO Stabilization Force – SFOR) "seized control of SRT [the Serb television in Bosnia], and jammed its airwaves. SFOR was also instrumental in shutting down Croat TV (HTV), a Croatian hate television" (McKinney, 2002: 134).

Most notably, however, in 1998 violence between the Serbs and Kosovo Albanians erupted again in Kosovo, thereby triggering NATO's intervention in Yugoslavia (Thomas and MIkulan, 2006b: 47-51; Hentea, 2006: 91-7). In 1999, from March 24th to June 10th, under the code name Operation Allied Force (US Code Name: Nobel Anvil), NATO bombed Yugoslavia (Rutar, 2013). Even though it successfully ended the violence, to this day, the Operation remains a controversy, as it was not approved by the UN Security Council (Rutar, 2013). Further contributing to the controversy was the bombing of RTS Headquarters on April 23rd 1999 – a first instance in modern history in which Western political and military officials deemed media organisations as 'legitimate' targets of bombing.

The Operation ended "[a]fter Belgrade's capitulation [following which] a ceasefire agreement was signed at Kumanovo on June 9th 1999" (Rutar, 2013: 16). Subsequently, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was established as a peacekeeping mission in Kosovo. Just under 10 years later, on February 17th 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared independence from Serbia (Rutar, 2013: 16).[74] To this day, relations between Kosovo and Serbia remain tense, with Serbia (amongst other countries) still refusing to recognise Kosovo as an independent state.[75]

And finally, a brief mention ought to be given to the destiny of the three key leaders of the former Yugoslavia. Izetbegović voluntarily resigned in 2000, on the grounds of bad health. Tudjman, who is still perceived as a hero in Croatia, remained the President until his death on December 10th 1999 (Rutar, 2013: 14; Bellamy, 2003: 4). Milošević was officially removed from power on October 5th 2000, following the event known as *Petooktobarska Revolucija* (5th October Overthrow) (Rutar, 2013: 14). In 2001, Milošević was sent to the ICTY to be tried for his actions during the Yugoslav Wars, but he died in the Hague on March 11th 2006 before the trial was finished.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I integrated and relied on the touchstone literature in order to provide an overview of how Yugoslavia fell apart and the key actors who had a role in its dissolution. The primary

[74] In the meantime, on 21st of May 2006, Montenegro also declared independence from Yugoslavia (at the time called Serbia and Montenegro).

[75] During those 10 years many other important events took place, however, for the reasons of scope, the details of those events are not analysed in this chapter or this thesis.

purpose of this chapter was to familiarise the reader with the politicians whose role was crucial in the wars, and the key events of the wars, which should assist the reader in understanding the role RTS played and how exactly Milošević used RTS to achieve his political aims. Furthermore, the historical overview of Yugoslavia's dissolution will also help the reader appreciate the different stages of the war which corresponded with the different phases of propaganda; how Milošević determined which functions propaganda ought to serve in a given moment, which in turn, determined the specific discourses and techniques RTS built and used. Finally, it will help the reader appreciate how RTS utilised specific events in order to develop the discourses most likely to resonate with and be deployed by the relevant audiences. As such, the chapter should not be treated as an account that explicates *why* Yugoslavia fell apart or *how* certain actors contributed to its dissolution, since, indeed, there is a vast literature available on the matter. Instead, I merely detailed crucial points in the run-up to and during the war, as that is a necessary for understanding my empirical analysis in chapters five, six, and seven.

Chapter Four: Inside Radio and Television of Serbia (RTS)

Introduction

Milošević's promise: "No one should dare to beat you"

One of the key moments for Milošević's rise to power was the visit he paid to Kosovo in 1987. During that visit Milošević made his historic statement to the Kosovo Serbs, "no one should dare to beat you." This was a pivotal moment in Serbian political history. However, this essential moment was contingent on a series of unforeseen events. As Kaliterna (2013: 71) tells us: "it started in Kosovo, it will end in Kosovo. […] It all began during a protest in Kosovo Polje on 24th April 1987. […] around 15,000 Serbs and Montenegrians came [to greet Milošević]." And indeed, to understand Milošević's rise to power, it is necessary to consider that historic visit to Kosovo Polje.

With ethnic tensions rising in Kosovo, Milošević was sent to Kosovo Polje to address the situation. Initially, Milošević was not scheduled to go to Kosovo. President of Serbia Ivan Stambolić, Milošević's close friend at the time, was scheduled to visit Kosovo himself. However, days before the visit, Stambolić decided that Milošević should go in his place (Silber and Little, 1997: 37-47). This was not the only spontaneous development related to the trip. In fact, even Milošević's statement was not pre-planned. As Doder and Branson report, "Milošević prepared a speech designed to stimulate a conciliatory spirit in the province. He never delivered it" (Doder and Branson, 1999: 43). As he arrived at the meeting with the Kosovo Serbs, he found himself unexpectedly stuck in the middle of a crowd of angry Serbs, protesting against the use of excess force by the Albanian officers of Yugoslav police forces. Caught by surprise, Milošević responded to the crowds' anger with the promise "no one should dare to beat you." Although the crowd responded with delight, it is implausible that Milošević was aware of the consequences this single sentence would have on his political career. As Doder and Branson report, "Milošević's facial expression and demeanour are those of a man […] unaware that the populist phrase he uttered would not merely calm the restive crowd but set in motion a dramatic series of events that would transform his life" (Doder and Branson, 1999: 43).

What is perhaps even more surprising is that the historic phrase was recorded coincidentally. Nino Brajović, Radio and Television of Belgrade (RTB)[76] reporter and editor, who recorded the statement, states:

> It was April 1987, and […] I recorded that statement 'No one should dare to beat you' which skyrocketed his political career completely accidentally. Well, not accidentally, but I was not meant to be outside. My colleague, who is dead now, was meant to be outside, and I was meant to be inside. Inside the hall in which the event [negotiations with Kosovo Serbs] was taking place. […] and we got the information that something was happening outside, and we decided to go outside. And as we came out, we were just next to Milošević and there was a big crowd and our equipment was damaged. But we managed to record it with a special tape recorder […] the colleague who was meant to be outside did not manage to record that statement. Well, no one knows what would have happened had we not aired that statement (interview 1, 2019).

The footage was sent to RTB, and Dušan Mitević (at the time the Deputy Director of RTB, and Milošević's close friend) ensured that the statement was aired continuously. It is reported that Mitević said, "we aired Milošević's promise without a break. That's what launched [his political career]" (Vekarić, 2011: 35). According to Mitević, Milošević was pleased with how RTB covered the event. He was delighted with the positive response to the statement. It appears that this was the moment when Milošević realised that the media was a pivotal asset for climbing to the top of the Serbian political establishment (Vekarić, 2011: 35). In the following years, Milošević launched an aggressive campaign (now referred to as the Anti-bureaucratic revolution)[77] through which he ensured control over key political institutions in Serbia - including RTB.

In this chapter, I trace the processes through which Milošević secured total control over RTB[78] between 1987 and 1995, while also demonstrating the implications it had inside the institution. Milošević himself rarely appeared on RTS broadcasts, but as Gordy (1999: 17) reports:

> […] every major political move of his [Milošević's] regime has been announced, defended, and removed from the agenda by surrogates. To the extent that Milošević appears at all on the daily television news, it is nearly always in the same manner: a still photograph of the President sitting on the same sofa in the same position, receiving visitors and delegations that vary from day to day. On occasion, he may emerge to perform a ceremonial duty, such as laying a wreath, although this work too is often performed by surrogates, particularly the strangely

[76] As I detail below, RTB was a predecessor to RTS.

[77] For further details on the revolution and the processes through which Milošević asserted control over autonomous provinces and other political institutions in Serbia see Silber and Little, 1997: Ch.4; Office of Russian and European Analysis, 2002: Ch.1; Glenny, 1996: Ch.2.; Bakić, 2011: 82; Thomas, 1999: 45-51; Glaurdić, 2011: 29-35; Ramet, 2005: 56.

[78] RTB – Radio and Television of Belgrade, in 1992 renamed to RTS – Radio and Television of Serbia

> featureless Federal President. […] Otherwise, all the crucial, ideological, political, and military work of the regime is performed by surrogates.

I aim to show that journalists and RTS staff more generally were 'surrogates' and that Milošević often used the journalists to disseminate his ideology or justify his policies. It is important to note that Milošević's control over RTB did not only impact the content of the news and broadcasts, but its personnel. Some were no longer able to do their job, others were fired, and at the extreme, journalists' personal security was threatened. Furthermore, the impact of Milošević's interference in RTB also extended to private relationships amongst journalists – as my interviewees report, personal conflicts between those who supported Milošević and those who opposed him were continuous, with close friendships breaking down in the face of opposing political attitudes.

This analysis makes three primary contributions. First, I provide detailed insights into the processes through which authoritarian regimes assert control over the media – an area understudied by scholars of authoritarianism. Such a lack of interest is surprising since scholars devote significant attention to the processes through which authoritarian regimes assert control over relevant political institutions or legitimise their rule (Boix and Svolik, 2013; Linz and Stepan, 1996: 68-71; Geedes, Wright and Frantz, 2008; Dukalskis and Gerschewski, 2018; Frantz and Ezrow, 2011; Gandhi, 2008; Geddes and Zaller, 1989; Koesel and Bunce, 2019; von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017). It is unclear why the media are continuously excluded from academic research, especially given the importance of the media within contemporary study of authoritarianism. Scholars generally recognise that authoritarian regimes need support from the population to maintain their power and must therefore seek to publicly legitimize their rule (Geddes, Wright and Frantz, 2018: 34-35).[79] Despite the media's importance as a tool used to legitimise authoritarian regimes,[80] this analysis remains meagre in the studies of authoritarianism.[81]

Second, I demonstrate how depending on the regime's aims, the phases of propaganda, as well as the functions that propaganda serves, the atmosphere inside the institution also correspondingly changes. As I show below, when there was a need for propaganda targeting the Croats to escalate, Milošević ensured that the General Director of RTS was a committed ideologue, who ensured that all reports coming from RTS during that period negatively portrayed the Croats, often equating Croats with Ustaše. However, as 1992 began and there was a need to slightly de-escalate propaganda, Milošević replaced the General Director and subsequently the atmosphere inside RTS and its reporting changed.

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[79] See also: Dukalskis and Gerschewski, 2018; von Soest and Grauvogel, 2017; Cassani, 2018.
[80] For further details see: Geddes and Zaller, 1989.
[81] There are some exceptions to this general trend of disregarding the media (for further details see: Becker, 2004), however, even Becker's analysis leaves numerous questions unanswered.

Third, I show that dissemination of propaganda is not a straightforward, top-down process in which politicians continuously control the content of the news. Instead, as indicated by the example above – propaganda could also be coincidental and developed on the basis of unpredicted and unplanned events. Furthermore, both the journalists and editors have (at least some) control over the content and are thus responsible for the materials aired. And indeed, in Serbia, Milošević rarely directly interfered in the content of the broadcasts. Instead, he influenced content by reserving the right to appoint editors and directors, for whom he knew, would always ensure that RTS reporting was in line with the Party's ideology.

This chapter also serves as a starting point for thinking about precursors to hate propaganda. Extreme forms of hate speech – the more dominant propaganda focus of research on violence and discrimination – cannot emerge overnight. Instead, such propaganda is a consequence of a long-lasting and systemic breakdown of a free and independent media – during which the standards and norms of what is appropriate to say publicly changes. Subsequently, this chapter should help the reader understand the initial stages of these processes which could in turn help prevent the development of such discourses. Such prevention could either be secured by establishing proper legislatures that protect free and independent media, and discourse; or at the very least by enabling timely reaction to extremization of the discourse.

Consolidating power

In this section, I demonstrate the ways Milošević asserted control over RTS. I argue that he relied on a 'sticks and carrots' principle – that is, he punished those who disobeyed his orders by publishing politically undesirable reports, and rewarded those loyal to him. However, I show that the process of asserting such control over RTS was neither simple nor short: it took five years for Milošević to fully consolidate his influence. In addition, I also show that this process was often interrupted by expressions of opposition, and I detail the ways in which Milošević dealt with such challenges. I also argue that the process of asserting power over RTS was incremental and cumulative. Instead of immediately shutting down any opposition or dealing with problematic journalists harshly from the beginning, Milošević slowly but steadily increased his control by intensifying the repercussions. Finally, I also show that even once Milošević asserted control over RTS, the exercise of that control was often indirect – i.e. it was the general directors and editors-in-chief (whom Milošević appointed) who ensured adequate RTS reporting.

To illustrate, in the period between 1987 and 1990, Milošević primarily used nudging and temporary suspensions as methods for ensuring adequate reporting. However, with the first multiparty elections approaching, Milošević needed to exercise greater levels of control.

Subsequently, from late 1990 until mid-1991, Milošević, through his influence on editors-in-chief and General Director, suspended more individuals and, for sustained periods of time, began banning TV shows. Furthermore, editors-in-chiefs also began directly interfering in the choice of guest speakers, and shutting down many offices and newsrooms inside RTS. Finally, as the war intensified, in late 1992, Milošević (through his influence on RTS General Director) ensured that all of those who disagreed with him were fired, thereby completely cleansing RTS of opposition elements. I suggest that these strategies had both direct and indirect effects. On one hand, by suspending the journalists, Milošević directly prevented them from publishing controversial materials. On the other hand, by suspending some journalists, Milošević plausibly deterred others from producing reports that would be threatening to his political aims.

Tito, RTS, and the Media Environment in the former Yugoslavia

Prior to analysing the processes involved in Milošević's consolidation of power over RTS, it is important to provide the reader with a short context of the political environment in which RTS was created. This should, in turn, help the reader understand that RTS (nor any other media organisation in Serbia) was not created in a democratic country that valued free thought and independent media. Instead, RTS was founded in a socialist state that exercised excessive control in many areas of life. Subsequently, the story of RTS is not one in which a free and independent media organisation turned hateful under the pressure of authoritarian leaders. Consequently, understanding the historical context should help the reader appreciate how the legacy of Tito and his relationship to the media enabled Milošević to secure control over the media with relative ease. Milošević inherited a system in which it was expected that those in power dictate the content of the news and where the public was not expecting to be exposed to multiple competing political positions. Furthermore, one reporter suggests that the journalists were used to following orders coming from the top of the political establishment rather than produce news independent from political influence (interview 2, 2019).

Thus, as I show in the later sections, the media environment of Serbia in the 1990s was not novel or created solely by Milošević. Instead, several mechanisms of control were simply copied from Tito's time (Kurspahić, 2003). As Kurspahić (2003: 24) shows, "for the media it was only a changing of the guard and not a change in the methods or instruments of control." What should be noted, however, was that such radicalisation of discourse was not inevitable. To the contrary, as I show below, Tito's death was a chance for easing the control exercised over the media. However, what could have been a period of democratisation and liberalisation instead

became a period in which the interest of local Republics started taking over the Federal interest, and it was the local politicians that intervened in the media more so than the Federal authorities.

Radio and Television of Belgrade (RTB) was founded on August 23rd 1958, after the National Assembly of Serbia decided to merge Radio Belgrade with the newly created television channel (Vekarić, 2011: 22-3). Tito recognised the importance of the media from the earliest stages of his rule,[82] and immediately invested resources into turning RTB into a professional radio and television station that could be compared to its counterparts across the globe. By 1960, Radio Belgrade had three different radio stations, and plans of developing RTB Channel II began in 1966. Over the 1970s, RTB developed its organisational and hierarchical structure. The Information Law (adopted in 1973) resulted in the creation of a Program Council (*Programski Savet*), RTB Assembly (*Skupština RTB*) and its Executive Board (*Izvršni Odbor*), as well as Workers' Council (*Radnički Savet*). At the top of RTB's hierarchy was the General Director (Vekarić, 2011, 22-4).

Throughout Tito's rule, all media organisations were placed under strict party control. The Ministry of Information, and the Agitation and Propaganda Department – otherwise known as Agitprop – "were in charge of developing the main lines of Communist propaganda, aimed at spreading the Party's ideology among the population" (Kurspahić, 2003: 5). Ultimately, even though Yugoslavia differed from other Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union in many ways, the media scene of Yugoslavia in the aftermath of World War II resembled the Soviet model (Kurpsahić, 2003: 5).

Legislation in Yugoslavia further confirmed Party's dominance in the media. As Robinson (1977: 18) comments when discussing the Yugoslav press law adopted in 1946, "[w]hile freedom of the press was nominally guaranteed, the fact is that only groups showing evidence of loyalty to the authorities received permits to publish and to broadcast." From the earliest days of his rule, Tito instituted a series of mechanisms which were meant to guarantee that the press reported accordingly, and Kurspahić (2003: 7) provides a helpful summary:

> The 'filtering' of the news was guaranteed by the appointment of chief editors and directors by the Central Committee; by checking content before publication and making the top editors personally responsible for what was in their papers; by making distribution and newsprint allocation dependent on good relationships with the Party's economic planning committee and by making the official news agency, Tanjug […], the exclusive source of the 'news' for all newspapers and radio stations.

[82] A detailed analysis of Tito's methods of controlling the media is outside the scope of this chapter, but for further details it see: Vekarić, 2011.

All of these policies not only meant that the Party, in effect, had a final say on what could be published, but it also resulted in a high degree of self-censorship. Top editors and journalists were afraid of losing their job should they publish materials that the Party deemed controversial. That such fears were justified was proved in 1948 during the famous Tito-Stalin split. Following the expulsion of Yugoslavia from Cominform, Tito engaged in a massive purge of all of those not loyal to his regime and sent them to "a newly opened 'reeducational' prison facility at Goli Otok in the Adriatic […]" (Kurspahić, 2003: 8). Furthermore, reporting in line with the Party's demands brought success to all of those who complied.[83] As I show in the later sections, similar system of 'sticks and carrots' remained in place once Milošević assumed power.

However, as time passed, the scale of freedom given to the press expanded (particularly after the dust settled from Tito-Stalin split) and was generally greater than in other communist states. This was partly a consequence of the introduction of the self-management system, and partly a consequence of Tito's desire to distance himself from the Soviet bloc. Yet the media in the former Yugoslavia were not free by liberal democratic standards, and many strategies used to control the media remained in place. For instance, appointing editors-in-chief was still the responsibility of the Party and demands for the retraction of any news that contradicted the Party's ideology continued. Thus, at the time of Tito's death in 1980, the Party's influence over the media was widespread. Not only did the Party have the power to control the messages aired and appoint directors and editors, but many journalists were members of the Party too.

> According to the Federation of Journalists of Yugoslavia [*Savez Novinara Jugoslavije*], the SFRY in 1982 had 11000 journalists, of which 3800 were based in Serbia. Of this figure, over 75% were members of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia […] Radio Belgrade [had] 300 journalists, and Television Belgrade 300 [journalists] (of which 80 per cent were members of the party, and in TANJUG of 250 employees 88 per cent were also members of the party)" (Vekarić, 2011: 30). This illustrates the level of interconnectedness between the media and the Party. Moreover, it makes it likely that at least some of the pro-Party content aired was a consequence of the political beliefs of the journalists rather than direct control exercised by the Party. Journalists may also have been willing to compromise the standards of their profession and promote the Party's interests either to gain benefits from it, or to avoid punishments.

As indicated above however, after Tito's death, there was the potential for a transformation in many aspects of society, including the media. Journalists, for instance, started demanding a transformation of the media system. More specifically, they wanted to increase professional standards in the industry and divorce journalism from politics (Vekarić, 2011: 30). Demands for

[83] For further details see: Kurspahić, 2003: 8.

the reform of the media system increased and in early 1980s there was optimism for reforms to the media landscape. To illustrate, Slobodan Stupar, a journalist and editor at Radio Belgrade suggests that the institution was transforming. He recalls that at the start of the 1980s many journalists from "the older generation, post-war generation" retired, and that younger people took their positions. In his words: "we were lucky to be so young, around 30 or 35, when we got the opportunity to govern all of that. To be able to do the most important things in a conservative Radio Belgrade […] with our youth and with our different perspective on what journalism was really about and a more liberal approach to it, we managed to create a modern radio station" (interview 3, 2019).

This account is consistent with what Branka Mihajlović, a prominent RTB journalist, claims. In her words: "Radio Belgrade had like debate shows at the time, with a lot of political figures that took part, and no one was banned from going to Radio Belgrade" (interview 4, 2018). Despite these improvements, the Party's tolerance of an independent press was limited – with television lacking the same degree of freedom as Radio. Mihajlović (interview 4, 2018) reports: that "[television journalists] tried […] to argue […] to get some more freedom, say the freedom that Radio Belgrade had." Specifically, whilst Radio Belgrade was allowed to host debate shows, and its journalists could invite any guest and discuss any topic, their colleagues based at Television Belgrade risked suspension should they report on controversial issues or invite controversial speakers.

Nadezda Gaće, a prominent RTB journalist, explains how she was suspended because she reported about a minor ethnic group in Yugoslavia based in the Gora Region. The Gora region (a triangle between Kosovo, North Macedonia and Albania) is an area inhabited by the Goranci people, who are a Slavic Muslim ethnic group. In Gaće's account, Serbs, Albanians and Macedonians all tried to claim the Goranci as their own people, which inspired her to do a report on them. In the report that aired on Sunday's Dnevnik, she suggested that the Goranci were neither Serbian nor Albanian nor Macedonian, but a separate and indigenous ethnic group that spoke their own Slavic language. After the report was aired, Gaće notes that "the people from the Party called me and said that what I was doing was treated as a hostile behaviour towards the state, and [they asked me] how dare I write such reports" (interview 5, 2019). Gaće was temporarily suspended from work.

She also faced a similar suspension after she did an interview with Vlada Gligorov (the son of Macedonian politician Kiro Gligorov). Following an interview with Gligorov, which was also aired in Dnevnik, she says that "the editor-in-chief of the newsroom Mihajlo Erić, the director of television, and the General Director of RTB all waited for me outside the news studio, and told

me to escort my guest and come to the General Director's office. […] After a long fight in the director's office, Erić told me to shut up and accept a month-long suspension, and that at least I would be allowed to come back to work" (interview 5, 2019).

As illustrated by Gaće's stories, attempting to reform the Serbian media environment in the still largely undemocratic context of continued Party interference and control, was complex, difficult, and sometimes futile. Furthermore, these episodes show that there was no need for direct intervention by political leaders. Instead, political elites could rely on editors-in-chief and other relevant authorities to engage with 'problematic' journalists and penalise them. Nonetheless, the punishments were relatively mild both when compared to Tito's and Milošević's time – suspensions would be temporary and relatively short; journalists would receive their salaries and were allowed to come back to work; and there were no threats to either their job or personal security.

The Party's tolerance towards radio reporting, relatively benign punishments for television journalists, and the ever-increasing demands of journalists are all indicative that during this period Serbia was well positioned to transform and democratize its media system. However, transforming the media system required more than a handful of prominent journalists demanding reforms or for the Party to occasionally turn a blind eye to negative reporting. Instead, it required active support from the political establishment. Given the extensive control the Party had over the state, it would be naïve to assume that any substantial transformations could occur without its approval and active support. As I show below that political will did not exist, but furthermore the Republics' leaders realised that control over the media could be pivotal for acquiring and maintaining power. Subsequently, leaders only wanted to increase the level of control they had over the media.

I argue that Serbia's chances of transforming its media environment substantially decreased after Milošević's visit to Kosovo. I suggest that in the immediate aftermath of this visit, Milošević realised two crucial things. First the political consequences of a single statement accidentally recorded made Milošević realised the importance of the media in facilitating the chances of him rising to power. Second, he realised that the nationalist card was the best method for acquiring power in Serbia. These realisations, in turn, had two primary effects on RTB. First, it massively decreased the chance of liberalising and democratising the media, as Milošević knew he needed control to ensure appropriate reporting. Second, it implied that the content disseminated had to change – appeals to Serbian nationalism had to become more prominent that narratives of common Yugoslav identity.

RTS and the 8th Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia

Milošević's visit to Kosovo split the Serbian branch of the Communist Party into two factions. Some members wholeheartedly supported Milošević, believing that the time has come for Serbia to assert control over its autonomous provinces. Other members backed the country's President, Ivan Stambolić. Those who supported Stambolić maintained that the Serbs should negotiate with the Kosovo Albanian leaders, and perceived Milošević as a dangerous nationalist whose politics could lead the country into an abyss. The Party was further polarised by a series of other scandals, that damaged the party beyond repair.

The future of the Party was decided at the 8th Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia scheduled for September 22nd 1987. This Session was all or nothing for Milošević. He was aware that if he won the support of the Party, he would be in control of the country. However, losing would end his political career for good. Mitević, the leader of the Belgrade Communist Party and RTB's Deputy Director, played an important role in the outcome of the Session. First, he openly sided with Milošević as the representative of the Belgrade Communist Party and compelled other members to do the same. Second, and perhaps more important, Mitević helped Milošević utilise RTB in the run up to and during the 8th Session. Taught by his experience in Kosovo, Milošević knew that the media was pivotal in his chances of winning control over the Party. Subsequently, Milošević requested Mitević to broadcast the Session live on RTB, which Mitević agreed to. Furthermore, Milošević ensured that no positive reports were aired about Stambolić, and that no negative remarks were made about Milošević. As Nadežda Gaće and Branka Mihajlović note as soon as the preparations for the 8th Session began, Milošević began asserting control over RTB (interview 4, 2018; interview 5, 2019). Gaće states that (interview 5, 2019), "[…] the Party meetings began, and for three months we had the Party meetings, and ideological cleansing [began], of course they took everything out, all the files, my file with stories about Vlada Gligorov and Goranci […] and during those meetings we were all suspended, me, Gordana, Branka […]." Both Mihajlović and Suša confirm Gaće's account (interview 4, 2018; interview 6, 2019). Through such suspensions, Milošević was able to ensure that the reality portrayed by the media was in accordance with his political goals.

In the end, Milošević decisively won – he consolidated his power and took charge of the Party (for further details see chapter three). After Milošević took over the Party, he started to consolidate his power over the state. To do so, and consistent with the scholarship analysing authoritarian regimes, Milošević needed to secure control over vital institutions including RTB. However, as will be demonstrated throughout this chapter, the consolidation of power over RTB

did not occur overnight. Instead, it was a five years process during which Milošević slowly dealt with any demonstrated resistance until he purged RTB of all of those not loyal to him.

'Sticks and carrots': asserting control over RTS

In the immediate aftermath of the 8th Session, Milošević's strategies of controlling RTB resembled Tito's model. As Cvetićanin (1997: 61) tells us – Milošević's "methods of asserting control over the media, as the precondition for gaining absolute power [over the country] were different and combined." First, journalists were often *nudged* by their editors to report in line with the Party's ideology and refrain from criticizing Milošević. Mihajlović (interview 4, 2018) claims that whenever her editor was dissatisfied with her reports they would come to her office and tell her "oh, come on, do you really have to say it like that." Mareš suggests that his editor used similar strategies when trying to convince him to change his reports. In his words: "you come to the office and then you make a normal report but then the editor tells you 'look, you really should not speak against the war, take those who speak like that out and only include those who support the war and how we are going to win that war and fight them because they are evil and Ustaše" (interview 7a, 2018).

Whilst my correspondents suggest that often this strategy was effective, there were those who refused to comply with the editors' instructions. In those cases, and in instances in which political losses were potentially high, Milošević would rely on the editors-in-chief to use a well-established strategy – *temporary suspensions*. As mentioned earlier, in the run-up to and during the 8th Session, all journalists considered disloyal were suspended. However, as all of my interviewees report, in late 1980s those suspended would be allowed to come back to work relatively quickly, which would not be the case in the years to come.

However, even during the early stages of his rule, Milošević began introducing methods of content control different to those used during Tito's time. During the Anti-bureaucratic revolution, the editors would press journalists to modify reports so as to make them more consistent with Milošević's ideology. In instances in which the journalists failed to respond to the familiar method of nudging, the editors would approach alternative journalists and modify reports without the original author's consent – thereby relying on the strategy I term *substitution*. Suša's story serves as a good illustrative example of this method. Suša was sent to Novi Sad to report from the so-called Yoghurt Revolution[84] and she says that:

> I reported from the Yoghurt Revolution in Novi Sad, and when I came back to the office, I started preparing the report and as I was coming to the end of preparations the editor-in-chief came in and said to me 'Please add how the

[84] One of the protests organised during the Anti-bureaucratic revolution. During this specific, protest organised in Novi Sad, Milošević asserted political control over Vojvodina.

> nationalists were going wild at the protest, and Šešelj as well, and how Olivera Katarina sang nationalistic songs. I said to him 'there is no way in hell I am doing that, because I did not see that happen and the camera did not film that' […] He then told me that I must do that, and I refused again, and I said that if necessary, the report would not be aired or if it was, then someone else would have to present it, but not me. And then they aired my report, but then the presenter said that he had, on the phone, a reporter Stevan Čizmić who added further things to my report. […] [Čizmić] then said exactly what Mitević wanted him to say. The day after, they retracted the news, because it turned out that Šešelj was in Bosnia and not even in Novi Sad. (interview 6, 2019).

This story not only illustrates that Milošević subscribed to new methods of content control, but it also implies that the strategies of nudging and suspending had effect. As Suša suggests, it was relatively easy for editors to find journalists willing to fabricate the news as many, particularly those less experienced and established feared punishments from editors (interview 6, 2019).

Despite his ability to influence the editors, who would then interfere with the content of specific reports or would temporarily suspend problematic journalists, Milošević was far from having total control over RTB. Furthermore, whilst heavily biased, RTB still had elements of professional journalism illustrated by the fact that many radio and television debate shows continued to exist. However, with the first multiparty elections scheduled to take place in December 1990, and with the crisis in the country deepening, Milošević's tolerance towards oppositional journalists substantively decreased.

In the run-up to the elections, Milošević through (now the RTB Director) Mitević suspended all 'rebel' journalists. As Mihajlović (interview 4, 2018) states:

> There was a whole group of journalists in RTB that rebelled and requested the permission to report about the political life of Serbia and what was happening in it – like the multiparty system, the existence of oppositional parties etc. and we were not allowed to report about it. The elections were on their way and we rebelled and requested to be allowed to properly report about the elections. And then, closer to the elections, all of us were suspended and we were not allowed to work.

I asked her to provide further details regarding the suspensions – namely, I wanted to know what they were told and how the suspensions were justified. She answered, "it was simple. We were told that we cannot work, that we have no tasks. So, we would arrive to work, and sit and have coffee, and argue with the others, that was it" (interview 4, 2018). Other journalists gave similar answers. Suša says that she was simply told that she cannot work anymore, no further justifications were provided (interview 6, 2019). Whilst those journalists officially remained paid and employed by RTB, in-effect they were unable to do work or produce reports.

Following the decisive victory on the first multiparty elections in Serbia (for further details see chapter three), Milošević substantially increased his control over RTB. For a start, whilst notionally allowed to come back to work, the amount of actual work that 'rebel' journalists were allowed to do was extensively limited (interview 7a and interview 4, 2018; interview 5 and interview 6, 2019). Their ability to produce reports was restricted, most of them were not allowed to present in Dnevnik anymore, and overall, their presence on television considerably decreased. Furthermore, the regime not only targeted journalists or those working in the newsroom, but pressures now extended to other offices and staff within RTB as well. Filip David, a famous Serbian screenwriter who worked at RTB in the culture and art section, says that even his office became a target for the regime. He says that his shows were considered too liberal and that consequently he continuously received calls from the RTB Director and other officers. He recalls (interview 8, 2019):

> I was called by the RTB Director and other important people from my sector and they asked me 'what the hell are you doing in your office? Are you aware that the official state politics is to empower nationalism in Serbia and that we have to support our people?' And I said to them 'that may be your Party line, but I am not a member of the Party and I don't have to support what the Party wants.' […]

Furthermore, after the 1990 elections *clear segregation of journalists* took place. Milica Pešić (RTB reporter), Mareš, and Mihajlović claim that after suspensions, there were separate rooms for journalists created inside RTB (interview, 4, interview 7a and interview 9, 2018). The first was devoted to journalists who supported Milošević's regime and reported in accordance with the Party line. The second room, described as small and poorly furbished, was given to the journalists who opposed Milošević. In the face of such repression and division, the atmosphere inside RTB quickly deteriorated. For instance, former friends and colleagues from the two rooms entered open conflict. Pešić suggests that political divisions extended to private relationships, and that some of her colleagues stopped speaking to one another over political disputes (interview 9, 2018). Mareš suggests that he used humour and mocked those who supported Milošević whenever he had a chance (interview 7a, 2018). Similarly, Stupar claims that fighting was intense in Radio Belgrade as well (interview 3, 2019). And Mihajlović (interview 4, 2018) reports:

> The divide between those who were pro and against Milošević was very explicit. It was horrific. We were treated like the traitors of the state. We were marked as traitors. Furthermore, people were analysing everyone's origins – like were you a pure Serb or not, and if you were not, then you had some Croatian blood and you were labelled an Ustaša. That is how it was.

Perhaps the best way to prove the level of divisions within RTB is that every single respondent, irrespective of their political attitudes, suggests that the atmosphere was horrific. Furthermore, every single respondent expressed hate towards those who had different political attitudes. For instance, Milorad Vučelić, RTB Director from 1992, stated that he felt "deep hatred" towards members of the Independent Union (interview 10a, 2019).[85]

I suggest that such conflicts between colleagues were partly caused by the fact that those who opposed Milošević were (and are) genuine ideologues – that is, they firmly believed that Milošević's regime was evil and that it would devastate the country, and subsequently considered all of those who cooperated with Milošević complicit. On the basis of what people like Mareš, Suša, Mihajlović, and Pešić all said to me in interviews, and based on their attitudes in the 1990s, it is highly unlikely that they were opportunists. Those people risked their careers and jobs, and in certain instances their physical safety (or life at the extreme) in order to fight for what they believed was right. Thus, it is unlikely that any of them was actively opposing Milošević because they expected to receive any benefits from that. Trivially, given the political circumstances in the country, it was unlikely that anyone could provide oppositional journalists with any material benefits that could motivate them to oppose Milošević.

As for the people who supported Milošević, it is difficult to conclude whether they were genuine believers or mere opportunists who aligned with him because that was in their professional interest. On the basis of a limited number of interviews that I conducted with the journalists from that group I suggest that they were both believers and opportunists. I believe most of them believed some aspects of his ideology, but even when they disagreed, they refused to publicly express such sentiments as they knew that such expressions would be penalised by the regime. Hence, for those people, cooperating with oppositional journalists was both unacceptable due to ideological disagreements and as cooperation with them could be identified as a betrayal of the regime.

However, it was not only personal relationships and the general atmosphere inside RTS that deteriorated. The standards and quality of reporting also declined. Two technical staff members who worked at RTB (and requested anonymity) suggest that after the 1990 election, ideological pursuits were prioritised over technical quality of the footage (interview 11 and interview 12, 2019). One of them states (interview 12, 2019):

> [it used to be the case] that a single 50-minutes long TV show would be prepared for 10 days. […] and then different people took over, and instead of 10 days, we had a single day to prepare the show. And they changed those standards because someone during some Party meeting decided that we need to promote something

[85] For further details on the Independent Union see below.

> as soon as possible on RTB, hence we had a day to make it happen. […] I think what destroyed RTB during [Milošević's] rule was the change of priorities, they devasted professional standards.[60]

In addition, the regime began to impose more direct control – it shifted from suspending journalists who invited controversial speakers to *directly intervening in the selection of guest speakers*. As David further reports (interview 8, 2019):

> I even experienced problems over a famous TV show that we aired while I was the editor of the culture and art office. […] The show was called Kino Oko. And the show was like you play a movie and then after that you have a debate about the movie. And we tried and invited famous people who would have different opinions about the movie and also some other societal issues. […] I once wanted to invite Nebojša Popov and they called me and told me that I could not invite him and that he was speaking publicly against the government. […] After a big fight with my superiors, the show never happened. Nebojša and the other guest cancelled their attendance.

This story illustrates the ever-increasing control that Milošević's regime exercised from within RTB. It also shows that his control had implications even on those outside RTB. It was no longer always necessary for directors and editors to ban the shows, speakers or suspend journalists. Due to the fear of repercussions, people themselves no longer wanted to come and speak at RTB.

Finally, to ensure consistent and appropriate reporting, the regime eventually *banned problematic TV shows and closed down entire offices within RTB*. David states (interview 8, 2019), "[s]oon after [the conflict discussed above] I was informed that they were reforming the channel and that my office would be shut down as part of that reform." Ultimately both Argument Više (the radio show hosted by Stupar) and Kino Oko (the aforementioned TV show for which David served as the editor) were banned. These examples also shows that media control may in fact depends on silencing opposing views– i.e. it is not that editors-in-chief solely focused on disseminating particularly persuasive discourses, but they also ensured that all alternative views were silenced.

As illustrated, over the course of four years the extent of control and methods used to ensure it became more extreme. However, Milošević was still unable to completely purge RTB of all of those not loyal to him. There are several plausible explanations for this. First, the legacy of Tito meant that firing people working in the public sector was really unusual. When explaining why he thinks he was not fired immediately, Mareš (interview 7b, 2019) suggests that "[i]t was not usual, it was against the custom you know. Once you get a job in a state-owned company, you stay there forever. […] it was inconceivable to fire people and leave them without any money. That was all part of the tradition." Hence, whilst it is difficult to definitively know Milošević's internal

motivations, it could be the case that Milošević felt insufficiently powerful to go against such a strongly established tradition.

Second, Mareš also suggests this was possibly just another strategy of the regime to ensure appropriate reporting. In his words (interview 7a, 2018):

> "[t]here was logic in it you know. All of those people were against the regime and everything that the regime was doing. So, if you fire them and leave them without any money, you force them to seek jobs elsewhere, and it was better if they did not. It was better for the government if they just sat around, got small amounts of money, because then they wouldn't be motivated to seek jobs elsewhere where they would criticise the regime. If you just sat at RTB without any ability to work, then you were harmless."

Third, it is also plausible that at least in early 1991, Milošević's power was insufficiently consolidated for him to completely purge RTB. Indeed, this argument becomes ever more convincing when one considers the kind of opposition generated due to RTB's increasingly biased reporting – which I discuss in the following section.

Milošević Challenged

Despite a substantial increase in his ability to control institutions, Milošević's power was not yet consolidated in 1991. This is best shown by two stories that detail some of the strongest expressions of opposition he was faced with that year. The first is the Independent Union, created by RTB staff in their attempt to protect the professional standards in the institution. The second is the story of the March 9th protest – one of the largest protests in Serbia, which forced Milošević to replace the governing body of RTB.

In 1991, a group of journalists and technical staff members from RTB, which were dissatisfied with the level of control the government exercised over the institution, created a separate labour union within RTB and named it the Independent Union (*Nezavisni Sindikat*). Several of my interviewees took part in the creation of this Union and were its active members: Stupar, Suša, David, Pešić, and Mihajlović. The purpose of the Union was to coherently organise all of those opposed to the deteriorating professional standards and coordinate multiple campaigns that aimed at preventing further consolidation of Milošević's power inside RTS.

As Stupar (interview 3, 2019) reports, at least in the early stages of the Union's work, the government did not pay too much attention to them as they thought that the Union had no chances of becoming a serious threat. However, soon after its creation, the Union had over 1000 members – most of whom were journalists, but also included technical staff and other RTB employees. The existence of the Union, its rapid growth and the presence of its members inside

RTB appears to indicate that in 1991 Milošević had to tolerate some opposition as he was not strong enough to purge RTB entirely. However, that would change in subsequent years as all of those associated with the Union were fired in 1993.

The second expression of opposition to Milošević's regime took place on March 9th 1991, in what is to date one of the largest anti-government protests in Serbia's political history. On that day, oppositional parties led by the Serbian Renewal Movement (*Srpski Pokret Obnove* – SPO) and Vuk Drašković, scheduled a mass rally. The trigger for the protest was a report aired on RTB's Dnevnik, in which a prominent RTB journalist Slavko Budihna claimed that Drašković and his party were prepared to cooperate with pro-Ustaše Croatians against the interests of the Serbian people. Drašković immediately requested a retraction, but the news division chief Predrag Vitas claimed that "retractions [were] only issued in the cases of dissemination of inaccurate information, but not commentaries" (Antonić, 2002: 112). Subsequently, Drašković scheduled a protest for March 9th, and began referring to RTB as "TV Bastille" – a nickname that is still sometimes used to describe RTS (Dedeić, 2011a; Dederić, 2011b).[86]

In the lead up to March 9th, oppositional parties drafted a list of specific demands. They had four key demands. First, they requested the Serbian National Assembly (which, as mentioned, founded RTB) restrict SPS's ability to appoint editors-in-chief. Second, they wanted greater opposition airtime on RTB. Third, they demanded resignations of RTB's key figures – Dušan Mitević (RTB Director), Slavko Budihna (a journalist), Predrag Vitas (head of the news division), Ivan Krivec (a journalist), and Sergej Šestakov (a journalist). Finally, they requested the removal of obstructions placed upon oppositional media's ability to work (channels such as Studio B and Yutel) (Dederić, 2011a).[87]

The protest itself turned into a riot that involved violent clashes between the protesters and the police, resulting in Milošević eventually deploying the Army (Silber and Little, 1997: 119-133). Before the day came to an end two people died, and oppositional media like Radio B92 and Studio B were banned. A journalist who worked for Studio B at the time (and wished to remain anonymous) reports (interview 13, 2018) that "[March 9th] was the famous rally of the city, then we promised 'Belgrade, never again' […] and you know most people there, were those who wanted to stand up against Milošević and the war and the meaninglessness of it all. And that was how Studio B reported about the event." RTB's report portrayed the protesters as traitors, and the Army's intervention against civilians as legitimate. Given the discrepancy of the reports and

[86] Available at: https://www.istinomer.rs/amnezija/9-mart-dve-decenije-1-deo/ and https://www.istinomer.rs/amnezija/beograd-ratiste/ accessed 10/05/2021
[87] Available at: https://www.istinomer.rs/amnezija/9-mart-dve-decenije-1-deo/ accessed 10/05/2021

Milošević's dissatisfaction with the protest itself, it is unsurprising that Milošević decided to shut down Studio B.

The aggressive response by Milošević only further angered the protesters and the opposition. The protests continued on March 10th, and other oppositional parties (most notably the Democratic Party), students from the University of Belgrade, and other prominent figures joined the demonstrations. Branislav Lečić, a famous Serbian actor who became the 'spokesperson' for the protest describes that it was "Milošević's decision to use tanks to defend his own regime" that motivated him and many others to join the protest (interview 14, 2019). Throughout March 10th, students arrived in the city centre to join the protests. On their way to the meeting point located at Terazije Square in Belgrade, students were often subjected to beatings, and the Serbian police used tear gas against the people. Due to the perseverance of the demonstrators, who refused to leave before their requests were fulfilled, the government eventually conceded – RTB director Dušan Mitević was fired, and Ratomir Vico (former RTB director) appointed in his place. In addition, all RTB journalists suspended in the run up to the 1990 elections were allowed to go back to work (interview 4, 2018; interview 3, 2019).

The relative success of the protest movement created some optimism amongst the opposition and RTB journalists. Such optimism was further encouraged as Milošević organised a secret meeting to which he invited the 'rebel' RTB journalists (interview 4 and interview 7a, 2018; interview 7b, 2019). Milošević suggested to the journalists that the purpose of the meeting was to give them an opportunity to speak so that he could address their concerns. Mihajlović attended the meeting and (correctly) foresaw that the changes brought by the March 9th protests were not going to last. Her recollection of the meeting goes as follows:

> [Milošević] asked us what we want […] I was aware from the start that this was all a theatrical play, that nothing would come out of it, but you know, my colleagues took it seriously and they were telling him what we wanted and that all we wanted was to be professionals and to do our job properly and to report impartially. And we were giving him examples, and like basically we were agreeing that the way in which RTB reported about the protest was scandalous and so on. […] And then, Milošević said something, 'you know, these are difficult times, and serious things are happening, and Tudjman is not our main problem'. Listen, this was only spring 1991, and like he was saying that […] the Muslims were our main problem, that our enemy lies in Bosnia. So, Bosnia, I thought, like I froze to death of fear when he said that. […] Like he was trying to convince us that we do not understand the gravity of the situation and that Serbia was in danger. The meeting then ended and that was it. (interview 4, 2018).

Mihajlović suggests that as soon as Milošević mentioned Bosnia it became clear to her that all the changes made after the protest were cosmetic, and Milošević had no intention of democratising

the media. She suggests that Milošević was aware that he was not yet powerful enough to completely ignore the opposition's demands, and subsequently had to cave in. She argues that he had no real intention to try and resolve the Yugoslav crisis peacefully (interview 4, 2018). Mareš, who also attended the meeting, agrees with this account, and suggests that he had reached similar conclusions after the secret meeting (interview 7a, 2018; interview 7b, 2019). According to him (interview 7a, 2018):

> I was able to work as a reporter […] there were couple of months after the March 9th when you could report without blatantly lying, but that was only for a couple of months, perhaps till the end of August. […] and then someone decided in the state that the war needs to become more serious. […] hence all of those who were fired after the protest were returned, or if not, even worse people came in their place.

The Wars Begin: Escalation Inside RTS

The state of affairs inside RTB drastically worsened after the outbreak of violence in Slovenia and Croatia. After the respective declarations of independence and eruption of violence, Milošević's regime not only re-instituted old methods of control, but also became even harsher when dealing with any expressions of opposition. In the second half of 1991, anyone associated with the Independent Union was banned from working and appearing on TV. Such increase in control was necessary since Milošević realised that in order to effectively recruit Serbs to fight and to legitimate the war and violence, propaganda needed to escalate quickly (for further details see chapter five and six).

Furthermore, Milošević's control now also extended so as to include Radio Belgrade. As Stupar reports (interview 3, 2019), "I was banned from working, I think it was September or October of 1991 when I was no longer allowed to even sit in front of a microphone. From September 1991 until January 1993, they stopped paying me, and I wasn't allowed to work." Mareš and Pešić suggests the situation was the same for the journalists working in television. Whilst they were allowed to notionally come back to work, they were not allowed to go to the field, produce any reports, participate in the production of the news, or appear on the screens. As they both say – they sat in the office all day and did absolutely nothing (interview 9, 2018; interview 7b, 2019).

In addition, many journalists faced *various forms of threats*. For instance, Stupar reports that editors threatened them with court proceedings (interview 3, 2019). Mareš argues that his editor continuously threatened him with disciplinary hearings should he refuse to report in line with the Party's demands (interview 7a, 2018). Furthermore, threats often extended to journalists' personal lives. As Stupar suggests, people from state security services threatened to inform his wife about

his alleged extramarital affairs. However, once they noticed that such threats were not effective, the editors in Radio Belgrade attempted to prosecute him. In his words (interview 3, 2019):

> They tried to prosecute me for not working, but it was them who banned me from working in the first place. I think they were trying to find an excuse to fire me, but I had lawyers. In court, I told them, I am a hardworking person, I want to work, just let me work. But they didn't want to let me work because they knew that I would criticise the state. And so, I did nothing until January 1993, when I was fired.

Those who decided to cooperate with the regime increasingly received *substantial benefits* and *financial incentives* to continue to do so. Both Stupar and Petar Jakonjić (technical staff member at RTB) suggest that their colleagues received various forms of support from the government. Jakonjić suggests that most journalists received packages of food and sanitary products as well as additional bonuses for their dedicated work (interview 15, 2019), whilst Stupar argues that some even received houses and apartments from the government (interview 3, 2019).

As violence spread through Croatia, the outbreak of war in Bosnia became more likely. By the end of 1991, Milošević was aware that total control over the media was of importance for maintaining power and justifying the Serbian cause. Consequently, he was no longer able to afford relatively moderate governing body of RTB. This period marks the final stages of Milošević's consolidation of power over RTB. During this stage, Milošević made crucial steps that secured total control over this media organisation.

First, the National Assembly of Serbia adopted a new legislation that restructured the media scenery of Serbia in 1991. The Radio and Television Law merged Radio and Television Belgrade (RTB), Radio and Television Novi Sad (RTNS), and Radio and Television Priština (RTP) into a single media organisation – Radio and Television of Serbia (RTS). The centralisation of the media system, with all of its relevant institutions located in Belgrade made it easier for Milošević to exert pressure and control directors, editors, journalists, and the content of the broadcasts.

Second, soon after the adoption of the aforementioned law Milošević replaced Vico with Dobrosav Bjeletić as General Director of RTS. Bjeletić was well known for his hatred towards the Croats. This is best illustrated by the statement he gave to a popular Serbian magazine in 1991: "I am happy that Radio and Television of Serbia made its first step into the world and became alike its global counterparts, and that it was freed of Croatian television influence. I am happy that we helped the Serbian people in Croatia preventing the Ustaše from killing them twice: spiritually and physically" (Skrozaa, 2019).[88] As all of my correspondents suggests, under Bjeletić anyone associated with the Independent Union or anyone considered anti-Milošević was banned from

[88] Available at: https://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=938729 accessed 06/05/2021.

working and many new, pro-Milošević editors and journalists were employed by RTS. And indeed, as I show in chapter six, once Bjeletić was appointed, propaganda targeting the Croats quickly escalated to become the hateful and dehumanising propaganda usually analysed by scholars.

Total Control

As RTS adapted to the newly-established centralised model, Milošević made the final step needed for asserting total control over the institution. In 1992, he replaced Bjeletić with Milorad Vučelić who, also served as an MP for Milošević's Serbian Socialist Party. Replacing Bjeletić became important when Milošević decided to de-escalate propaganda targeting the Croats – when propaganda against the Croats entered what I term maintenance phase. After assuming the position of the General Director of RTS, Vučelić fired over 1000 journalists, editors, and technical staff members in what was one of the largest purges of any institution in Serbia's contemporary history. Following this purge, Milošević's control over RTS was complete – there was no one inside the institution who would oppose his ideology or his decisions.

Stupar remembers the day when all of those people were fired. He tells us that (interview 3, 2019): "[basically since late 1991] we [rebel journalists] were just sitting inside RTS doing nothing until one day, I think it was January 13th 1993, we were no longer allowed to enter the building and our press IDs were taken away from us. […] You know, we successfully resisted [the regime and pressures] for years, until that day, when in a single day, 1200 of us were fired without any explanation or justification." Suša, Mareš, Mihajlović, David and many others agree with this account and indeed were themselves fired in the same way on the very same day (interview 4 and interview 7a, 2018; interview 6, interview 7b, interview 8, 2019).

However, Vučelić provides a different account for what took place in early 1993. Vučelić claims that by 1993, Serbia was faced with draconian sanctions imposed by the international community, and the public sector was under pressure. Subsequently, many state-owned companies were forced to send their employees on a furlough. Vučelić argues that he only put people on furlough, which was reasonable and expected given that RTS was a state-owned company. Furthermore, he argues that the criteria used to determine who should be send on a furlough was not political. Instead, he insists that heads of different offices and editors-in-chief drafted the list of names. Those lists, according to Vučelić, were based solely on meritocracy. He maintains that Milošević did not interfere in the process of drafting such lists, and that, if anything, he would have been against sending people on a furlough due to the possible political backlash (interview 10b, 2019).

In addition, he suggests that all of those sent on furlough received 80 per cent of their salary and all other state and healthcare benefits – a statement disputed by all other individuals that I have spoken to during my research. To the extent to which Vučelić acknowledges that he fired anyone, he argues that those were the journalists who simultaneously worked for RTS and another media organisation – and were thus fired on the grounds of working for competing media institutions (interview 10a and interview 10b, 2019). This account is however, again disputed by all other correspondents.

Whilst Vučelić is correct when saying that furlough became common during this period, the story he tells about RTS seems implausible for three primary reasons. First, his testimony stands in stark contrast with many others, making his side of the story less persuasive. Second, when one considers the list of people who were fired (or sent on a furlough), it is evident that almost all were prominent in their anti-Milošević attitudes. Hence, it seems implausible to suggests that those lists were not based on people's political views and behaviour. Finally, several years later, many of the fired journalists sued RTS and won the case. Hence, even the court's inquest shows that people were fired (rather than sent on a furlough) and that their political attitudes were the primary reason, rather than meritocracy as Vučelić wishes to argue.

Vučelić does, however, agree that RTS's reporting was biased since he assumed the position of the General Director. He disagrees with other correspondents about the extent of partiality and its legitimacy. Vučelić acknowledges that RTS supported the Serbian cause in Croatia and Bosnia, but that any other media organisation would have done the same, referring to CNN during Iraq war (interview 10a, 2019). Hence, from his point of view, a certain level of partiality is legitimate in war. Similarly, Vučelić disagrees with many RTS journalists about the extent and impact of RTS's partiality. Whilst Mareš (interview 7a, 2018) says that "RTS was a manufacturer of the war" and Suša (interview 6, 2019) argues that "RTS played a shameful role in the break-up of Yugoslavia", Vučelić maintains that "[t]here is not a single piece of evidence that RTS engaged in hate speech, literally not a single one, despite all the attempts [to prove otherwise]" (interview 10a, 2019). Finally, Vučelić denies that Milošević interfered with RTS's reporting or any work done in the institution more generally (interview 10a and interview 10b, 2019).

I am inclined to agree with Vučelić that Milošević did not directly interfere in RTS reporting or firing decisions. On the basis of other journalists' testimonies, it does seem to be the case that Milošević rarely, if ever, directly threatened journalists. Instead, it was usually the editors-in-chief or directors of offices that communicated with the journalists, gave them instructions on how to report, or penalised them when they refused to do so. And indeed, there was no need for Milošević to exercise such control, given that Vučelić himself comes across as someone who was

sufficiently loyal to Milošević and, at least partly, personally deployed his ideology – thus, appointing him as the General Director was sufficient to ensure adequate reporting from RTS.

Whilst I cannot have perfect insight into Vučelić's personal motivations, there are reasons to think that he was to an extent a committed believer. First, when entering his office (at the time of the interview, he worked as the editor-in-chief for Večernje Novosti, a popular Serbian daily newspaper), I identified multiple memorabilia usually associated with Serbian nationalism – from icons and other Serbian Orthodox Church symbols, to Serbian flags, and books written by people who were committed to the ideology of Greater Serbia. Second, throughout the interview Vučelić acknowledged that he strongly supported the aims of Milošević's regime and thought that Serbs were entitled to a state of their own – the borders of which would also include parts of Bosnian and Croatian territory. Third, even outside the interview Vučelić often expressed such views publicly – most notably on his blog, in which he defended his actions as the General Director of RTS, Milošević's politics towards the Yugoslav crisis, and the Serbian struggles during the 1990s.[89] Thus, it seems plausible to suggest that Vučelić was a genuine believer in Milošević's ideology and was willing to ensure that RTS reported in line with such ideology.

There are also strong reasons to think that Vučelić was an opportunist – and that even if he did not believe Milošević's ideology personally, he had extensive reasons to disseminate them publicly. As the General Director, Vučelić had a secured job with a good salary – an extreme luxury given Serbia's political and economic position at the time. Second, analysing the history of Vučelić's career also shows that he was often able to situate himself within any regime. During Tito's time, he was a popular young communist fighting for leftist ideologies. However, when Milošević assumed power, he quickly established himself as a pro-Milošević journalist who criticised the international community for their unfair treatment of Serbia. And even after, the October 5th 2000 overthrow of the regime, and despite his allegiance to Milošević during the 1990s, Vučelić was able to also align himself with the Democrats. Finally, Vučelić remains very close to the current Serbian government – illustrated by the fact that Vučelić maintains the position of an editor-in-chief in one of the most popular Serbian daily newspapers, but also serves as a director of the Partizan football club.[90] Hence, given Vučelić's ability to maintain powerful positions in many different regimes (all of which stand in stark contrast with one another), one could suggest that he was simply an opportunist who successfully aligned with the relevant authorities and was willing to air any content on RTS if that was to benefit him personally.

[89] His blog and all the texts he wrote are available at: http://www.miloradvucelic.com/index.html accessed 10/05/2021.

[90] And given the current political environment of Serbia, both of these positions cannot be held by anyone who openly opposes Aleksandar Vučić – the current President of Serbia.

Given the above evidence, and his conflict with Milošević (see below), I think it is reasonable to conclude that he was committed to some aspects of Milošević's ideology. However, I think that given the positions he held and periods during which he held them, Vučelić also seems able to set aside his personal beliefs and promote ideas that either benefit him, or at least would protect him from any serious penalties. Hence, to assert control over RTS it was indeed sufficient for Milošević to appoint Vučelić as the General Director.

Vučelić's account of RTS broadcasts also stands in stark contrast with the materials I have watched. As I will show in the following three chapters, RTS was more than simply partial, and in fact, aired a substantial amount of fake news through which they portrayed the Croats and Bosniaks as Serbia's eternal enemies, and denied any crimes committed by the Serbian forces. And indeed, from the moment Vučelić assumed the position of the General Director, RTS wholeheartedly supported Milošević's ideology and policies. This should not be surprising, since RTS was completely cleansed of all of those who would challenge or oppose Milošević, or his ideology. Thus, one can conclude that with Vučelić's appointment and the complete purge of RTS, Milošević was in total control over this institution.

That Milošević had total control over RTS is also suggested by the way in which Vučelić lost the position of General Director in 1995. Following a fight between Vučelić and Milošević, Vučelić was fired. When discussing how the events unfolded, Vučelić implicitly acknowledges that Milošević in fact controlled the institution. According to him:

> Until late 1994 no one interfered in RTS's work […] however, once Milošević's wife joined politics, interference began, mainly done through influencing the process of appointing the editors. […] Then Milošević also became vulnerable and suggested that we were not devoting enough attention to his wife's political party. […] in the end, as a consequence of those disagreements, I was replaced after the Operation Storm. […] that was very traumatic, [Milošević] and I had two public fights. I was shocked, I thought that we needed to defend Knin, and to protect the Serbian people and to send them to Kosovo, to colonise Kosovo with all refugees coming from Croatia. […] But Milošević was probably aware of the preparations for the Dayton agreement, and he said that we need to remove the 'extra patriotism' as he phrased it. […] After multiple fights, he offered me multiple positions – Vice-President of the government, or to become an ambassador, or a director of any state-owned company. I declined all of that and he insisted that I could no longer remain the General Director of RTS. He wanted me to resign, but I insisted on being fired from the position. […] In the end, I was (interview 10a, 2019).

Though Vučelić would certainly disagree with my interpretation of this event, I would argue that his removal illustrates the extent of control Milošević had over the institution. This story shows that even the most powerful individual in the institution could be fired if Milošević was dissatisfied

with RTS's reporting. Thus, once Milošević decided that propaganda needed to de-escalate, and Vučelić appeared too 'extreme' for that phase of propaganda – Milošević replaced him in the same way in which he fired Bjeletić and hired Vučelić back in 1992.

Furthermore, this story illustrates how little tolerance Milošević had towards those who politically disagreed with him, even if those individuals were his close friends – which Vučelić was. Finally, this story confirms what has been argued since the beginning of this chapter – namely, that controlling RTS was of importance for Milošević throughout his political rule. To him, it was clear that the way in which RTS reported would impact the way in which people perceive his regime. As soon as it became clear that Dayton peace agreement was on its way, RTS had to 'tone down' its anti-Croatian and anti-Bosniak sentiment. Put simply, there was a need for propaganda to de-escalate, and Vučelić refused to do that. This argument will be further substantiated in the following three chapters in which I will extensively analyse the materials aired by RTS between 1991 and 1995.

Conclusion

The key aim of this chapter was to detail the processes through which Milošević secured control over RTS and the implications that had on the lives of those who worked in RTS. I have filled in the lacunae in the existing scholarship on authoritarianism which largely fails to address the media when discussing the ways in which autocrats consolidate power over vital political institutions. Moreover, I supplemented propaganda scholarship by detailing the ways in which media organisations become propaganda machines controlled by authoritarian regimes. Such analysis is important, as it complements scholarship that usually focuses on the extreme and hateful content, but not on the institution that produces it. As argued in chapter two, understanding the content or its implications cannot be complete if one does not fully appreciate the institution that produces it.

There are several specific contributions this chapter makes. First, it shows that asserting control over media organisations does not happen overnight, but that instead it is a long-term process that involves multiple steps and strategies. Furthermore, I provided details into the specific methods and strategies Milošević used, and how they evolved over time. These findings may help scholars think about possible preventive measures that could halt authoritarian regime's efforts of turning media organisations into propaganda machines. Second, I showed that Milošević's ability to utilise RTS with relative ease was contingent on the fact that RTS was created in a socialist state that exercised control over the media. Thus, when thinking about possible prevention or ways of countering hateful propaganda, scholars should perhaps also consider the contexts of specific

media environments that they are researching. Third, I demonstrated that propaganda can often be a consequence of unplanned or unforeseen events. And indeed, Milošević was particularly adaptable to external circumstances, and his strategy changed as events unfolded – illustrated by the Kosovo event discussed at the beginning of this chapter, his response to the March 9th protests, the declarations of independence and the start of the wars, as well as his response to the Operation Storm. Fourth, I showed that Milošević's method of control was most of the time quite indirect. More specifically, and to some extent confirming Vučelić's account, Milošević rarely intervened directly in RTS's operations. Instead, Milošević reserved the right to appoint directors and editors-in-chief who then served as the key channel for ensuring that RTS reported in line with his ideology. Finally, I demonstrated that Milošević's strategies were effective both because many journalists eventually sided with him, but also because in the end he reached the desired goal – he had total control over RTS.

Before concluding the chapter, it is important to briefly address one final question. Namely, why was Milošević able to assert total control over both RTS and the media landscape of Serbia more generally. This question is particularly important since Milošević's attempt to assert control did not go unchallenged. As shown in this chapter, various fractions from within RTS (most notably the Independent Union) invested a lot of effort and resources in combating, or at the very least mitigating, Milošević's influence over RTS. Moreover, Milošević's journey to acquiring power over media in Serbia was often challenged by other politicians, some oppositional media outlets, and large-scale protests (most notably the one which took place on 9th March 1991). Thus, it is natural to wonder why those either inside or outside of RTS failed to dominate the public sphere. In the following paragraphs, I briefly address this question.

First, when it came to assuming full control over RTS, several events proved extremely advantageous for Milošević. For instance, Stamoblić's decision to send Milošević to Kosovo and the accidental recording of his statement 'No one should dare to beat you' gave Milošević a huge political advantage at a critical time. Second, Milošević was able to effectively utilise these events, both by relying on his personal connections (such as his friendship with Mitević, at the time RTB Director) and using the 'stick and carrot' method to create a group of people loyal to him. By the time the Independent Union was created, Milošević already had sufficient levels of control over crucial positions in RTS – reflected in his ability to appoint the General Director and influence the elections of editors-in-chief. By contrast, the Independent Union did not have that level of control – and subsequently, was very limited in what it could do to combat Milošević's influence over RTS broadcasts.

Finally, the political and cultural legacy of Tito's regime also assisted Milošević's efforts to assert control over RTS. As argued above, RTS (or any other media outlet in Serbia) was not created in a democratic country that valued free press. Instead, most media outlets were used to following the party ideology and rarely challenged the government. As one RTS reporter suggested to me, journalists themselves were also used to following orders coming from the top of the political establishment rather than produce news independent from political influence (interview 2, 2019). This environment, in combination with various events Milošević utilised all helped him assert total control over RTS.

Once Milošević manage to secure control over RTS, it became increasingly difficult to challenge his position of power for two primary reasons. First, controlling RTS at the time meant that he had control over what the Serbian audiences were exposed to. As shown in the introduction, other media outlets had an extremely limited reach (and Milošević often shut them down at his convenience). Conversely, as Todorović and Gredelj (2001: 41) show, RTS had a national reach (which even extended to parts of Republika Srpska and Montenegro), and Dnevnik 2 was watched by as many as four million people on a daily basis (of the around 7 million people who lived in the country at the time). Thus, by asserting control over RTS, Milošević, in effect, ended any discourse competition in Serbia. Second, with the assertion of total control over RTS, Milošević gained control over *all* key political, cultural, and military institution. Thus, penetrating his circle of power became extremely difficult, if not impossible.

A study of propaganda would not be complete if it did not include an analysis of the content. Thus, in the following three chapters, I will analyse RTS broadcasts (more specifically, Dnevnik 2, aired on a daily basis at 7.30 pm) during the Slovenian War, the Croatian War and the Bosnian War, respectively. In those, I will detail the kinds of news and narratives that people were exposed to with the purpose of showing that extreme forms of propaganda also do not occur overnight, but instead are a consequence of discourse shifting during which what is and is not appropriate to say publicly changes.

Chapter Five: A Trial Run - The Slovenian 10-day War

Introduction

It is a commonly held assumption, in both scholarship and lay discourse, that propaganda in war is characterised by hateful and dehumanising language and imagery. Oppositional political parties in Serbia usually portray RTS as an institution that sowed hatred in Serbian society during the 1990s, and some hold it partly responsible for the horrors that overwhelmed the country and the region. Notably, NATO justified the bombing of RTS in 1999 by claiming that the institution was inseparable from Milošević's political apparatus and that RTS propaganda prolonged the conflict in Kosovo.[91] Similarly, scholars that analysed Serbian propaganda during the 1990s wars, largely confirm such claims.

By contrast, I contend that propaganda in war is more than mere dehumanising rhetoric. I argue that throughout the years the people of Serbia have been exposed to a variety of different kinds and styles of propaganda, and that only some included the kind of dehumanising imagery and rhetoric usually associated with war propaganda. Furthermore, I suggest that reaching a point where it is acceptable to use extreme forms of dehumanising language does not occur overnight. Instead, getting to that point requires a process of discourse-shaping during which certain language and framing becomes acceptable. Thus, in the following three chapters, I aim to fill the lacunae in the existing literature and produce a detailed analysis of RTS broadcasts.

In this chapter, I analyse the materials aired during the Slovenian 10-day War. The length of the war allows me to analyse all evening daily news (that I will sometimes refer to as Dnevnik)[92] aired between June 25th 1991, the date when Slovenia and Croatia unilaterally declared independence from Yugoslavia, and July 8th 1991, the day after the Brioni Agreement was signed which effectively ended the Slovenian War.[93] I show that Serbian propaganda during the Slovenian 10-day War was relatively mild and did not contain many hateful and derogatory tropes.

The relatively mild character of RTS propaganda can be explained by two primary factors. First, due to Slovenia's ethnic homogeneity, Serbia could not make a legitimate claim on parts of Slovenia's territory. Hence, there were no strong reasons for keeping Slovenia inside the Federation. As explicated in chapter three, Milošević was willing to allow Slovenia to secede from the SFRY. Consequently, there was no need for RTS propaganda to involve the dehumanising and

[91] For further details see chapter 3.
[92] Dnevnik is the official name of the evening daily news aired on RTS.
[93] It should be noted that June 26th and 30th, as well as July 6th and 7th have been permanently lost by the RTS official archive, and consequently those days will not be analysed in this thesis.

hateful propaganda usually associated with war. Second, as explicated in chapter two, to escalate propaganda and have an audience believe it, one must prime the people over an extended period. The length of the Slovenian War meant that RTS never had an opportunity to build the kinds of discourses usually associated with war propaganda and it is unlikely that RTS could have effectively escalated propaganda to a significant extent over that period. Thus, propaganda during the Slovenian 10-day War saw minor escalation in the early stages of the conflict, and a significant de-escalation towards its end.

Additionally, propaganda during the war in Slovenia occasionally appeared contradictory – with some reports aired standing in contrast with the perceived aims Milošević had at the time. As I show below, RTS aired various stories which promoted the view that Yugoslavia must remain united and that any unilateral secessions were unconstitutional, unjust, and threatening to the peace and stability of the region – with Milošević also supporting these views. In line with such content, RTS also aired stories which were supportive of the JNA's intervention in Slovenia, arguing that the intervention was both legal and legitimate. However, in addition to blaming the Slovenian government and its Territorial Defence forces, RTS also openly blamed the crucial authority who was politically in charge of keeping the Federation united for the emerging violence and the political crisis – the Federal government and its representatives, most notably the Federal Prime Minister.

Such a contradiction may appear surprising – and potentially threatening to Milošević's political aims. If Milošević really aimed to keep the Federation united, why would he allow RTS to openly criticise the crucial political authority of the Federation while simultaneously supporting the key military institution of the Federation. There are several potential explanations for this. First, as shown in chapter four, in 1991, Milošević was still unable to exercise total control over RTS – subsequently, it is possible that internal struggles within RTS, at least partly, caused this contradiction. Second, a relative confusion within the country and uncertainty about the Federation's future could also partially explain the contradictions throughout the broadcasts – as journalists themselves did not know how to adequately explain the events taking place. However, these explanations are not particularly persuasive since even in the summer of 1991, Milošević's control over RTS was sufficiently strong that he was able to prevent airing of the content which could put his core objectives into jeopardy.[94]

Instead, it is possible that Milošević's perceived aim to keep the Federation united was different than his actual objective – and such understanding of Milošević's political views provides a more persuasive explanation to this contradiction in the reporting. Since the international

[94] For further details see chapter seven.

community still supported Yugoslavia's unity and refused to support Croatia's and Slovenia's unilateral declarations of independence, it was prudent for Milošević to maintain the image of himself as the protector of Yugoslavia's unity, sovereignty, and its constitutional order. Consequently, it remained important that RTS defends the Federal Army's intervention as legal and legitimate, and continuously air positive discourses about the JNA's activities in Slovenia.[95]At the same time, by the summer of 1991, it was increasingly clear to Milošević that Yugoslavia, in its current form, would likely not last long. Thus, undermining the authority of the Federal government proved advantageous for Milošević for at least two reasons. First, it allowed him to slowly prime the Serbian population for accepting the evolving circumstances and the eventual break-up of the Yugoslav federation. Second, it made the Federal authorities the perfect scapegoat whom Milošević could blame for the crisis in the country (which, indeed, he did as I show below). Thus, these contradictions in RTS discourses can be explicated by Miloševic's aims as well as the political circumstances at the time.

This chapter has two main sections. In section one, I analyse the process of propaganda escalation during the Slovenian War. I detail the key functions propaganda served, as well as the discourses developed and corresponding techniques. In section two, I detail the process of propaganda's de-escalation and similarly explain the key functions, discourses, and techniques used.

RTS Propaganda

The Slovenian 10-day War could broadly be divided into three phases. Phase one took place between June 25th and 27th, when the levels of violence were relatively low. Phase two occurred between June 28th and July 4th, when the levels of violence increased, and the JNA and Slovenian TO exchanged fire across the country. The final phase of the war occurred between July 4th and 8th, when the levels of violence decreased, and negotiations took place resulting in Brioni declaration – which ended the war.

RTS reporting on the Slovenian 10-day War mirrored the situation at the front. During the first phase of the war most of RTS propaganda was mild. As the levels of violence increased during the second phase of the war, RTS's propaganda escalated and reports included an increased number of negative tropes used to describe the Slovenian TO forces. In the final stage of the war, as negotiations began, the negative portrayal of the Slovenes decreased, as propaganda de-escalated.

[95] Furthermore, maintaining positive imagery about the Army was also important due to the anticipated role that JNA was going to have in the Croatian War.

In the first phase of the war RTS propaganda was relatively mild, and focused on the legality of the independence declarations. Such mildness could be explained by the fact that on June 25th or 26th the international community strongly supported Yugoslavia's territorial integrity and suggested that it would not recognise Slovenia's or Croatia's independence. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that RTS did not want to escalate propaganda immediately in the hope that the declarations of independence may be withdrawn. Hence, in the first two days, propaganda did not have a clear function, and subsequently there were no attempts to develop extreme discourses.

In these early days, RTS extensively reported about the declarations of independence adopted by the Croatian and Slovene parliament, and the possible political implications of such declarations. Furthermore, RTS devoted significant airtime to the reactions of the international community – around 15 minutes of each Dnevnik was devoted to the news and reports coming from Moscow, Washington, Paris, Berlin, London, Bohn, Budapest, and Brussels. Similarly, reactions and statements of the Federal leadership, most notably the Federal Presidency (FP) and the Federal Executive Council (*Savezno Izvršno Veće* – SIV), dominated Dnevnik in this period.

The question of border crossings and control over them became key points of contention as soon as Ljubljana declared independence. Press conferences and press releases from the JNA Headquarters and the Ministry of Defence (*Savezni Sekretarijat za Narodnu Odbranu* – SSNO) were extensively covered by RTS, with the Army suggesting that it was its constitutional obligation to control the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Yugoslavia – thus, to assert control over the external borders of the Yugoslav Federation. RTS also aired statements made by the highly positioned JNA officers as the Army decided to send troops to Slovenia.

That discourses about Yugoslavia's unity and the illegality of independence declarations were dominating the broadcasts should not be surprising. During this period, there was still hope that Yugoslavia would remain united. Furthermore, Milošević still wanted to maintain the image of himself as the protector of Yugoslavia's unity and push the image of the Serbs as the only peoples of Yugoslavia who actively attempted to keep the Federation together. For these reasons, RTS aired reports that were supportive of Yugoslavia's unity and critical of unilateral secession. And in order to make such discourses persuasive, RTS devoted a significant amount of airtime to all of those who supported such views.

Escalation

Even though escalation began on June 28th, there were some similarities between RTS reporting prior to and during escalation. For instance, extensive airtime was given to the representatives of

the international community and RTS reported about all the meetings that took place between the Yugoslav, Slovene, or Serb leadership and the representatives of the EC and international community more generally. Furthermore, RTS continued devoting around 15 minutes of each Dnevnik to reports coming from the capital cities of the most powerful states at the time.

Despite these similarities, as violence escalated in Slovenia, so did RTS propaganda. First and foremost, the number of reports and the amount of airtime devoted to the events taking place in Slovenia increased. In every Dnevnik one could hear a RTS reporter, usually Nino Brajović, discussing the situation in Ljubljana, and a variety of reporters, most notably Vlado Mareš, covering events taking place at border crossings in Slovenia. An ever-increasing number of reports from the front included the news about the imprisonment of JNA soldiers, attacks committed by Slovenian forces against both combatants and civilians, as well as family members of the JNA officers or soldiers. RTS also covered a number of ceasefire agreements signed, all of which were later violated. Usually, the analysis of ceasefire deals (and their subsequent violation) was provided by JNA or SSNO officers. In such reports, representatives of these institutions would always *blame* the Slovenian TO forces for peace deal violations, arguing that they were violated *exclusively* by the Slovenian TO forces.

Functions

During the escalation phase, propaganda's functions crystallised. I argue that during this phase, RTS propaganda served three primary functions. First, in this phase, RTS began *building identities* along the ethnic lines, thereby distinguishing between *us* (the ethnic Serbs) and *them*. Importantly, during the Slovenian 10-Day war, RTS did not treat Slovenian civilians and Slovenian TO forces as unitary actors – instead, RTS discourses surrounding the Slovenian civilians were relatively mild, whereas those who were portrayed as threatening and dangerous were Slovene TO forces. There are several explanations for building identities along the lines which distinguished between Slovene TO forces and Slovenian civilians. First, as argued above, it was never in Milošević's interest to keep Slovenia in the Federation, and he was likely to accept secession of this country – thus, there was no need to build extremely radicalised discourses targeting the Slovenian civilians. Second, this war broke out relatively quickly and unexpectedly – thus, RTS did not have enough time to prime the Serbian audiences for extreme discourses targeting the Slovenian civilians – since, as argued, building such discourses cannot occur overnight. Interestingly, RTS also developed negative discourses targeting the Federal authorities – in the attempt to portray them as also threatening to the interests of ethnic Serbs. Hence, in this war, delineation between *us* and *them* was not done along the ethnic lines – contrary to the identity building seen in Croatia and Bosnia.

Nevertheless, identity building was relevant both because it helped RTS justify the behaviour of JNA troops in Slovenia, but also because of the anticipated war in Croatia.

Second, propaganda's core function was to *disincentivise opposition* – both among the general population and the JNA troops. There are several reasons why disincentivising opposition was the main function of propaganda. First, the war in Slovenia was largely unanticipated. Moreover, the Slovenian authorities worked on priming the nation for independence and built adequate discourses to achieve this aim (Niebuhr, 2004). However, the Federal authorities and the Serbian political establishment did not have an opportunity to engage in such priming of the population. The political representatives of the Federation were increasingly losing their power to the representatives of individual Republics (for further details see chapter three) – and invested most of its resources in trying to get their political capital back. Similarly, at that time Milošević was primarily focused on consolidating his power in Serbia.

An implication was that neither the Federal authorities nor the Serbian political establishment had time to explain the importance of the conflict and justify violence to citizens before hostilities intensified. Subsequently, the majority of individuals (particularly those of Serbian ethnicity) had little understanding of what was happening on the ground or what was at stake. They were thus less willing to sacrifice for the cause, raising the risk of opposition and anti-war movements emerging.

Second, Milošević had just began consolidating his control over RTS and the instruments of propaganda. As shown in chapter four, the conflict in Slovenia occurred only three months after the largest anti-Milošević rallies, which forced him to acquiesce to changes to the RTS executive board. Subsequently, Milošević was still in a comparatively weak position and remained politically vulnerable. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that when the Slovenian War broke out, the ground was fertile for emergence of oppositional, resistance, and anti-war movements. And while perhaps it is true that Milošević would not be particularly concerned if people opposed the war in Slovenia, he could not afford to deal with such opposition in the wars to come. Accordingly, it should not be surprising that RTS invested efforts into disincentivising such opposition by building the various discourses discussed above.

Importantly, the challenge of opposition was not only coming from the general public. Instead, the potential for opposition and desertion was also high amongst JNA troops – and it was important to disincentivise such behaviour. By the time the Slovene War began, the ethnic composition of the JNA, and the Army's decision to disarm Slovene and Croatian TO forces, coupled with the political crisis in the Federation, created various problems for the Army. Most notably, a significant number of non-Serb soldiers deserted from the JNA troops. Thus,

disincentivising Serbian soldiers from deserting was vital for the JNA. And, as I show later, the JNA used various tools – from threats with actual punishments to propaganda – in order to achieve this goal.

The third key function propaganda served during the escalation phase was to *legitimate violence* committed by the JNA troops. For all the reasons discussed above, it was difficult for an ordinary individual to accept that a ground invasion of Slovenia and the subsequent violence conducted by the Federal Army was justified and legitimate. Thus, it should not be surprising that RTS invested huge efforts into building discourses that would legitimate such violence. One could ask whether *brutalising* the perpetrators and especially *recruiting* the fighters was relevant during the escalation phase. However, my examination of RTS broadcasts did not indicate that either of these functions was particularly relevant. I argue that a lack of importance of these two functions can be explained by Milošević's general lack of interest in keeping Slovenia in the Federation. Subsequently, there was no reason to target civilians during the Slovenian campaign, and there was no need to brutalise perpetrators. If anything, brutalising the perpetrators and targeting civilians would only carry costs for Milošević – as it would damage the international reputation he held at the time, and diminish any support that the international community expressed towards keeping Yugoslavia united. Milošević also apparently did not particularly care about recruiting the fighters to fight in Slovenia. Instead, it seems reasonable to assume that he wanted to keep those soldiers for the increasingly anticipated war in Croatia.

Finally, despite the importance of these functions during the Slovenian War, it is important to note that escalation of propaganda targeting the Slovenes never reached the level of hatefulness that it did in Croatia or Bosnia. The key difference between propaganda targeting the Slovenes (as opposed to Croats or Bosniaks) is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that during the Slovenian 10-Day War, RTS always distinguished between politicians and Slovenian TO forces on one hand, and the Slovenian civilians on the other. Arguing against Slovenia's secession publicly was caused by the narratives and imagery that the Serbian political leadership wanted to create about themselves, rather than their genuine desire to keep Slovenia in the Federation. Furthermore, developing discourses about Slovenia's threat and guilt or valorising the violence committed by the JNA troops was relevant for the upcoming conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia. Thus, propaganda targeting Slovenia served more as a trial run for what was about to take place in Croatia and Bosnia, and as a method of priming the Serbian audiences for war and violence.

Discourses

In order to fulfil the functions of propaganda, RTS developed several discourses targeting the relevant actors of the conflict. Slovenian TO forces and its political leadership were portrayed as a *threat* to the region's peace and stability, and *guilty* for the chaos caused by unilateral secession and all the implications such declaration carried. Similarly, the Federal authorities were also portrayed as *guilty* since it was argued that it was their responsibility to identify a political solution that would keep Slovenia in the Federation. As I show later, whilst the discourses of threat and guilt were used throughout the escalation phase, the exact content of those discourses changed as violence escalated.

Conversely, RTS developed two key discourses surrounding the JNA. First, the soldiers and their family members were *humanised* – with a lot of RTS reports involving interviews with JNA soldiers or civilians in clear distress caused by the 'monstrous' attacks of the Slovene TO forces. Second, any violence committed by the JNA troops was *valorised* – RTS would either show that such violence was legitimate because it was constitutional, or because it was committed in acts of self-defence. In addition, RTS would also occasionally air statements of soldiers who aimed to show membership in the Army and participation in the war as admirable and honourable.

Discourses targeting the Slovenian side

During the Slovenian War, RTS escalated their discourses of *guilt* and *threat* targeting the Slovenian TO forces and its political leadership. As I show below, RTS went from blaming the Slovenes for deepening the crisis in the country, to portraying them as explicitly guilty for the war and violence as well as the suffering of the civilians and members of the JNA troops. Similarly, in the initial days of the war, the Slovenian TO forces and the Slovenian political leadership were portrayed as threatening to the peace and stability of the region, and Yugoslavia's constitutional order. However, as war and violence escalated the nature of this threat changed – namely, the Slovenian TO forces and its political leadership were increasingly portrayed as violent, and consequently an existential threat to the members of the JNA and Serb civilians stuck in Slovenia.

For instance, on June 25th and 27th RTS aired multiple reports which focused on the *threat* that Slovenia's declaration of independence posed to Yugoslavia. On the June 25th, a long statement was aired by SIV in which it was argued that Slovenia's independence was threatening to the peace and stability of the region and Yugoslavia's constitutional order (TV Dnevnik 2, 25/06/1991). A very similar argument was proposed by the members of the Federal Presidency in a statement aired on RTS on June 27th (TV Dnevnik 2, 27/06/1991).

The discourse of *guilt* was developed along the similar lines. For example, on June 27th, RTS aired a statement made by representatives of the Federal Presidency in which Slovenia was explicitly blamed for deepening the Yugoslav crisis. They argued that Slovenia's declaration of independence "furthered the conflicts and produced negative effects, bad consequences, and human victims" (TV Dnevnik 2, 27/06/1991). To further the discourse of guilt, RTS also began suggesting that Slovenia – as the responsible party for the crisis in the country – would also have to face all the political consequences of their decision to secede. This is best illustrated by RTS's report on the meeting of the members of the Serbian parliament. Refusal to accept Slovenia's independence as well as an expectation that Slovenia should bear complete responsibility for the implications of their decision to secede were only some of the conclusions of the Serbian MPs (TV Dnevnik 2, 27/06/1991). And to deepen the discourse of the threat that the declarations posed, as well as the Slovenian guilt, RTS aired reports from representatives of the international community, who claimed that unilateral declarations were destabilising the region and as such would not receive international recognition (TV Dnevnik 2, 25/06/1991; TV Dnevnik 2, 27/06/1991).

Developing the discourse of guilt and threat in this way was particularly important for justifying the JNA intervention in Slovenia that began on June 27th. The illegality of the declaration, and the subsequent consequences thereof meant that the JNA was constitutionally obliged to prevent Slovenia from seceding unilaterally from the Federation, even fulfilling that obligation required violence. And indeed, that is exactly how the JNA and RTS justified the military intervention. This is best illustrated by the following report (in which the JNA informed Lojze Peterle, Slovene politician, of their further plans):

> The 5th military district must seize control over the border crossings and secure the borders of Yugoslavia, and [the Army] expects full cooperation from all citizens of Slovenia. […] [This intervention is justified because] illegal and unconstitutional decisions of Slovenia and Croatia jeopardise the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia and are sabotaging its constitutional order (TV Dnevnik 2, 27/06/1991).

The report above is not an isolated example. Several other relevant political figures and individuals used similar arguments when justifying JNA intervention and the subsequent violence. For instance, on the same day, the Serbian MPs explicitly stated that they expect the JNA to intervene in Slovenia and defend the territorial unity and integrity of the country (TV Dnevnik, 27/06/1991). And indeed, in their statements the JNA also made sure to highlight its constitutional obligation to intervene in Slovenia and stressed its moral obligation to maintain peace in the country (TV Dnevnik 2, 27/06/1991).

As the intervention began, RTS also started developing discourses about Slovene TO forces. First, they were portrayed as a direct threat to the JNA soldiers – as it was argued that Slovene TO forces illegally opened fire and initiated violence (TV Dnevnik, 27/06/1991). Correspondingly, they were also portrayed as guilty for the intensified hostilities – since it was claimed that the JNA only responded when attacked. Specifically, RTS aired a statement by Army representatives in which it was suggested:

> At the moment, the borders are controlled by non-authorised people […] The JNA is not engaging in an occupation, but only securing the borders of the country. […] Slovenian TO forces opened fire on JNA. […] Opening fire is a crime – causing serious bodily harms – and someone will have to bear responsibility for that […] the JNA units did not use force anywhere, they only opened fire on obstacles, that is on trucks filled with sand that could not have been removed otherwise. Of course, those trucks were empty – there were not drivers in them (TV Dnevnik 2, 27/06/1991).

Thus, it was suggested that the Army's deployment of violence was a legitimate self-defence, whereas the Slovene TO forces were guilty of opening arms and initiating a conflict (TV Dnevnik, 27/06/1991).

However, as violence escalated and as the JNA asserted control over the border crossings on June 28th, the focus on the illegality of the declaration faded and other aspects about Slovenian politicians and its fighting forces gained prominence. The discourses of both threat and guilt further evolved.

Slovenian TO forces were no longer portrayed as illegally attacking the Army, or at the very least that was no longer the dominant term used to describe the situation at the front. Instead, the Slovene TO became "unscrupulous attackers" who were targeting the legitimate Yugoslav Army that legally had an obligation to protect the borders (TV Dnevnik 2, 28/06/1991). Thus, the nature of the Slovene threat changed – it was no longer that Slovenian TO forces were threatening to the peace and stability of the region. Instead, they represented an existential threat to the JNA soldiers based at the Slovene borders. From June 28th statements pertaining to such a threat dominated RTS broadcasts – at least five times per Dnevnik someone would accuse the Slovenian TO of "heinous attacks"[96] against the JNA soldiers. The change of tune was noticeable. On June 28th, RTS report stated:

> Tonight, we are basically witnessing events that are a direct consequence of Slovenia's unilateral decision to take over the border crossings. The JNA, in its attempt to legitimately control the borders, fell victim to serious violence and fire

[96] This was particularly common expression used to describe Slovenian TO attacks on the JNA (in Serbian – *bezočni napadi*).

> coming mainly from the Slovene TO forces. This led to serious clashes – in which people lost their lives and many were injured. […] the JNA, as it did until now, will only use force when forced to do so. That is why, for all other violent clashes that occur from now on, as well as for all of those that occurred thus far, none of which were started by the JNA, the Slovenian authorities will bear responsibility. […] JNA were cautious not to use excessive force at all times but were occasionally exposed to unscrupulous attacks conducted by the Slovene TO forces. The JNA only used force in self-defence (TV Dnevnik 2, 28/06/1991).

The nature of the Slovenian threat continued to escalate in the coming days. The Slovenian TO were increasingly portrayed as dishonourable, and occasionally even monstrous. RTS began airing stories suggesting that Slovene TO forces were also targeting civilians. On June 29th specifically, RTS aired a report which suggested that the Slovene TO forces shot down a JNA helicopter delivering food supplies to the JNA troops. In addition, it was also suggested that the Slovene TO forces began attacking women and children – usually family members of the JNA soldiers. Finally, RTS also aired a report claiming that the Slovene TO forces mined a car with wives of two JNA officers, one of whom suffered light injuries and the other who lost her leg (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/06/1991).

The escalation of the threat discourse reached its peak in the first days of July. Notably, on July 2nd, RTS aired a long statement made by Colonel General Blagoje Adžić who said:

> [once the Army publicly announced ceasefire] the Slovenian government used that, violated ceasefires, and ordered its people to engage in the dirties attacks on anyone who wore the JNA memorabilia or was in any way connected to the JNA. […] they were brutal, they did not even spare women, or young children, or young soldiers, or their neighbours. The Slovenian leadership is using the most hideous means (TV Dnevnik 2, 02/07/1991).

This speech was aired twice within this broadcast, and a reference to it was made in every Dnevnik subsequently aired until July 8th. The statement and the claims made in it are not an isolated example – many other military and political figures made similar statements throughout the escalation phase.

The discourse of guilt similarly escalated. Most notably, the Slovenes TO and its political leadership were no longer guilty of deepening the crisis of the country. Instead, an increased number of reports aired on June 28th and 29th blamed them for the suffering of JNA troops and their families – who fell victim to illegitimate and indiscriminate violence committed by Slovene TO forces (TV Dnevnik 2, 28/06/1991; TV Dnevnik 2, 29/06/1991). In addition, the Slovene TO forces were explicitly blamed for the war and continuation thereof. For instance, on June 29th RTS aired a report in which it was suggested that "SIV and Slovenia signed at least 10 ceasefire agreements, none of which were respected by the Slovenian side" (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/06/1991).

RTS gave significant amount of airtime to various political and military figures all of whom suggested that the JNA was willing to respect the ceasefire agreements, but were brutally attacked by the Slovene TO forces, and were subsequently forced to engage in self-defence. In the words of Aleksandar Bakočević (the President of Serbia's national assembly at the time), "Croatia and Slovenia, their leadership more specifically, with their unilateral moves […] are bringing the country to the brink of war" (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/06/1991). By July 2nd almost every report aired on RTS discussing the circumstances in Slovenia highlighted that the Slovene TO forces were violating ceasefire agreements and prolonging the war, thereby forcing the JNA to engage in violence.

Almost all the reports discussed tried to create an image of the Slovene TO forces and its political leadership as threatening and guilty. On one hand, reports suggesting that the Slovene TO forces continuously engaged in a series of illegitimate attacks including some that targeted civilians, furthered the idea that the Slovene TO forces posed a threat to the wellbeing of the Army and their families. On the other hand, such reports coupled with the news suggesting that Slovene TO forces violated ceasefires, presumably furthered the image of Slovene TO forces as guilty for the continuation of war and violence. As discussed in chapter two, such discourses presumably helped legitimate violence and disincentivise opposition.

The portrayal of the Slovene people (i.e., ordinary civilians) was in stark contrast with that of the government, and especially the Slovene TO. RTS refrained from talking about the Slovene people in any great detail, despite the fact that it was the Slovene people who voted for independence in the first place. This appears even more odd when one considers that on June 27th, RTS aired statements that suggested that the JNA expects the Slovene people to help in their activities against the Slovene government that was acting unconstitutionally (TV Dnevnik 2, 27/06/1991).

In fact, RTS aimed to portray the Slovene people as comrades, and continuously aired statements of politicians and military officers who repeatedly asserted that the war was not waged against the Slovene people, but only with the Slovenian government and the TO (TV Dnevnik 2, 28/06/1991; TV Dnevnik 2, 03/07/1991). Such statements were repeated occasionally until the July 8th, although limited time was devoted to discussions about the Slovene people in general.

Nevertheless, the Slovenian people received some minor negative publicity. Occasionally, RTS aired statements from ordinary Serb civilians who expressed their disappointment with the behaviour of the Slovene people. For example, on July 3rd RTS aired a report in which some Serbs advocated that the Slovenes had a moral obligation to support the Federation and the Serbs in particular, as they would be under Italy's or Austria's control if the Serbs did not fight for them in

World War II (TV Dnevnik 2, 03/07/1991). Hence, it was suggested that Slovenes were in debt to the Serbs for the events of World War II. However, RTS did not push this narrative, nor did it attempt to build any further discourses about the Slovene people.

This relatively positive portrayal of the Slovene people should not come as a surprise. Since Milošević never really wanted to keep Slovenia in the Federation, creating negative imagery about the Slovenians was not really a priority for the Serbian regime at the time.[97] For as long as they could portray the JNA intervention and all subsequent episodes of violence as justified, RTS did not need the Serbian audiences to accept extremely negative imagery about Slovenia overall. Instead, the goal was to legitimate violence and disincentivise opposition among the general population and JNA troops. In addition, it was important to portray the overall aims of the Serbian population as legitimate, as such discourses were important for priming the Serbian audiences for the upcoming events that transpired in Croatia and Bosnia.

Discourses targeting the Federal Authorities[98]

On top of escalating propaganda targeting the Slovenian political leadership and its fighting forces, RTS also engaged in an extensive campaign against the Federal authorities – usually by airing statements from individuals that criticised the Federal government. Marković, the Federal Prime Minister was usually the prime target. Building discourses targeting the Federal authorities seems to be compatible with Milošević's aims at the time. As discussed in chapter three, Milošević had realised that the nationalist card was the best available strategy for acquiring and maintaining power – thus, it made sense for Milošević to undermine the power of Federal authorities (who still believed in Yugoslavia's unity). Additionally, with Croatia's and Slovenia's declarations of independence it was becoming increasingly clear that the Federation would breakup (even though the nature of the breakup remained unclear) – leaving a power vacuum that Milošević could fill.

Consequently, when targeting the Federal authorities RTS primarily relied on the discourse of *guilt* – that is, they blamed the Federal authorities for the political chaos in the country, and for the Army's inability to effectively intervene in Slovenia. Since it was the Federal leadership that commanded the Army, it was Marković who was primarily blamed for the Army's failures.

For instance, in the same statement discussed above Colonel General Blagoje Adžić openly *blamed* the Federal authorities for the events taking place in Slovenia, explicitly suggesting that the

[97] For further details on Milošević's attitude towards Slovenian secession see chapter three.

[98] For the reasons of scope, this section is not as dense as the one that explicates the discourses targeting what was perceived as the out-group (the Slovenian TO) and what was perceived as the in-group (by that point Serb-dominated JNA). In addition, as I explain at the end of this section, with Federal authorities' power already undermined by the events taking place across the country. Subsequently, there was no need for RTS to invest huge resources in propaganda targeting the Federal authorities.

Federal government prevented the JNA from engaging in a proper intervention in Slovenia (TV Dnevnik 2, 02/07/1991). As mentioned earlier, this speech was aired twice within the same broadcast, and a reference to it was made in every subsequent Dnevnik aired during this war. RTS ensured to always highlight Adžic's comments on the Federal authorities and their guilt for the failure of the intervention.

On July 3rd, this narrative further escalated. RTS aired an SPS's press release in which they demanded the authorities to conduct an investigation to examine whether SIV and the Prime Minister were responsible for what happened in Slovenia (TV Dnevnik 2, 03/07/1991). It should be noted that the SPS did not demand an inquiry about the FP's involvement, even though the FP was the official commanding authority over the JNA. However, this is not surprising as one of the FP members was Jović (Milošević's closest ally), whereas Marković was perceived as a delusional communist by most of the Serbian political establishment.

The escalation of this discourse continued in the following days. On July 4th, RTS covered a press conference organised by Marković. Following Marković's statement, RTS journalists provided a list of things that remained unclear or vague following the press conference. For instance, RTS suggested that even after the press conference it was unclear who was in command of the JNA troops in Slovenia, or who ordered the Army to engage in the intervention (TV Dnevnik 2, 04/07/1991). Subsequently, RTS argued that the Federal authorities, in part due to their incompetency, ought to bear full responsibility for the events that transpired.

In the same broadcast, presumably with the purpose of furthering the discourse of guilt, RTS aired a statement by a self-declared political commentator titled "Believe it or Not". Most of the statement was focused on Marković's press conference and the responsibility of the Federal authorities for the failed intervention. The commentator argued that: "SIV's cooperation with the defence of the country has been terrible for a while now. SIV ought to be responsible for the events that transpired, as it was SIV who issued orders to the relevant parties" (TV Dnevnik 2, 04/07/1991). Similar reports were also aired with the aim of portraying the Federal authorities as incompetent throughout the war and thus responsible for the failed JNA intervention in Slovenia.

One could perceive RTS reporting to be contradictory up to a point – as they defended the JNA, while attacking the Federal authorities. However, this contradiction can be resolved once we consider Milošević's aims. As argued above, by the summer of 1991 it was clear to Milošević that Yugoslavia in its current form would not last long – something which the Federal authorities struggled to accept.[99] From his perspective it was good to ditch the Federal authorities as incompetent and delusional. However, the positive portrayal of the JNA was necessary, not so

[99] For further details see chapter three.

much because Milošević cared about the Slovenian War or the role the JNA had in it, but because the JNA would play a vital role in the Croatian War of Independence. It is for this reason that positive imagery about the JNA had to be maintained within the Serbian society.

Discourses targeting the JNA

Correspondingly with escalating the negative imagery about the Slovenian TO forces, Slovenian politicians, and Federal authorities, RTS also escalated the positive imagery about the JNA. Valorising the violence committed by the JNA troops coupled with the portrayal of the JNA as a heroic army fighting against monstrous forces was likely to assist in legitimating violence taking place in Slovenia and decreasing the levels of opposition from both the general population and JNA troops.

The content of the discourse of valorisation evolved over time. In the initial stages of the war the JNA intervention and the violence committed by the troops was *valorised* through appeals to the constitutional obligation of the Army to protect the borders of the country, as well as Yugoslavia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. To develop this discourse, RTS often aired statements that re-affirmed that it was the JNA's constitutional obligation to secure the control of the borders that were at the hands of "unauthorised individuals" (TV Dnevnik, 27/06/1991). On top of allowing the generals to construct the case for legality of the intervention, RTS also allowed the JNA to defend itself from the attacks in the media. For instance, in the broadcast aired on June 27th RTS attended the JNA press conference. During the press conference, one RTS reporter asked: "How does the Army respond to the Slovene claims that the JNA is engaging in an occupation of the country?" The JNA representative answered: "The JNA is not engaging in an occupation, it is merely securing the borders of the country" (TV Dnevnik 2, 27/06/1991). The JNA proceeded to argue that the intervention could not be treated as an invasion given that the Army was conducting an operation on territory that was under its jurisdiction.

However, legitimating the violence committed by the JNA troops required more than arguing that engaging in an intervention was its constitutional obligation. Thus, to support this function of propaganda, RTS also aired reports which suggested that the JNA used the minimal levels of violence necessary to secure control over borders, and that the JNA did not attack civilian targets – but rather obstacles (like empty trucks) placed around the borders (TV Dnevnik 27/06/1991). Hence, all the violence committed by the JNA forces until June 28th was legitimate not only because it was constitutionally required, but also because it was proportionate and limited.

As the JNA achieved full control over the borders on June 28th – thereby fulfilling its constitutional obligations, there was a need for the discourse of valorisation to evolve as focusing

on the constitutionality or legality of the intervention was no longer sufficient. On the same day, RTS aired a report in which the JNA suggested that it "has total control over the border crossing, and the need for the troop's movement has now lapsed" (TV Dnevnik 2, 28/06/1991). Many other similar reports were aired that day. It was argued that the JNA would only use force if the Slovenian TO decide to attack their positions (TV Dnevnik 2, 28/06/1991). Thus, any violent operations that the JNA might engage in were portrayed as instances of legitimate self-defence. Therefore, such reports and statements served as an implicit justification for any further violence.

Such pre-emptive justifications served their purpose as violence continued and escalated on June 29th. RTS broadcasts became flooded with statements by JNA generals, who continuously argued that it was the Slovenian TO were violating ceasefire agreements, thereby forcing the JNA to engage in violence to defend itself (TV Dnevnik 29/06/1991). From this day forward, every broadcast aired included statements from the Army's representatives all of whom argued that the Slovenian TO violated ceasefire agreements, and consequently forced the Army to engage in violence. Furthermore, RTS increasingly conducted interviews with soldiers on the ground – many of whom suggested that they would continue to fight as that was their obligation as soldiers and patriots (TV Dnevnik 2, 05/07/1991). In all such reports, fighting for the JNA troops was portrayed as an admirable and heroic.

From July 1st, RTS also engaged in extensive *humanisation* of JNA soldiers – RTS portrayed them as victims of the vicious attacks conducted by the Slovene TO. The discourse presumably aimed at invoking feelings of empathy amongst the RTS viewership, whilst simultaneously eroding the feelings of sympathy towards the Slovenian TO. A series of interviews with soldiers, their spouses, and generals showed the difficulties that the JNA face – lacking food, water, electricity, medical supply, or sanitary equipment. Moreover, RTS ensured to show the suffering that the Slovene TO caused not only to soldiers, but also to their family members. In such reports, RTS extensively humanised the JNA soldiers and their families. For instance, on July 1st RTS interviewed Rozalija Nedović (wife of colonel Nedović who was captured by the Slovene TO). During the interview, she was in a clear state of distress, and said:

> I don't know where my husband is, no one knows. I am trying to find out where he is, I spent the whole day trying to publicise my problem. We called so many people, no one wants to talk to us. […] I even tried calling the press centre. […] I received information that families are not mistreated by the officers […] they told me that if I want to know more, I need to give them my husband's name, but I don't want to do that, because he will be labelled then. And I am labelled by the government already, but I am not afraid. […] it has apparently been announced that my husband was arrested, and that the investigation will start soon. I can't tell you more, I am really tired, and my eyes hurt from tear gas. They accused him of

> some crimes, like he was doing something against the Slovene government. (TV Dnevnik 2, 01/07/1991).

Similar reports from other distressed civilians and soldiers were aired throughout the escalation phase. Overall, from the broadcasts one could get the impression that the JNA soldiers lived in terrible conditions. Hence, it was honourable that the JNA did not use excessive violence or deploy all of its resources against the Slovenes. It also seemed like the JNA also paid a high price for the decision to wage what appeared to be a fair war on their side.

This kind of discourse-formation deployed for the JNA should not come as a surprise. It was in Milošević's interest to portray the JNA as a fair and honourable army given the role that the JNA was about to play in the Croatian War of Independence. For that same reason, the violence committed by the JNA had to be perceived as just and was thus valorised. Valorisation of the JNA violence accompanied with extensive humanisation of the JNA soldiers and their families helped build a picture in which violence committed by the JNA was perceived as just and legitimate. Similarly, it helped portray joining and staying in the Army as honourable and heroic, thereby disincentivising opposition. No report containing the struggles of Slovenian civilians or the family members of Slovene TO forces was aired. Thus, if one only watched RTS one would end up with a one-sided picture of this war – in which a legitimate Army and their innocent family members suffered due to the violence committed by an almost terrorist-like organisation.

Techniques

In order to make the four key discourses, namely threat, guilt, valorisation, and humanisation more persuasive, RTS relied on a variety of techniques. First, they extensively used *agenda-setting* – RTS would change the amount of airtime devoted to a particular discourse, depending on its relevance. For instance, in the first three days of the war the questions of legality of the secession, as well as the threatening nature of unilateral declarations of independence dominated RTS broadcasts. However, as violence escalated, the amount of time devoted to the issues caused by the declarations decreased, and the amount of time devoted to the 'monstrous' acts of violence committed by the Slovenian TO increased.

Second, RTS *manipulated* its viewership. First, they often used multiple actors from different social and political backgrounds to confirm the validity of their stories and discourse. Rather than merely relying on statements issued by the generals or politicians, RTS had an extensive 'army' of its commentators – from journalists, editors and self-declared political commentators, to civilians, and JNA rank-file soldiers. In such interviews journalists would usually ask leading questions. To illustrate, on July 2nd RTS interviewed several civilians in clear distress

who described their experiences. One of them was a wife of an officer, who argued that she was told that she must leave Maribor (a town in Slovenia), along with other women in her position, and immediately go to Belgrade. She claimed that she was told that "we all had to leave, we knew that some officers were located in the barracks and had no food, so we decided to help them and bring them some food and cigarettes. We were then told that we must leave" (TV Dnevnik 2, 02/07/1991). Another woman made a similar claim as she broke down into tears during the interview: "I hope that I will return. And for the Slovenes, like they used to be our friends, we used to go to school together and all of that. We hope that they won't forget that. We were friends you know" (TV Dnevnik 2, 02/07/1991). Other two women interviewed in the same broadcast also confirmed that they were forced to leave, and that they hope to be able to return to their country one day (TV Dnevnik 2, 02/07/1991). Subsequently, even if one did not believe the politicians or military figures who claimed that the Slovene TO were ruthless not only towards the JNA soldiers and to civilians, RTS provided a seemingly independent source of information. Such reports both served to further the discourse of threat and guilt of the Slovene TO, but also to additionally humanise the JNA soldiers and their families in Slovenia.

As discussed in chapter two using history is another way in which media outlets can manipulate viewership, however, the usage of this was limited in the Slovenian case, with the exception of a few isolated examples. For instance, on July 3rd as the JNA troops were making their move towards Slovenia, RTS interviewed Serb civilians who came to greet their Army. One of those citizens argued that Slovenes were in a historical debt to the Serbian people as they would be under Austrian or Italian control if it weren't for Serbs in World War II (TV Dnevnik 2, 03/07/1991). Nevertheless, despite such occasional mentions of historical events, RTS did not particularly rely on this technique, especially when compared to the Croatian or Bosnian case.

Third, RTS also extensively relied on *denial* – whenever the JNA would be accused of illegitimate attacks RTS would devote extensive airtime to military personnel and politicians who would deny such claims. They argued that the Army only used violence in self-defence and when provoked by the Slovene TO. Similarly, RTS also denied any reports coming out from Slovenia, and especially those regarding the strength of the Slovenian fighting forces. On June 28th, for example, RTS aired footage from Slovenian television that showed the strength and military capabilities of Slovenian TO. Following the video materials, RTS reporters dismissed the accuracy of the video. They suggested that Slovenian leadership was exaggerating the strength of their TO forces, that the video was a misrepresentation of the reality, and that all of this was part of a broader plan of the Slovene leadership to portray themselves as stronger than they actually were (TV Dnevnik 2, 28/06/1991). Finally, the Slovene leadership often aired statements suggesting

that the JNA troops were struggling with high levels of desertion (which as shown in chapter three was the case during the Slovenian 10-day War). However, throughout their broadcasts RTS would always label such reports as false, ensuring that enough airtime was devoted to those who argued that the JNA troops did not struggle with desertion (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/06/1991; TV Dnevnik 2, 04/07/1991).

As illustrated in the previous section, RTS escalated its anti-Slovene and pro-JNA propaganda in the first half of the Slovenian 10-day War. The key two functions of propaganda during this period were to legitimate violence and to disincentivise opposition: which presumably through the four developed discourses, RTS managed to do. However, given the political interests at hand, and the fact that keeping Slovenia in the Federation was not of great importance to any relevant political actor, the escalation of RTS propaganda during this war was relatively mild, especially when contrasted with the escalation of propaganda during the Croatian War of Independence or the Bosnian War.

The report aired on July 2nd highlights this argument. In the report, 50 parents of Serb soldiers who got stuck in Slovenia gathered in the Serbian national assembly and demanded for their sons to be returned to Belgrade immediately. And indeed, live updates from the Assembly (as events escalated and unfolded) were part of this day's broadcast with Milica Pešić (RTS journalist at the time) covering the event. On July 3rd, RTS continued to cover this story, and aired a footage of parents who arrived at Ljubljana via Zagreb to find out what was happening with their children (TV Dnevnik 2, 03/07/1991).

Airing such a report seems to stand in contrast with the functions propaganda served. This report presumably encouraged at least some to support desertion – as seeing parents in clear distress demanding their children back could have been seen as legitimate by parts of RTS audience, especially as there were no attempts to refute the parents' request or portray it as illegitimate. There are two possible explanations for this. First, as argued in the previous chapter, in mid-1991, Milošević had yet to secure complete control over RTS – thus, it is possible that this, and other similar reports, were aired as other powerful people in the institution insisted on doing so. Alternatively, it is possible that Milošević wanted this report aired. Namely, it was important for him to generally portray desertion as dishonourable– however, in practice, whether soldiers actually deserted from Slovenia did not particularly concern him. If anything, he would prefer for those soldiers to be relocated to Croatia – as that was the country whose territories Milošević wanted to gain control of.

Nevertheless, some escalation during the Slovenian 10-Day War was necessary for two primary reasons. First, since the JNA intervened in Slovenia, it was necessary to legitimate any

instances of violence but also to disincentivise opposition. Second, given that all the relevant actors anticipated that the conflict would transpire in Croatia, it was important to prime the Serbian audiences for the possibility of a bloodier war. Priming the Serbian audiences involved establishing certain discourses – most notably, the discourses of threat and guilt targeting the out-group; and the discourses of humanisation, valorisation and victimisation targeting the in-group.

De-escalation

Before starting this section, it is important to highlight that the broadcasts aired on July 6th and 7th were permanently lost by the RTS archive. Consequently, my analysis of de-escalation is not as dense or empirically rich – as I did not have access to a sufficient number of broadcasts. Thus, it is possible that some of the arguments I make in this section are incomplete. However, my analysis of propaganda's de-escalation is partly based on the broadcasts aired on July 5th and 8th– both of which suggest that propaganda was de-escalating. Moreover, my analysis of the Croatian broadcasts (in which almost no reference to the Slovenian conflict was made) is indicative that the period between July 5th and 8th could broadly be defined as de-escalation. Finally, the fact that JNA troops began their withdrawal from Slovenia is also indicative of the fact that the war was coming to an end, and as such suggests that propaganda was indeed de-escalating.

As the levels of violence de-escalated in Slovenia, the number of clashes between Croats and Croatian Serbs increased – and RTS reporting corresponded with the developments on the front. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that from July 5th onwards, the deteriorating situation in Croatia was the main focus of Dnevnik. Overall, the structure of Dnevnik remained somewhat similar. Reporting on the international community's (by now somewhat changing) stance still took around 15 minutes of each Dnevnik and so did the news from various meetings between the Yugoslav/Serb/Slovene leadership and representatives of the EC.

Similarly, the JNA and SSNO press conferences continued to dominate Dnevnik with officers still arguing that the Slovene forces continuously violated ceasefire agreements, attacked JNA soldiers and their family members, and prevented the JNA soldiers from collecting dead bodies or receiving the necessary medical assistance (TV Dnevnik 2, 05/07/1991). However, the time devoted to such reports, as well as the intensity of the negative portrayal of the Slovene forces visibly decreased. As it became clear that Slovenia would in-effect secede from Yugoslavia, propaganda targeting the Slovenian fighting forces de-escalated, and was completely eliminated once the Brioni Agreement was signed.

In addition, RTS also de-escalated their propaganda targeted against the Federal authorities. Such de-escalation is particularly evident when one considers the amount of airtime

devoted to those who criticised or blamed the Federal authorities. And such de-escalation becomes understandable when considering the political circumstances and Milošević's aims at the time. As explicated in chapter two, as soon as the declarations of independence were announced it quickly became clear that Republics' leaders, and not the Federal authorities, were the key actors of the Yugoslav crisis. And as the war in Slovenia was coming to its end, the Federal authorities lost the already limited political relevance they still held at the start of the crisis. Thus, there was no need to further escalate propaganda targeting the Federal authorities.

Further contributing to the de-escalation of propaganda targeted against the Slovenian fighting forces and political leadership were the events taking place in Croatia. From the earliest days of July, violence in Croatia began escalating and it was evident that local skirmishes in Croatia were likely to burst into an all-out war. Subsequently, RTS needed to shift focus and escalate propaganda targeted against the Croats rather than Slovenia. Thus, when it comes to Slovenia, the primary function of RTS propaganda during this period was to *pacify* the Serbian audiences. It should be noted however, that due to events that were about to take place in Croatia, RTS propaganda also served multiple different functions (e.g., *disincentivise opposition* or *legitimation of violence*). However, since all of those other functions were primarily pertaining to the situation in Croatia, they shall be discussed in the following chapter.

In order to pacify the Serbian population and prime them for the (increasingly likely) possibility of Slovenia's secession, RTS de-escalated many of the previously established discourses. First, RTS no longer portrayed the issue of Slovenia's independence as threatening. Instead, RTS increasingly devoted airtime to those who were somewhat supportive of Slovenia's right to self-determination on the condition that the same right was acknowledged to the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia. To illustrate, on July 8th RTS attended Jovic's press conference, during which he stated that "the crisis can only be resolved through political means and negotiations. However, every nation's right to self-determination must be respected, even when that right includes the option to secede" (TV Dnevnik 2, 08/07/1991). Second, RTS de-escalated its discourses against the Slovenian TO forces and decreased the number of reports about alleged violations of ceasefire and instances of excess violence committed by the Slovenian TO. Whilst some such reports were still aired on RTS their frequency and intensity substantially decreased. Third, RTS also re-interpreted some of the previously established discourses. To illustrate, the JNA began its withdrawal from the Slovene borders on July 4th but that decision was never explicated to RTS viewership. It was unclear who ordered the withdrawal, or whether perhaps the JNA forces based at the borders simply lost to the Slovene TO. Perhaps more surprisingly, as the Brioni agreement was signed, the JNA insisted that the withdrawal was in accordance with the orders (for which it

remained unclear who issued them) but also in accordance with the constitution (which was even more peculiar, as they used the constitution as a justification for the intervention in the first place) (TV Dnevnik 2, 08/07/1991).

In order to successfully de-escalate such discourses RTS relied on three primary techniques. First and foremost, they used *agenda-setting* – as mentioned above, the number of news pieces pertaining to the situation in Slovenia substantially decreased, and reports from Croatia began dominating RTS broadcasts. Second, RTS also relied on *denial* – at no point did they tell the RTS viewership what exactly happened at Slovenia's external borders. Instead, they merely announced that the officials decided to order the withdrawal of the troops and suggested that such withdrawal was in accordance with the law. According to Vlado Mareš, who reported from the border crossings, contrary to RTS's official reports the soldiers never waited for an official decision. Instead, a lot of them willingly surrendered to the Slovenian TO and abandoned the border crossings (Interview 7b, 2019). However, such reports never made it to RTS Dnevnik and RTS viewership was left wondering why the JNA decided to withdraw from Slovenia.

Finally, in order to promote the Brioni agreement, RTS also used *manipulated* its viewership by airing reports and statements from various individuals all of whom confirmed that the deal signed was beneficial for both Slovenia and Serbia. RTS continuously aired statements from domestic and international politicians as well as military personnel and ordinary civilians, all of whom praised the ceasefire and a peace deal signed at Brioni islands. And indeed, as soon as the peace deal was signed on July 7th most discourses and discussions about Slovenia stopped – RTS devoted almost all of its time to the events taking place in Croatia. Even though the Brioni agreement placed a 3-months long moratorium on Slovenia's (and Croatia's) declaration of independence, RTS was no longer interested in discussing the situation in Slovenia or even the possibility of it remaining part of Yugoslav federation.

It should be noted, however, that discourses of humanisation and valorisation targeting the JNA and (and increasingly the Serbs) continued to be promoted on RTS broadcasts. However, the Serbian and JNA victims humanised were no longer suffering at the hands of the Slovenes, but the Croats instead. Similarly, the violence valorised was no longer taking place in Slovenia, but instead across Croatia. Thus, the existence and development of these discourses shall be analysed in the following chapter that focuses on RTS propaganda during the Croatian War of Independence.

Conclusion

This chapter's purpose was to introduce the reader with the content of RTS broadcasts pertaining to the Slovenian War and begin to indicate the techniques used by RTS to promote certain discourses necessary for propaganda to fulfil its primary functions. RTS propaganda against Slovenia was generally mild. No dehumanisation or hateful imagery was disseminated against the Slovenian people, and if anything, RTS was generally positive when speaking about ordinary Slovene civilians.

Second, to the extent to which RTS was negative in their depiction of Slovenia, such discourses were mainly orientated towards the Slovene government and the Slovene TO forces. However, even in those cases, those discourses were not developed overnight, instead it took time for RTS to feel comfortable to use metaphors such as "audacious" or "heinous" or "unscrupulous" or "monstrous" when describing the Slovenian forces. Thus, this chapter is the first step in demonstrating that hateful and dehumanising propaganda is a process of discourse-shaping rather than something that exists from the start of the war.

Third, from this chapter the reader can begin to understand that propaganda can serve multiple different functions, and that it can even be used to de-escalate tensions and violence. Thus, instead of assuming that the fact that propaganda was not hateful during the Slovenian War implies that propaganda was ineffective, scholars ought to first examine all the possible functions that propaganda could have been serving, and only then examine whether propaganda was effective in fulfilling them.

In this particular case examining whether propaganda was effective would involve researching whether and to what extent ordinary Serbs believed the discourses on the constitutionality of unilateral secessions, and whether they considered Slovenia primarily responsible for the outbreak of the war. Finally, it would also involve examining whether and to what extent the Serbs perceived the Brioni agreement as a positive step towards the resolution of the Yugoslav crisis.

Importantly I suggest, and will analyse in later chapters, that from RTS's perspective, Slovenia was a trial run. During the war RTS set the stage for what everyone anticipated would be a much more important battle – Croatia. Even though many discourses developed were solely targeting Slovenia and its political and military leadership, many of the other discourses developed were important for the Croatian War of Independence. To illustrate, all the discourses targeting the JNA bared more importance during the war in Croatia than in Slovenia as I show in the following chapter. As indicated in the previous chapters, RTS was a part of Milošević's political apparatus, and as such was only able to air and disseminate materials that were in accordance with

his political objectives. And indeed, the secret deal that was struck between Kučan and Milošević,[100] is indicative of the fact that Milošević had very little, if any interest, in keeping Slovenia in the Federation. RTS broadcasts were a reflection of such attitude. However, I shall substantiate this argument later, as I contrast my analysis of Slovenian broadcasts with those pertaining to Croatia and Bosnia.

[100] For further details see chapter three.

Chapter Six: "Remembrance as a Warning" – The Croatian War of Independence

"Tudjman's fighters are competing in the horrible messages they wish to send to the Serbian people. A slogan claiming that 'Croats will eat börek made from Serbian eyes' was created exactly inside that fascist kitchen. Judging on the basis of what is happening at the front, this slogan is pathetic and only serves as a consolation to the small-minded members of the Croatian democracy."[101]

Introduction

While the war in Slovenia was swift, the Croatian War of Independence was brutal. This should not be a surprise – Slovenia's ethnic homogeneity made its secession relatively easy. No other country had legitimate grounds to make a claim on any part of Slovenia's territory. In contrast, over 600,000 Serbs lived in Croatia in 1991 (Silber and Little, 1997: 90; Bellamy, 2003: 56). When Croatia declared independence from the former Yugoslavia, the status and position of the Serbs living there was contentious. Croatian Serbs were resolute that should Croatia successfully secede from the Federation they would declare independence from Croatia and join rump Yugoslavia. The Serbian political establishment, led by Milošević, actively supported Croatian Serb aspirations, arguing that if the Croats' right to self-determination was acknowledged, then the same right should be granted to Croatian Serbs. However, the Croatian leadership was not willing to negotiate any changes of its borders. Thus, from the earliest stages of the break-up, it was clear that Croatia's secession would not be as smooth as Slovenia's.

During the Slovenian War propaganda was relatively banal and mainly targeted Slovenian TO forces and not the civilian population. In contrast, RTS's propaganda during the Croatian conflict was amongst the most vitriolic and hateful of the entire Yugoslav Wars. For instance, by the time the Vukovar battle began in late August of 1991, RTS no longer used the term "Croat", and almost exclusively referred to any Croatian politician, fighter or civilian as "Ustaša." However, it took months for RTS to reach the point in which it was acceptable to use the term Ustaše to describe any Croatian national, and in this chapter I detail how exactly such language and terminology became widespread.

Whilst it may seem obvious that the Croatian secession was going to be inevitably more complex than Slovenia's, there are multiple questions relating to RTS propaganda during the Croatian War. First, how did RTS manage to persuade so many Serbians that their Croatian neighbours and friends were enemies? Second, why was propaganda relatively mild during Operation Storm in 1995 when arguably the worst atrocities committed against the Serbian people

[101] A statement made by an RTS journalist reporting from the war front in Croatia. The report was aired in Dnevnik on October 2nd 1991.

took place? Third, how exactly did propaganda evolve from relatively mild portrayals aired in early 1991 to some of the most hateful and derogatory imagery that RTS broadcasted throughout the second half of 1991? Fourth, in what way did external circumstances, including developments on the front and changes in the political stances of major actors, impact RTS propaganda? These are only some of the questions that await answers, without which we can barely begin to question whether propaganda had an effect on the fighters or the Serbian audiences more generally.

In this chapter, I aim to provide answers to some of the aforementioned questions in order to clarify the nature and the role of RTS propaganda. To do so, I will analyse the three distinct phases of propaganda, as well as the functions that propaganda served in each of those phases. Additionally, I will analyse the discourses disseminated through RTS broadcasts and detail how those discourses evolved or changed as propaganda varied between the three phases and as propaganda's functions changed. Finally, I will examine the specific techniques RTS used when promoting the discourses.

Data

The chapter's conclusions are primarily based on the broadcasts aired on RTS between June 25th 1991 and December 15th 1995 – of which I watched 105. In the bibliography to this thesis, I provide a list of all the broadcasts watched, and indicate whenever a specific broadcast has been permanently lost from the RTS archive.

For my analysis of RTS broadcasts, I used two sampling methods. First, I identified *key events* and watched all the broadcasts that occurred during those events. Specifically, in instances of single events (e.g. the day when Croatia declared independence), I would watch the broadcast of the day when the event took place, and then one or two days prior to and after the event. If the event lasted over a sustained period of time (like in the case of Vukovar or Dubrovnik), I identified key events that took place during those battles and sieges and watched broadcasts on the day of the key event and one or two days prior to and after the event.

The key events in the Croatian War of Independence (and the dates of the broadcasts watched) are as follows:

1. **The declaration of independence**: June 25th-27th 1991
2. **Vukovar battle**:
   a) *Start of the battle*: August 21st-25th 1991
   b) *Killings in the hospital*: October 2nd-6th1991
   c) *The end of the battle*: November 16th-22nd 1991
3. **The siege of Dubrovnik**:
   a) *Start of the siege*: September 29th– October 1st 1991
   b) *The worst instance of shelling of the town*: December 4th-7th 1991

c) *The end of the siege*: May 30th – June 2nd 1992
4. **The Vance Plan**:
   a) *Plan signed*: November 21st-25th1991
   b) *Plan implemented*: January 1st-4th1992
   c) *Ceasefire coming into effect*: January 5th-7th 1992
5. **Operation Storm**: August 3rd-9th 1995
6. **The Erdut Agreement**: November 10th-14th1995

In addition to purposeful sampling, I also used *random sampling* – that is, I watched the broadcast on every 16th and 29th of each month during the aforementioned period. Random sampling serves two distinct purposes. First, as I finished watching the broadcasts covering key events, I identified changes between the propaganda aired in 1991/1992 and propaganda aired in 1995 – thus, random sampling was necessary to explain the occurrence of such changes. Second, I used random sampling in order to avoid possibly biased conclusions – given that it is possible that propaganda around key events would be different than propaganda more generally throughout the conflict.[102]

RTS Propaganda

The trajectory of propaganda over the war broadly shifted in the in the following way. The first period, beginning in 1991 marks a period of stark and steep *escalation* of propaganda. As I detail in the following section, Milošević's regime and RTS escalated discourses targeting the Croats from relatively mild portrayals in June of 1991 to hateful and derogatory portrayals that dominated the broadcasts in the second part of 1991.

Once the Sarajevo agreement was signed in early 1992, and with both parties interested in sustainability of this peace deal,[103] the regime's aims changed. Consequently, following a minor de-escalation of propaganda, from January 1992 until early 1995 propaganda mainly *maintained* the negative imagery created about the Croats and did not attempt to either escalate or de-escalate the corresponding discourses. A significant de-escalation of propaganda targeting the Croats was not desirable, as it was clear that the status of the territories conquered by the Serbian forces in 1991 was only temporary – partly since the UN peacekeeping troops sent to Croatia in 1991 could not have stayed there permanently. Subsequently, as I detail below, it was important for the Serbs to maintain negative imagery about the Croats in case that new recruitment and fighting became necessary.

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[102] One could argue that my random sample should have been larger, given the size of the overall data available. However, in many instances the broadcasts were incredibly long – sometimes, they would last even over an hour. Furthermore, in order to provide detailed insights, in many instances I needed to watch certain broadcasts more than once. Thus, due to time limitations, I was unable to analyse a broader random sample in this particular case. However, analysis of a larger pool of broadcasts should remain part of further research, as I am confident that such examination would provide even greater insights into RTS propaganda during the Croatian War of Independence.

[103] For further details on why both Milošević and Tudjman wanted this ceasefire deal to succeed see chapter three.

Finally, with the war ranging in Bosnia the international community introduced draconian sanctions against Yugoslavia.[104] Increasingly cut from the rest of the world, Milošević had no option but to change the narrative and portray himself as a peacemaker. Correspondingly, the image of Milošević as the protector and unifier of the Serbs slowly became replaced with the image of Milošević as the key peacemaker in the region. Thus, and in accordance with Milošević's aims, RTS propaganda took a turn during 1995 and *de-escalated*.

Escalation

As discussed in the previous chapters, by early June 1991 there was a widespread belief that Yugoslavia could no longer be held together in the form in which it existed for more than four decades. However, the exact shape and nature of Yugoslavia's breakup was uncertain, with multiple paths available to the political representatives of the Republics. Different Republics had different preferences regarding the future make-up of Yugoslavia. As explicated in chapter three, at the beginning of the crisis, the Bosnian leadership strongly supported a confederal organisation of the country, Serbia maintained that Yugoslavia's territorial integrity and sovereignty must not be violated, and Croatia and Slovenia demanded full autonomy and independence.

The governments of the Federation's Republics and their media organisations needed to provide explanations and discourses which could explicate the crisis. The media became a tool used to make sense of the new and uncertain reality of Yugoslavia, particularly as it was presumably difficult for the peoples who peacefully co-existed for more than four decades to suddenly perceive their former friends and neighbours as enemies and threats. Hence, from the earliest days of the crisis, there was a need to escalate propaganda and develop discourses of threat and guilt targeting other Republics.

Escalating propaganda targeting the Croats was particularly important for the Serbian political establishment. On top of providing discourses that could explain the crisis in the country more generally, the Serbian leadership also needed to provide accounts that could explain the increased tensions and skirmishes taking place in Croatia. Furthermore, the ethnic composition of Croatia also implied that its secession from the Federation was likely to be complex and possibly violent, thus the Serbian media had a pivotal role in priming the Serbian audiences for a possibility of war with Croatia. Thus, propaganda targeting the Croats began escalating from the onset of the crisis.

Nevertheless, comparatively RTS propaganda in June 1991 was relatively mild when contrasted with the kind of propaganda aired in the later months of 1991 – which clearly indicates

[104] for further details see chapter three

that during this period propaganda was escalating. In the first couple of weeks of the war, the vast majority of news reports did not contain the kind of derogatory, threatening or hateful imagery usually associated with war and violence. Instead, most reports focused on the illegality of unilateral secessions and the threat they pose to the regional and European stability. Furthermore, to the extent to which RTS aimed to justify any violence taking place, in the early days, it made sure to suggest that war was not something that the Federal authorities, the Serbs, or the JNA wanted. Instead, RTS argued that it was the Croats who imposed the war on everyone else by deciding to break up the Federation. Perhaps the best illustration of that is an excerpt from General Kadijević's statement. According to Lalić (1995: 85), Kadijević stated that:

> "The Yugoslav People's Army did not want a war. The war was imposed on us. Those who want to break up Yugoslavia, supported by its foreign mentors, have chosen [war]. Nothing else is left for us to do except to use force to defend ourselves. […] We will prevent the repetition of genocide and defend the right of all of our peoples who want to continue their common life in new Yugoslavia."

There are several potential explanations for the relative mildness of RTS propaganda during the first couple of weeks of the war. First, both Slovenia's and Croatia's secession were illegal according to the Yugoslav constitution – thus, at least in the initial stages, it was potentially sufficient to simply criticise Croatia (and Slovenia) for violating its constitutional obligations instead of immediately portraying them as enemies or brutal killers. Furthermore, at least in June 1991, the international community still supported Yugoslavia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Thus, it is possible that Milošević did not want to escalate propaganda targeting the Croats immediately as he could not predict the trajectory of the crisis. It is plausible that Milošević hoped that international community's support could enable him to keep the Federation united. Finally, the relative mildness of RTS's initial propaganda could be due to Milošević's original aim to present himself as the protector of Yugoslavia's unity – extensive dehumanisation of the Croats would compromise such imagery.

However, even if one assumes that Milošević and RTS wanted to dehumanise the Croats from the earliest days of the crisis, it is unlikely that the Serbs could easily accept the dehumanised images of Croats having co-existed with them peacefully for four decades. Consequently, for an effective dissemination of such hateful propaganda it was necessary to prime Serbian audiences. And indeed, there is some evidence that RTS used the first couple of weeks of the war to prime the population for future content. For instance, even though reports in the early period primarily criticised the Croats for unilaterally seceding from the Federation, RTS would occasionally air reports that would compare Croatian forces with the Ustaše forces who fought during World War

II. For instance, on June 27th 1991 RTS aired a report featuring Krste Bjelić (a journalist) who visited the town of Glina. There Bjelić reported:

> Glina, a town which people fled en-masse, seems spooky. Tanks are located across the city, there are few passengers, and bullet marks can be seen across the city. We [RTS reporters] found out that in the yesterday's skirmish next to the police station which ultimately spread across the city, on top of two police officers and one Serb civilian, other innocent people also lost their lives. An old lady Stoja Baždar, a graphic designer Miladin Tibić and another young man whose name we did not find out. The way in which they were killed reminded the citizens of Glina to the darkest days of the previous war [World War II] when many unarmed and innocent people were also brutally killed (TV Dnevnik 2, 27/06/1991).

Whilst such comparisons were rare in the first weeks of the war, I suggest that they served as a method of priming the audiences for an ever-increasing number of such reports that came in the following weeks and ultimately led to RTS almost exclusively referring to all Croats as Ustaše. Thus, even in the early days of the war, although propaganda was relatively mild compared to its later incarnation, it still played an important role in the escalation of tensions between Serbs and Croats.

As the war in Slovenia ended, with the country in-effect seceding from the Federation,[105] the Serbian political leadership turned to the Croatian question and how to reconcile Croatia's desire to secede with the demands of 600,000 Serbs to secede from Croatia and join rump Yugoslavia. Since neither of the sides was willing to compromise or reconsider their stance, from July 1991 propaganda targeting the Croats saw steep and stark escalation.

It is hard to exactly pinpoint the moment when RTS propaganda targeting the Croats began an exponential escalation, but a good case can be made for a report aired on July 8th 1991. Milorad Komrakov (the editor and presenter of Dnevnik), in what seemed a sudden interruption of a general flow of the news (since neither the previous nor the following segments were related to this report), aired footage created in 1941 when Hitler visited Maribor (a town in Slovenia) and when NDH (Independent State of Croatia - *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*) declared war to the UK and the USA. Komrakov directs the viewers' attention to the current events taking place in Croatia and implicitly suggested that the similarities between 1941 and 1991 were striking and politically relevant. In his words:

> In the following minutes of this programme, Dnevnik is taking you 50 years back with the assistance of the Yugoslav Cinema Library who kept the footage. [In this

[105] As mentioned in chapter three and five, according to the Brioni agreement signed, Slovenia was expected to institute a three-months long moratorium on its decision to secede from the Federation. Nevertheless, it was a widespread belief amongst both the general population and relevant political actors that Slovenia has successfully seceded from Yugoslavia as no attempts to bring back the Republic into the Federation were made after the agreement.

> footage] you will have a chance to see events that are in many ways similar to what is happening today. Remembrance as a warning. The dates are April 26th 1941 and December 12th 1941. The events – Chancellor Hitler visiting Maribor and NDH declaring war to the UK and the USA. Location – Maribor, if they still call it that, and Zagreb (TV Dnevnik 2, 08/07/1991).

Following the 5-minute footage demonstrating the citizens' euphoria and general enthusiasm expressed in the face of Hitler's visit and the declaration of the war, Komrakov concluded "let me remind you once again – remembrance as a warning" (TV Dnevnik 2, 08/07/1991). I argue that this report, as well as many others aired in the following months, attempted to persuade the Serbian population that the Croats posed an existential threat to the Serbs in a similar fashion as they did during World War II. RTS presumably wanted to navigate the Serbian viewership into accepting that violence committed against the Croats was legitimate and justified. From that day, the intensity and frequency of reports drawing direct comparisons between Croatian forces fighting in 1991 and Ustaše forces fighting in 1941 substantially increased until eventually all Croats (irrespective of whether they were civilians or combatants) were referred to as Ustaše.

Functions

As the ever-increasing number of skirmishes turned into an all-out war in Croatia, a more extensive escalation of RTS propaganda was necessary to enhance and further Serbian aspirations in Croatia. Subsequently RTS exponentially escalated its propaganda targeting the Croats, and the functions of such propaganda crystallised. During this period of steep and stark escalation in 1991, RTS propaganda served five key functions: *identity building, recruiting fighters, disincentivising opposition, legitimating violence* and in the final months of 1991, propaganda also aimed to *brutalise the perpetrators* based in Croatia.

Identity building was particularly important in the escalation phase – as the regime needed to ensure a clear distinction between *us* and *them*. As illustrated below, contrary to the conflict in Slovenia, during the Croatian War of Independence, RTS failed to distinguish between Croatian civilians and Croatian fighting forces, and used ethnicity as the primary way for distinguishing between those who belong to *us* (i.e. ethnic Serbs) and *them* (i.e. ethnic Croats). This identity building was particularly important for increasing the power of other functions – since those categorised as *them* could be excluded from the universe of obligations owed to humans by the virtue of their humanity (Fein, 1979: 9). Thus, violence against those categorised as *them* could be seen as legitimate.

Effective recruitment of the Serbs and disincentivising opposition (particularly within the troops, but also among the general population) was particularly important due to the high level of

desertion of other ethnicities from the JNA.[106] Thus, to increase the size of the military willing to fight in Croatia, it was insufficient to simply rely on Croatian Serbs and it became necessary to mobilise Serbs from Serbia. That disincentivising desertion was of importance to the regime is illustrated by the fact that the government introduced legal penalties (and even prosecution) for all of those who fail to turn up for their obligatory military service and/or desert from the troops.[107]

However, propaganda does not exist in a vacuum and its functions are often dependent upon external circumstances. Thus, even though recruitment and disincentivising opposition were the two crucial functions of propaganda in July 1991, further developments on the front also necessitated further functions of propaganda. As the JNA struggled to win key battles (most notably in Vukovar) attacking civilians and violating the Geneva conventions appeared to be part of effective strategies. Hence, brutalising perpetrators and legitimating such violence became important functions of propaganda.

Discourses

To ensure that propaganda effectively fulfilled its functions, RTS developed two key discourses targeting the Croats, namely the discourses of *threat* and *guilt*. To further support the discourse of threat and guilt, RTS also created three key discourses pertaining to the Serbs: the discourse of *victimisation, valorisation,* and *humanisation*. All of the discourses developed furthered the previously mentioned functions of propaganda. Portraying the Croats as guilty likely made the Serbian audiences more prone to support violence committed against the Croats or perhaps even engage in it – as they perhaps saw it as a legitimate punishment for the crimes (allegedly) committed by Croatians. Furthermore, for those who did not perceive guilt as sufficient ground to legitimate violence, threat construction served as an appropriate complement, as most people (potentially excluding committed pacifists) would agree that it is legitimate to use violence in self-defence. Hence, for as long as RTS was able to successfully portray Croats as a threat, it was likely that many people would consider violence against the Croats legitimate and would possibly be willing to engage in such violence.

Similarly, the discourses targeting the Serbs further contributed to the fulfilment of the aforementioned functions. For instance, if RTS successfully persuaded the Serbs that they were yet again victims of brutal Ustaša-like violence some Serbs may have become more prone to support or engage in violence committed against the Croats or, at the very least, not to openly oppose it. It is possible that humanisation contributed to Serbians' ability to identify with the pain

[106] for further details see chapter three

[107] The penalty was introduced by the Lieutenant General Marko Negovanović during his appearance on RTS broadcast aired on August 21st 1991.

that ethnic Serbs were experiencing in Croatia which could motivate some to join the troops, or at the very least not actively oppose the troops (and the regime) who engaged in violence against the Croats. Similarly, valorisation of the violence committed by Serbian forces could have also served as a tool that disincentivised Serbs to desert from the troops, as presumably fewer people would feel a moral obligation to desert from the Army if they perceived the violence committed by the Army as heroic and admirable. A victimisation discourse, coupled with the humanisation of the Serbian victims and valorisation of violence committed by the Serbian forces further enhanced the ability of propaganda to fulfil its function.

Importantly though, in a similar way to which propaganda's functions evolved and transformed depending on the external circumstances, so did the discourses used to promote them. Hence, whilst the discourse of threat persisted throughout 1991, the *nature* of the Croatian threat changed. Likewise, other previously mentioned discourses saw a similar trajectory of change throughout 1991. I detail the processes that influenced those changes and provide an extensive analysis of such changes in the following paragraphs.

Threat

The discourse of threat construction evolved in accordance with the escalation of tensions and violence in Croatia. In the immediate aftermath of Croatia's declaration of independence, RTS primarily aired news and reports focused on the illegality of Croatia's independence declaration and the *threat* that unilateral secessions posed for both regional and European stability. For instance, on June 27th 1991 RTS aired a report following a meeting of the Federal Presidency. The report said:

> The Federal Presidency has established that in the last couple of days the Yugoslav crisis has culminated, and that the political situation in the country has worsened especially since Slovenia and Croatia declared independence. The Federal Presidency considers that these [unilateral secessions] are jeopardizing the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country. It was stated that these [unilateral secessions] are unconstitutional, illegitimate, and should not have any legal or other implications [for the Federation]. Nevertheless, [the Federal Presidency] highlighted that these [unilateral secessions] already produced harmful consequences and deepened interRepublic and interethnic tensions. [The Federal Presidency also stated that these secessions] led to a tragic loss of innocent human lives (TV Dnevnik 2, 27/06/1991).

Such a development of this discourse should not be surprising. At that stage, it remained unclear whether Croatia would be successful in seceding from the Federation and since Milošević primarily wanted to portray himself as the protector of Yugoslavia's unity, portraying unilateral secession as

the primary threat to the wellbeing of the Serbian people was the most consistent discourse with the imagery the regime wanted to promote and have the relevant audiences deploy.

However, as the war escalated and as Croatia's secession became increasingly likely, the nature of the Croatian threat changed. RTS no longer focused on the threats of Croatian secession and the implications it would have on the region. Instead, RTS increasingly presented Croats as an existential threat to Croatian Serbs. Thus, RTS's broadcast increasingly focused on brutal episodes of violence that the Croats committed against the Serbs. Additionally, in such reports, RTS often drew comparisons between the kinds of violence experienced by the Serbs during World War II to the ones experienced during the 1990s.

For instance, on August 21st, RTS aired a report which implicitly argued that the Serbs were facing the threat of annihilation, similar to what they experienced during World War II. In the report, an RTS journalist asked the Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia Budimir Košutić to comment on the (alleged) statement made by Stipe Mesić, a Croatian politician, in which he allegedly minimized the number of casualties in the Jasenovac camp during World War II. Košutić replied that he was shocked and that the Ustaše treatment of the Serbs in Jasenovac was often shocking even to the commanders of the German troops at the time. He went on to add that "we do not like going back to the past in Serbia just because we love the past. It is quite the opposite. We talk about these [past events] exactly because that past is increasingly becoming the present in modern-day Croatia led by Tudjman" (TV Dnevnik 2, 21/08/1991).

Despite such statements being aired on RTS, propaganda and the discourse of threat had yet to reach its peak. RTS still made a clear distinction between Croatian combatants and civilians. Whenever RTS reports referred to violence committed against the Serbs, RTS would use the phrases such as "Croatian fighting forces", "Tudjman's fighters", "Ustaše fighters", "MUP-ovci"[108] and would not attempt to equate all Croats with those fighting units. Furthermore, the visual materials aired, particularly footage of killed and deceased civilians, were comparatively mild in the late summer of 1991. However, in the following months RTS propaganda escalated to the point where all Croats were portrayed as an existential threat to the Serbs irrespective of their fighting status, and the images aired became more distressing – with mutilated corpses of civilians aired during RTS's primetime Dnevnik.

Arguably, RTS propaganda and its associated discourses reached their peak in November 1991. Whilst the nature of the Croatian threat did not substantially change (i.e., they were still an

[108] MUP – Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Ministarstvo Unutrašnjih Poslova*) – thus, MUP-ovci was a slang term used to describe police forces who were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry.

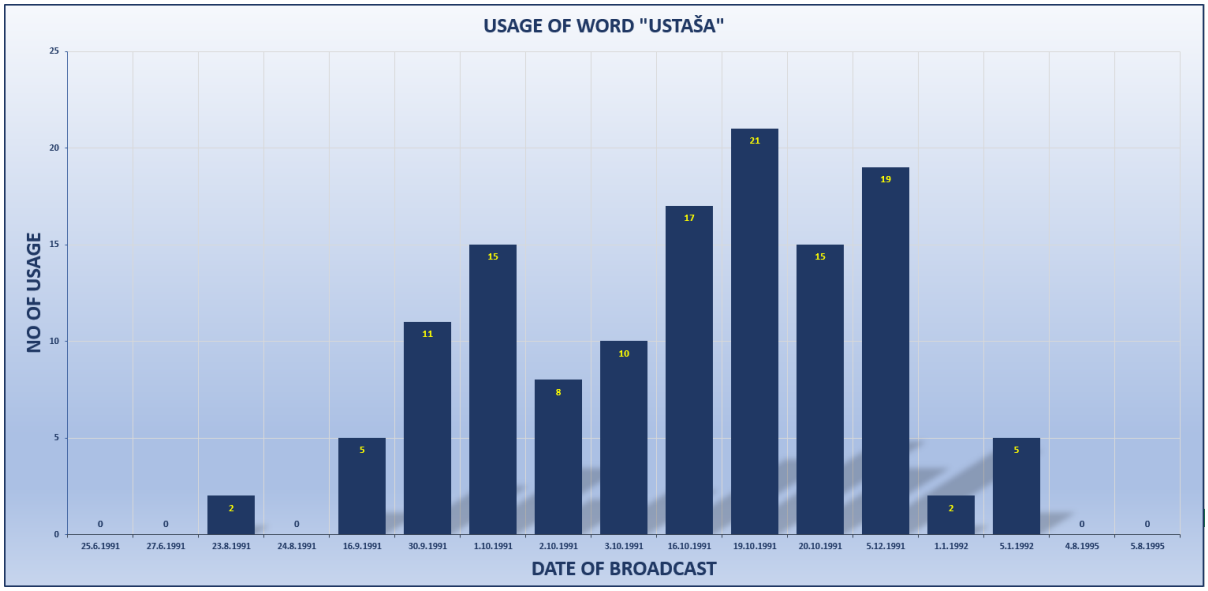
existential threat to the Serbs), the intensity and frequency of the reports portraying the Croats as threatening significantly increased.

On November 29th, RTS aired a report from the Centre for Identification of Corpses located close to Vukovar. RTS reporters were aware of the intensity of the videos and their possible inappropriateness, which is shown through the opening statement of the presenter: "[hiding] a crime is the same as participating in it. The footage that we are about to show dramatically demonstrates the extent of Ustaše crimes. That is why it is our duty to warn all of those who are particularly sensitive as well as the youngest ones [to refrain from watching the following footage if you think you may find it too difficult]" (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/11/1991). Close up footage of several mutilated corpses, including that of children usually not older than three or four, were aired alongside an (alleged) expert who discussed the methods Croatian forces used to execute those civilians. This was not an isolated example, as Lalić (1995: 88) tell us, RTS often aired videos in which they "represented the crimes committed against civilians. The camera, like a surgical drill would dig into the deepest details regarding the victims, while the other side of that drill would dig into the brain of the numb viewer. As time went by, a lot of such reports were aired."

On top of portraying Croats as brutal executioners of innocent civilians, RTS in that report yet again attempted to push the audiences to the conclusion that the Croatian forces of 1991 were no different to those that operated during World War II and that subsequently, the existential threat that the Croats posed to the Serbs during the 1940s persisted during the 1990s as well. In the report, the soldier interviewed by RTS suggested that the methods used to kill children and other civilians were similar to those used in 1940s.

These examples highlight an identifiable escalation in threat construction discourse. Not only that the terms used to describe Croats became increasingly derogatory and hateful, but RTS increasingly blurred, and then completely eliminated, any distinction between Croatian combatants and Croatian civilians. By December of 1991, every single Croat represented an existential threat, and RTS almost exclusively referred to any Croatian national as Ustaša – thereby furthering the discourse of Croats as an existential threat to the Serbian people.

Figure 2 – Usage of the Word Ustaša During the Croatian War of Independence[109]



The chart above illustrates the point that propaganda evolved through three different phases – and that the discourse of threat correspondingly adapted. In the early stage of the war, namely in June and August of 1991, RTS rarely used the term Ustaša. However, as propaganda escalated, the usage of that word substantially increased and peaked in October 1991. Following the peace deal signed in January 1992, propaganda slightly de-escalated – with RTS decreasing its usage of the term Ustaša. Finally, as propaganda entered de-escalation proper in 1995, as Milošević aimed to sign the Dayton Peace Agreement, RTS stopped using the term Ustaša.

Whether the use of Ustaša was intentional (in a sense of instructed by editors in chief), or a consequence of the journalists themselves deploying such ideology is unclear. Goca Suša (a prominent RTS journalist, who left the institution after several suspensions due to her anti-Milošević attitudes) claims that editors and directors unequivocally ordered the journalists to solely use the term Ustaša – a statement supported in both lay discourses in Serbia and by many other journalists. In Suša's words:

> The main editor would [come into the office] and put a note on the wall telling the journalists that they cannot say 'today the Serbian forces attacked the Croatian forces.' Instead, we [were ordered] to always say 'the Serbian heroic forces attacked

[109] For reasons of scope, I narrowed down the sample size in which I analysed how frequently RTS used the term Ustaša. For the same reason, I also exclusively focused on the term Ustaša (and other equivalents, like "Black shirt wearers" – the colour of the uniform worn by Ustaše during World War II). Nevertheless, further studies that would involve a larger word sample as well as more broadcasts would further substantiate the argument about propaganda's evolution through three distinct phases.

> the bloodthirsty Ustaše gangs.' Thus, you had very clear instructions on how you may and may not speak on air (interview 6, 2019).

However, Nino Brajović (who worked at RTS, and claims to have voluntarily resigned in 1993) strongly denies that such instructions were ever issued (interview 1, 2019). Regardless, by the end of 1991 RTS almost exclusively used the term Ustaša when referring to both Croatian fighting forces and civilians.

That RTS chose referring to World War II and its legacy as the primary strategy for portraying the Croats as an existential threat should not be surprising. Many of those who fought in 1991 lost their parents (or at the very least had their parents tortured) at the hands of Ustaše forces. And even those who did not lose relatives to the violence of Ustaše regime, had vivid memories of the horrors of World War II and Croatia's role in it.

Thus, portraying the Croats as an existential threat in this context, and particularly given statements made by Tudjman,[110] was likely to successfully enhance propaganda's function. For instance, it seems likely that efforts to recruit the Serbs to join fighting forces and/or disincentivise opposition would be enhanced if most Serbs believed that if they did not fight (or if they actively opposed the war) the annihilation of the Serbian people was plausible. And indeed, a limited number of interviews I conducted with the direct perpetrators of violence during the wars confirms this argument. The three persons I spoke to all claimed that the historical legacy of World War II played a significant role in their decision to join the army and fight in the war (interview 16; interview 17; interview 18).

Furthermore, for those based at the front invoking memories of World War II was likely to further brutalise the perpetrators. The images of tortured civilians coupled with an elimination of any distinction between Croatian forces of 1991 and Ustaše soldiers potentially invoked feelings of anger and vengeance amongst some Serb fighters, making them more prone to engage in violence they would otherwise consider immoral and unacceptable. One of my interviewees confirmed suggested that memories of World War II made some members of their unit more brutal towards civilians (interview 16). Whilst findings from a single interview should not be overstated, it may serve as an indication that invoking the image of World War II made at least some perpetrators more brutal. Finally, such imagery and portrayal of Croats presumably also impacted the wider Serbian audiences – similarly making them more prone to accept that violence committed against the Croats was legitimate and justified. Such perception of the violence, in turn, presumably further disincentivised opposition from the general audiences.

[110] for further details see chapter three

Guilt

The discourse of guilt followed a similar trajectory. Initially, the Croats were mainly portrayed as responsible and guilty of the disarray and insecurity their declaration of independence was likely to cause – resembling the discourse of guilt targeting the Slovenians in the initial days of the 10-Day War. As war escalated, RTS blamed the Croats for the suffering of the Serbs in Croatia – which was no longer solely related to the chaos caused by declarations of independence. Instead, the Croats were also blamed for violence, looting, and killing of the innocent Serbian population. For instance, in a report from Banija region on August 23rd 1991, RTS featured distressed civilians who survived a Croatian attacks. RTS aired a statement of a woman who said that while she was running away from Croatian forces, she spotted an ambulance. As she rushed to the ambulance in hope to get help, the back doors opened and the Croats fired bullets in her direction (TV Dnevnik 2, 23/08/1991). On August 24th RTS aired an interview with a civilian who suggested that he was captured by Croatian forces and tortured. He claimed that all of his possessions were stolen, and that he was only able to save himself from the Croatian forces because he had connections in the Croatian Serb political leadership who negotiated his release (TV Dnevnik 2, 24/08/1991). These kinds of reports persisted throughout the escalation phase, with RTS continuously airing reports from civilians who claimed that the Croatian forces were torturing them and stealing from them. As propaganda further escalated, so did the intensity and frequency of such reports. Occasionally though, RTS also expanded the discourse of guilt so as to also include the international community.[111]

The discourse of guilt clearly evolved and escalated in accordance with the developments on the front. As discussed above, in the initial days of the conflict, it made sense to blame the Croats for the disarray caused by their declaration of independence. Similarly, as Slovenia's independence became imminent, it made sense to increasingly focus on the Croatians' guilt for the disadvantaged position of the Croatian Serbs, and particularly for Croatia's refusal to acknowledge Croatian Serbs' right to self-determination and all the consequences thereof. However, by the second half of 1991 the break-up of the Federation appeared inevitable, and the war was raging. The international community also appeared ready to accept Croatia's unliteral secession. Subsequently, Milošević responded by shifting his strategy from keeping the Federation together to capturing parts of Croatian territory that were predominantly inhabited by Serbs. Portraying Croatians as guilty for the break-up of the Federation may have remained persuasive, but it was less relevant and less able to motivate action than blaming them directly for the actual suffering of

[111] As the war escalated, RTS increasingly became critical of the international community, often accusing it of being biased in favour of all other ethnicities. However, due to the scope of this thesis, I will not analyse RTS portrayal of the international community in great depth.

Serbs in Croatia. Blaming the Croats for the violence committed against the Serbs, and subsequently use the discourse of guilt, enhanced Milošević's strategy while also furthering many other functions propaganda was serving at the time.[112]

Victimisation

Conversely, RTS also developed discourses pertaining to the Serbian side (partly to increase the validity and persuasiveness of the discourses targeting the Croats), and those discourses followed a similar trajectory of escalation. The *victimisation* of the Serbian people was used to primarily legitimate violence and recruit the Serbs to fight. That discourse significantly changed between June and December of 1991. In June 1991, RTS primarily focused on Serbia's desire to keep Yugoslavia united and portrayed the Serbs as the key victims of the break-up of the Federation. Furthermore, those who victimised the Serbs also evolved during the wars. As Cvetićanin (1997: 68) tells us: "the stories about the Serbian people as victims, after Kosovo, slowly moved to the west of the state. […] [Thus the Serbs became] victims of the Croatian and Bosnian criminal hand." For instance, on June 25th RTS aired a statement by Nikola Koljević (a Bosnian Serb politician, who served as a member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and later on as a Vice-President of Republika Srpska). In the statement given to the journalist, Koljević suggested:

> That Croatia's and Slovenia's decision to secede was just a trick. Initially, the two countries would secede, however, they would immediately unite into a confederation. This virus could then spread to Bosnia and Herzegovina which would put the Serbs [across the former Yugoslavia] in a difficult position. They [Slovenia and Croatia] would then try to portray themselves as supporters of Yugoslavia's unity and the Serbs as standing in opposition to it (TV Dnevnik 2, 25/06/1991).113

These kinds of statements – in which Slovenia and Croatia were accused of breaking up the Federation at the cost of the wellbeing of the Serbian people – were continuously aired on RTS. Furthermore, in such reports RTS portrayed the Serbs as protectors of Yugoslavia's territorial integrity, sovereignty and constitutional order. Overall, RTS aimed to persuade its viewership that the Serbs were the primary victims of Yugoslavia's dissolution.

As the prospects of Croatia's independence became ever more imminent, particularly since it was likely to be accepted by the international community, the Serbian victimhood discourse changed. RTS replaced statements focused on the damages that the break-up of the Federation would cause to the Serbian people with statements demanding the right to self-determination to

[112] For further details on the relationship between the discourse of guilt and functions of propaganda see: Chapter II.
[113] The statement was not aired directly on RTS but instead was paraphrased by the RTS presenter.

be equally applied to all the peoples of the former Yugoslavia. These reports consisted primarily of statements made by politicians arguing that it would be unfair to prevent Croatians Serbs from holding a referendum and deciding as to whether they wish to live in Croatia (should Croatia secede from Yugoslavia).

For instance, following the signing of the Brioni Declaration on July 8th 1991 RTS aired a report from the press conference organised by Borisav Jović. This statement shows a clear change in the discourse of victimisation. When asked to explain what Serbia intends to do in order to protect the Serbian citizens in Croatia, Jović clarified that the Croatian Serbs were not a minority in Croatia but instead a community which had the right, just like Croatia, to declare with whom and where they wish to live. The journalists then asked him whether Serbia intends to use all available means, including the war, to protect the right of Croatian Serbs to self-determination. To that Jović replied:

> At this point we intend to use peaceful measures, that is, we wish to have political conversations and negotiations about the future of Yugoslavia. Those negotiations must include securing the right of communities to declare on which side of the border they wish to live in case that Croatia secedes from Yugoslavia. We remain hopeful that both the EU and the relevant Yugoslav parties will respect the right of the Serbian people [to self-determination] in the same way in which they recognised that right to the Croatian people. Nevertheless, if that right was not respected, then those people [Croatian Serbs] would probably seek other ways to realise that right, and Serbia would be obliged to assist them in the process (TV Dnevnik 2, 08/07/1991).

Similarly, on October 16th 1991 RTS aired a report which focused on the meeting between members of Yugoslavia's Federal Presidency and Cyrus Vance. In the report, RTS highlighted the following statement made a member of the Federal Presidency, Jugoslav Kostić:

> The main cause of the crisis and interethnic skirmishes [are] unilateral and unconstitutional decisions made by Slovenia and Croatia who both attempted to use force to leave the Federation, and also did not aim to secede along the state borders, but instead administrative borders. The attempt [of Croatia] to include Serbian territories into their Republic [despite the] desire of the Serbs to continue to live in Yugoslavia, created a unique problem. Serbs in Croatia absolutely cannot accept to live in an independent state of Croatia, because in a rather similar fascist creation, [the Serbs] already experienced genocide during World War II, and they are [going through a similar experience] now (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/10/1991).[114]

As shown, focusing on keeping the Federation together or discussing the damages that the break-up of Yugoslavia would cause to the Serbian people was increasingly overshadowed by arguments

[114] The statement itself was paraphrased by RTS journalist rather than aired directly.

pertaining to the right of the Serbian people for self-determination, and the dangers the Serbs would be faced with if they were forced to live in independent Croatia. Thus, RTS portrayed the Serbs as victims of the inconsistent application of the right to self-determination. During the following weeks, similar statements and arguments made by various politicians dominated RTS broadcasts.

In the end, as violence escalated, RTS also portrayed the Serbs as victims of monstrous, Ustaša-like violence conducted by the Croatian forces. Thus, RTS argued that Serbs were, yet again, illegally and brutally executed by the Croats. For instance, on August 24th 1991 RTS aired an interview with Košutić who discussed the violence taking place in Croatia. He suggested that he visited Banija and was shocked to find out that a lot of the Serbian victims were not combatants but instead civilians, including women and the elderly. He suggested that most of those who were killed were the Serbs who did not believe that they had to mobilise and fight in order to avoid the fate experienced in 1941 (TV Dnevnik 2, 24/08/1991). Similar statements were often aired, during which the brutality of the Croatian fighting forces was highlighted and often linked to the violence from World War II.

It seems plausible to argue that victimisation of Serbs not only further supported the discourse of threat and guilt (since the Serbs were portrayed as victims of the decisions made by the Croatian political leadership), but also enhanced the key functions of propaganda. Persuading most people that the Serbs were, yet again, victims of brutal and indiscriminate violence presumably persuaded them that violence committed by Serbian troops was legitimate – as it was committed in necessary acts of self-defence. In addition, it seems also reasonable to assume that such perception of violence, in turn, further disincentivised Serbs from opposing the war and/or deserting the troops. It also plausibly motivated some to join the fighting forces. At the extreme, the discourse of victimisation – which often vividly portrayed the suffering of the innocent Serb civilians – potentially also brutalised some perpetrators.

Valorisation

The discourse of *valorisation* saw a similar evolution. As violence escalated, RTS valorised it. In their reports, they initially attempted to depict such violence as legitimate, but overtime such violence became portrayed as brave and desirable. On top of airing statements of soldiers, politicians and civilians all of whom praised the Army (and by implication the violence the JNA engaged in), RTS also always used repeated tropes when referring to the JNA and the Serbian fighting forces – such as heroic or brave.

For example, on October 1st RTS aired a report which contained a press release that the JNA sent to the Croats. The press release stated:

> Croatia continues to ignore all ceasefire deals. Ceasefires are, in fact, being used to conduct further attacks and concentrate forces. Instead of ending, [the Croats] are only enhancing their blockade of the barracks, [the Croats] are now limiting the Army's access to food and water, which needs to be provided to everyone, including prisoners of the war, according to many international conventions. This is a type of genocide, and indeed many nefarious crimes have been committed against the members of the JNA, everyone knows that [The Croats] are harassing and destroying families of the JNA soldiers. The Headquarters of the Supreme Command now wishes to warn [the Croats] that for every attacked or conquered institution of the JNA, [the JNA] will retaliate and destroy a Croatian institution of vital importance. For every destroyed garrison, [the Army] will destroy a vital institution in the city in which the garrison was attacked, but it will timely inform the civilian population to evade the city. If the Croats take over more barracks, we will retaliate. If you [the Croats] wish to avoid a bloodshed, the members of the local governments should immediately contact the JNA in order to secure that our troops can safely leave and that their families can be protected (TV Dnevnik 2, 01/10/1991).

This report illustrates the way in which RTS initially valorised and legitimated the violence committed by the JNA. Namely, they portrayed the Croats as those who were primarily responsible for all the violence and as the side who continuously violated ceasefire deals. Furthermore, they portrayed the Croats as illegitimately attacking not only the solders, but also their families. Thus, all the violence committed by the JNA was legitimate because it was committed in self-defence, but also as indicated in the report the JNA never intentionally targeted the civilian population. To the contrary, according to the quoted RTS report the Army always had the intention of informing the civilians prior to conducting any attacks in order to avoid such casualties – which could not be said of the Croatian fighting forces.

As violence escalated, it was no longer sufficient to suggest that the violence committed by the Army was legitimate because it was committed in self-defence. Thus, RTS added further layers to the discourse of valorisation – by suggesting that the aims for which the Army was fighting were heroic and brave. To illustrate, on October 16th RTS aired a report from Zadar in which journalist Marko Sladaković said:

> This is the only telephone line from which we are able to contact you and inform you of the things happening in this town, and there are too many [things]. The airport here only serves to accept refugees who are trying to escape from twilight zone to freedom […] it is difficult to explain what they [civilians and refugees] are going through, and they lost everything, but they claim that they will not allow for the Ustaše boot to walk all over them again […] in all the fights [that took place in

> Zadar] the soldiers acted as true heroes, even though they were forced to live without electricity or water (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/10/1991).

On the same day, RTS aired yet another report in which they interviewed (usually female) civilians who reported on the struggles of Serbs in the small village of Palača. To their statements, a RTS reporter further added:

> While this is one of the smallest villages, consisting of only about 130 houses, this place is experiencing some of the fiercest fighting. Here, the brave fighters of TO, alongside the JNA, resisted and will continue to resist any attacks [conducted by the Croats] because the freedom of [this] and eleven more villages depends upon [them successfully resisting attacks]. More importantly, connecting with Serbia also depends upon them successfully winning these battles (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/10/1991).

Finally, RTS also valorised the violence committed by the JNA in their reports from towns which the Serbian forces successfully captured. For instance, on November 19th RTS aired reports from Vukovar and the surrounding villages following the JNA's victory. Despite the fact that the footage aired clearly showed completely destroyed towns and villages, in such reports RTS would always include statements and tropes such as "Borovo is free from today" or "Vukovar is now a free town", thereby portraying the violence committed by the JNA as well as their victories as heroic, brave, liberating, and desirable (TV Dnevnik 2, 19/11/1991).

Hence, even though in ordinary circumstances people would usually perceive violence as immoral and unjustified RTS ensured that violence against the Croats was portrayed as brave and heroic, thereby increasing the chances of the Serbian audiences accepting such violence as justified. Following the same logic, such valorisation presumably encouraged some to join the troops (as they anticipated social rewards for doing so), and disincentivised others to desert and/or actively oppose the war (as they perceived it as admirable and/or feared the punishments). Finally, and at the extreme, it is possible that due to the valorisation of violence some perpetrators became increasingly brutal – as such brutal violence was also occasionally valorised.

Humanisation

Similarly, in their attempt to both legitimate violence, but also to recruit the fighters and disincentivise opposition (and perhaps brutalise perpetrators), RTS continuously *humanised* the Serbian victims in Croatia. Almost every broadcast would contain brief interviews with multiple Serb civilians in distress, discussing their struggles and violence they were faced with in Croatia. By contrast, no such report featuring a Croatian civilian was aired. Thus, from RTS's perspective this was a war waged between blood thirsty, monstrous Ustaše killers and devastated and scared

Serb civilians. In such reports, RTS almost always provided further details about deceased individuals in order to further humanise the Serbian victims. For example, on August 23rd RTS aired a report about massacres that took place in different Serbian villages. On top of extensive interviews conducted with civilians in which RTS aimed to find out the names of those who were killed, the reporter also inquired about the specific details of their killings and methods of execution (TV Dnevnik 2, 23/08/1991). However, no such reports pertaining to the Croatian victims was aired.

A similar report was aired on October 1st from the village Čovac. RTS interviewed civilians, one of whom suggested "nothing was left behind, they killed all the people, including an 80-years old man. His name was Joco Stanić" (TV Dnevnik 2, 01/10/1991). Another civilian said, "we tried and managed to save some women and children, but around 17 people were killed, half of the village was set on fire and destroyed" (TV Dnevnik 2, 01/10/1991). After these statements, RTS interviewed multiple other survivors asking them to provide further details about the killed civilians.

On the same day, RTS interviewed another civilian from the village Rajići. In the report, RTS claimed that the Croatian forces divided the village in two parts, and that barricades were placed to separate the two areas. As part of the report, they interviewed a 78-years old civilian named Rade Kukurika. RTS did not miss an opportunity to refer to World War II and make a direct comparison between the Croatian forces during the 1940s and 1990s, and between the Serbian suffering during the 1940s and 1990s. Here is a short excerpt from the interview:

> **RTS**: Who did you lose in the previous war?
> **Rade Kukurika** [clearly in distress and crying]: My wife, my son who was three years old, and my daughter who was seven years old, and my mother.
> **RTS**: But you do have more children now, you have a son right and he is fighting in this war?
> **Rade**: Yes, I have a son and he is in the military. I have no idea what is happening to him now. I have the experience of the previous war [begins crying more intensely]. My house was robed, but at least I think my son is doing ok. That is the most important thing.
> (TV Dnevnik 2, 01/10/1991)

Through such reports, RTS highlighted the human side of the Serbian stories and victims – thereby helping its viewership identify with the pain and the suffering these individuals were going through. I argue that such humanisation of the Serbs served as a tool to increase the feelings of empathy

towards the Croatian Serbs, whilst simultaneously decreasing such feelings towards the Croats which in turn furthered the functions propaganda served at the time.[115]

Techniques

In order to make their discourses more persuasive, RTS relied on multiple different techniques throughout 1991.[116] First, they used *agenda-setting* – i.e. as different discourses became more or less important, and as functions of propaganda evolved, RTS correspondingly varied the airtime devoted to specific issues. Thus, in the early stages of the war news about Croatian independence and the threats it posed dominated the broadcasts. However, as other functions of propaganda became more relevant, the key issues that dominated the broadcasts changed – i.e. the amount of airtime given to reports about monstrous violence committed by the Croatian forces substantially increased.

Second, RTS extensively *manipulated* its viewership to confirm their discourses – both by using historical narratives and examples, but also through the use of various actors to confirm the validity of their stories and discourses. As for the usage of multiple actors, throughout the escalation phase RTS aired statements from domestic politicians, military personnel, ordinary civilians (sometimes even from different ethnic backgrounds), all of whom confirmed that unilateral declarations represented a *threat* to Yugoslav and European peace and stability, and that the Croats were *guilty* of the rising tensions in the Federation, and by implication all other consequences arising from it. And as the discourse of threat and guilt escalated, so did the statements made by the various actors whose purpose was to increase the validity and persuasiveness of the aforementioned discourses. As illustrated throughout the examples above, RTS often interviewed civilians in order to further the image of Croats as brutal executioners and the Serbs as innocent victims of indiscriminate violence. Similarly, as illustrated in the example dating from November 29th 1991, RTS also often used soldiers and (alleged) experts who further confirmed the brutality of Croatian fighting forces.

Plausibly using this technique made the discourses promoted more acceptable, if for no other reason than due to the sheer size and diversity of those who confirmed those discourses. For instance, if one was reluctant to trust politicians who portrayed Croats as threatening or guilty, there would be plenty of other sources available to confirm such a discourse, and it is possible that individuals were more likely to trust a discourse if it was promoted by a civilian or soldier. Thus,

[115] For further details on how humanisation furthers functions of propaganda see Chapter 2.
[116] For further details on how specific techniques increase the persuasiveness of specific discourses see Chapter 2.

it is possible that the usage of this technique made the discourses promoted more persuasive than they otherwise would have been.

RTS also actively manipulated history in order to make their discourses of threat and guilt more persuasive. Throughout the escalation phase, RTS aired statements and reports that equated the Croatian forces of 1991 with the Ustaše. However, given the lack of clarity as to whether the Federation would break-up, and whether Croatia's independence declaration would be accepted by the international community, the intensity and frequency of such reports was limited in the early stages of the conflict. Nevertheless, as violence and war escalated, so did RTS's usage of history and World War II in particular. For instance, on September 30th, RTS presenter stated:

> A couple of nights ago, as we found out that the Croatian forces moved into the memorial park Jasenovac, we began wondering how the world would respond if the same thing was to happen in Auschwitz or Dachau. And indeed, the same forces which committed genocide against the Serbian people [during World War II] are doing the same thing today (TV Dnevnik 2, 30/09/1991).

On the same day, when they aired a report from war-torn Borovo selo, RTS added: "[modern-day] Ustaše remains exactly the same as the one from 1941. […] and, in accordance with the Ustaše customs, the bodies of [Serbian] civilians can be found in the water or washed on the bay" (TV Dnevnik 2, 30/09/1991). As illustrated above, similar reports were aired throughout 1991, with the intention of drawing the audiences to the conclusion that the Serbs were under the same kind of a threat as they were during World War II.

With the escalation of violence, RTS also further broadened the techniques used. Thus, from mid-July onwards, they also increasingly relied on *denial* – i.e. they continuously denied any claims of (illegitimate) violence committed by the Serbs. Whenever the Croatian leadership or the international community would accuse the Serbian side of any unjust acts of violence, RTS would air long and extensive responses in their attempt to refute such claims. For example, on August 29th RTS aired a following report in their attempt to refute statements made by the Croatian media:

> The Command of the Fifth Military District denied the news aired by the Croatian radio according to which 'the occupying army [the JNA] alongside Serbian terrorists attacked a police station in Plitvice.' The way in which the Croatian radio reported about these events, thereby accusing the Army of participating in the attacks, [the Command of the Fifth Military District] identifies as a provocation and an attempt to spread lies about the members of the JNA forces (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/08/1991).

On that same day, RTS also denied yet another report that was aired on Croatian television. Namely, Croatian television stated that a member of the Tuzla corpus was killed in a fight between the soldiers and their seniors. The JNA however denied these statements and suggested that the

soldier in question died accidentally due to mishandling of the weapons (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/08/1991). Hence, whenever any statement was aired in which the Croatian forces either attempted to accuse the JNA of conducting illegitimate attacks or suggest that there were tensions within the JNA, RTS would air extensive reports denying such claims, and it did so throughout the escalation phase.

Finally, RTS occasionally directly *invented* events (or substantially altered the facts of an event) – the most (in)famous instance of which was a story about the execution of around 40 Serbian babies in Borovo naselje near Vukovar. On November 19th the JNA successfully captured Vukovar, after which RTS aired a report claiming that they have received information that the Croatian forces executed around 40 Serbian babies as they withdrew from the city (TV Dnevnik 2, 19/11/1991).

On November 20th, more details regarding the massacre emerged and RTS aired them. In the report Komrakov (the editor and presenter of Dnevnik) attempted to further increase the legitimacy of the news by suggesting that the massacre was the key topic across the globe. Komrakov reported:

> The news about the massacre of 41 babies executed in a primary school in Borovo naselje is now at the centre of both domestic and foreign media. The independent British television ITV aired a report from the press photographer Goran Mikić according to whom the Croatian forces, as they withdrew from Vukovar towards Borovo, massacred multiple Serbian families in their entirety, and that the entire village of Borovo naselje is full of corpses of people killed by knives or axes. ITV also aired statements of JNA soldiers who suggested that 41 Serbian babies have been killed. This news is labelled on ITV as urgent, and this is the first time that they are reporting about the massacres conducted by the Croatian forces. Reuters also accuses the Croatian soldiers of killing 41 Serbian babies when withdrawing from the JNA (TV Dnevnik 2, 20/11/1991).

On November 21st, RTS reported that a group of domestic and foreign journalists alongside a group of experts was looking for the remains of the massacred children, and that multiple schools, kindergartens, and basements were searched. In this report RTS acknowledged that no bodies were found but stated that they will continue their search (TV Dnevnik 2, 21/11/1991).

On November 22nd, RTS continued to report about the alleged massacre and suggested that experts had arrived in Vukovar, and their investigation would provide further details about the executions. RTS journalist, Nino Brajović reported directly from Vukovar:

> Here we are in Vukovar, which is a very dark city and will continue to be dark for a long time. There is no electricity and no water, but it is peaceful today. The teams

> of experts are collecting the bodies and trying to establish the identities of those who were killed. They are doing so today and will continue to do this for a long time, but at the very least some streets have been cleared. […] [for the second half of the report, RTS was airing footage from the town and Brajović was narrating it] here you can see that the town has been completely destroyed, nothing looks normal. Here you can see the kindergarten next to which it is assumed that the bodies of massacred children are buried. […] There are many more corpses around as you can see. Our correspondents claim that these are corpses of Serbian people (TV Dnevnik 2, 22/11/1991)

On the same day, to further the plausibility of the claim RTS aired a report from an Italian journalist, Milena Gabanelli, who claimed that all the reports about the massacre of Serbian children in Vukovar were correct, and that she personally saw some of the dramatic sights in the town. She claimed that she was in Vukovar when the JNA entered town and that she saw the kindergarten and some of the corpses, the youngest of which was not older than four years. When explicitly asked whether the Serbs correctly attributed blame to the Croats for the massacre, Gabanelli answered 'yes' (TV Dnevnik 2, 22/11/1991).

Goran Mikić (a photographer working for Associated Press) claimed that he had evidence that 41 Serbian babies were killed by the Croatian forces – which ultimately led other, foreign, journalists, to extensively cover the story, thereby increasing its publicity, which only served as a further justification for RTS to continuously air reports about it. Ultimately, it turned out that Mikić never had any evidence to further support his claims. As the days passed with no clear evidence emerging to confirm the story RTS slowly stopped reporting about the massacre. On one hand, it was difficult to maintain the plausibility of the story without a single image or any other piece of evidence that could confirm it. On the other hand, the international community as well as foreign press soon realised that the story was fabricated – and indeed, foreign media outlets published retractions.

Left without evidence to build the story further, RTS was forced to stop discussing the story of "Vukovar babies" from November 23rd onwards. I have tried, but failed, to identify a clear retraction of the story in any of the RTS broadcasts I watched. I have been told by some journalists in RTS that a retraction was published, but in the third Dnevnik of the day, aired after midnight – which meant that the audience exposed to it was limited. However, I do not have access to the archive of the third Dnevnik and thus am unable to confirm whether this is correct.

While the story of the 41 executed Serbian babies is the most extreme example of news fabrication, it is not the only case. For example, on September 30th RTS aired a report from Borovo Selo in which they discussed the types of weapons used to execute Serbs. First, they suggested that ammunition calibre Winchester was used in Borovo Selo and claimed that such munition is almost

exclusively used in elephant hunting. Second, they claimed that "Ustaše" were poisoning the water pipes across the village, thereby making tap water poisonous (TV Dnevnik 2, 30/09/1991). However, no supporting evidence for these claims was provided from RTS – apart from the images of bottles which allegedly contained the poison. More importantly, I have not found a single piece of evidence in the relevant scholarship that would support RTS's accusations.

And that fabrication of the news was a strategy that RTS often used is further confirmed by Pešić's statement. As Pešić notes, airing multiple, and quite convoluted reports whose accuracy was questionable from the get-go was part of RTS overall reporting strategy. In her words:

> One day they would simply air information, for example "today they are hitting Zvornik over Drina, they are destroying Zvornik". And that was the information for the day, but the day after no one would talk about it. [The point was] to raise tensions amongst the people, [but they could not discuss that specific report again] because if they did, they would have to show the images of the town, and evidence such as destroyed houses or something, but those did not exist. So, they [RTS reporters] would simply have to stop talking about it. […] The point was, they would fabricate the news and they would air it, and the people would remember the basic point – that Serbs were attacked by Croats or Bosniaks– and no one would bother checking the accuracy of such reports (interview 9, 2018).

Maintenance[117]

As 1991 was coming to an end the Serbs made the desired advances in Croatia. At that point it was in neither Milošević's nor Tudjman's interest to continue fighting. For Tudjman, the continuation of the war would almost certainly imply further territory loses. Milošević had achieved territorial advances needed, and the war in Croatia was increasingly damaging for him. Subsequently, the international community correctly foresaw that both sides were interested in a ceasefire and brokered a peace agreement signed in Sarajevo in January 1992.[118] In order to effectively implement a peace deal and ceasefire, it became necessary for propaganda to change. Consequently, the final weeks of 1991 and early months of 1992 saw slight de-escalation[119] of anti-

[117] To avoid repetition, this section involves fewer examples from the broadcasts – I have used examples which I think clearly highlight the presence of specific discourses, as well as the fact that they were maintained (rather than evolving as time passed). Additionally, due to a lack of changes in either the discourses or techniques, as well as the fact that during this period most of the broadcasts focused on the war in Bosnia, this section is not as dense as the section that analyses escalation and de-escalation.

[118] for further details see chapter three

[119] Illustrated by the fact that the reports pertaining to the news from Croatia substantially decreased, but also that RTS decreased its usage of the term Ustaše in comparison to 1991. To illustrate, in a report aired on February 29th 1992, when discussing the attacks taking place in Dalmatia, RTS refrained from using the term Ustaše, and instead used the term Zengovci (a slang term for those who fought on behalf of *Zbora Narodne Garde* – Croatian National Guard). Nevertheless, this should not mean that the term was not used at all throughout the maintenance phase, as I will show in the following paragraphs.

Croat propaganda. Unlike the previous 14 ceasefire deals, the one signed in Sarajevo actually held for a prolonged period.

Despite the ceasefire deal, the slight de-escalation of propaganda in the immediate aftermath of the Sarajevo agreement was dominated by the continued need to *maintain* a negative portrayal of Croatians from early 1992 up until 1995. First, this was necessary in order to continue to maintain the Serbian belief in their right to the conquered Croatian territories. Second, although recruitment of soldiers for Croatia was no longer necessary (especially since UNPROFOR was protecting the territorial advances of the Serbian side in Croatia), it was important that the Serbs continue to fight the war in Bosnia – in which Croatia was also involved, often as an ally of Bosnian Muslims. Furthermore, in order to disincentivise desertion from Serbian troops and oppositional movements across the country, RTS also needed to maintain the negative images that existed about the Croatian side. Additionally, Milošević was aware that Republika Srpska Krajina's (RSK) position was only temporarily resolved and that the question of its status would eventually be re-opened as UNPROFOR could not protect those territories indefinitely. Thus, it was important that the Serbs maintain negative imagery about Croatia, in case that additional recruitment or fighting in Croatia became necessary.

During this period of maintenance, propaganda largely served three key functions: *identity building* (i.e. it was important to maintain the established distinction between *us* and *them*), disincentivising *opposition* (both within the troops and among the general population), and *legitimation of violence*. In order to properly maintain the level of propaganda, RTS maintained several discourses: the Serbs remained *victims* of brutal violence whose right to self-determination was illegitimately denied; the Croats continued to represent a *threat* to the Serbian people and were primarily *guilty* for the suffering of the Serbs (located both in Croatia and in Bosnia); violence committed by the Serbs was *valorised*; and finally, the Serbian victims were continuously *humanised*. A crucial distinction between escalation and de-escalation on the one hand, and maintenance on the other, is that the discourses did not evolve or change in the latter and they did in the former. Thus, unlike in the escalation or de-escalation phase, the discourses during the maintenance phase did not change. Instead, people were reminded of the pre-existing discourses, and their content remained largely the same.

Since both sides respected the ceasefire (with minor and localised violations) signed in Sarajevo in January of 1992, some of the key discourses targeting the Croats focused on their actions against the Serbs in Bosnia. With the exception of 1993, during which the Croatian forces also entered a war against the Bosnian Muslims, the Croatian forces largely fought alongside Bosnian Muslims against the Bosnian Serbs. And even during the war between Bosnian Croats

and Bosnian Muslims, the Croatians never aligned with the Serbs. Such behaviour of the Croatian forces made it relatively easy for RTS to continue to maintain the discourses of threat and guilt. To illustrate, on September 29th 1992 RTS aired a report in which they read the letter written by the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia Milan Panić addressed to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The letter was prompted by the recent agreement between Tudjman and Izetbegović which was signed in New York. RTS aired parts of Panić's letter:

> It was under the roof of the United Nations, the largest world organisation for peace and cooperation, where Tudjman and Izetbegović signed a military agreement on September 23rd. Due to the consequences of this agreement, I would like to comment on a couple of things. The accusations listed at the start of the agreement and regarding Yugoslavia are false and unjustified. Neither Yugoslavia nor its Army can be accused of aggression, and even the United Nations confirmed that no Yugoslav soldier is based in Bosnia. [RTS from here continued to paraphrase the statement] In the letter, Panić also listed the well-known measures of the Yugoslav government adopted to calm the situation down, as well as the fact that over 40000 Croatian soldiers are located in Bosnia, which means that the agreement signed in New York is attempting to legalise Croatia's military presence in Bosnia. […] Such behaviour and agreements can seriously jeopardise any peaceful efforts (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/09/1992).

Thus, RTS ensured that any agreement between the Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims was perceived as extremely threatening to the peace efforts invested by Yugoslavia (and other relevant actors). RTS aimed to ensure that should any violence erupt or escalate further (in locations where violence was already taking place), it would be the Croats (and Bosnian Muslims) who must be blamed and held responsible.

On top of portraying the alliance of Bosnian Muslims and Croats as threatening, RTS also continued to air stories that maintained the image of Croats as a threat in the territories conquered by the Serbs in 1991. RTS would usually do so by airing reports which discussed the planned attacks by Croatian forces, which the Army successfully prevented. For instance, on March 29th 1992 RTS aired the following report:

> Towards the end of February [1992], in the wood Kordoš close to the town of Ilok, the citizens discovered four dugouts in which they found fresh food, water and munition, as well as Kalashnikov guns. All of this led them to conclude that these [things were left for] a group of Ustaše terrorists who infiltrated the liberated territories of Western Srem with the aim of blowing up the bridge on May 25th that connects Ilok and Bačka Palanka. As soon as this plan was discovered, the people were alarmed and thankfully they [Ustaše terorrists] were captured by the JNA soldiers (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/03/1992).

Due to international community's recognition of Bosnia as an independent state, it was relatively easy for RTS to continue to promote the discourse of victimisation. By suggesting that all other peoples of the former Yugoslavia had their right to self-determination recognised, RTS argued that the same principle and standard ought to be applied to the Serbs. Such arguments were particularly highlighted in the broadcasts aired on February 29th 1992 (when Bosnia held its referendum of independence) and in the first half of April – following the international community's recognition of Bosnia as an independent state (with the original borders it held during Tito's rule).

Given such discourses, it was also relatively easy for RTS to valorise violence committed by Serbian forces. Violence committed by the Croatian or Bosnian Serbs was continuously portrayed as either heroic – given that they were fighting for the lands that historically belonged to the Serbs – or as a form of legitimate self-defence, since any violence committed against the Serbs (whether it was in Bosnia or Croatia) was portrayed as illegitimate. Thus, to valorise and thereby legitimate violence committed by the Serbian forces RTS would air reports similar to the one broadcasted on April 16th 1992. In that broadcast an RTS reporter said:

> Yet another Ustaše offensive began, this time targeting the Serbian municipality Bosanski Brod. Around 10am hell-like violence began in this village, and according to the information that we gathered from the village inhabited by the Catholics and held by the Croatian occupation forces, they [the Croats] began a fierce attack on the JNA and the Serbian population. […] It is now clear that the Croats have joined the war against the Serbs in Bosnia as well. […] Following the attack, the JNA was forced to respond to the Croatian occupation forces [in order to protect] the Serbs who are attacked by both domestic and imported Ustaše forces (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/04/1992).

Finally, reports humanising Serbian victims persisted throughout the maintenance phase as it was still important to maintain the levels of empathy felt towards the Serbian side, and conversely the lack thereof expressed towards the Croatian side. Thus, whenever airing reports from different destroyed villages, or attacked towns, RTS would ensure to always mention the suffering of the Serb civilian population. In addition, RTS would, when possible, list the names and further information regarding the deceased in a similar fashion as in 1991. However, since the number of reports pertaining to the violence committed by the Croats was significantly reduced, so was the opportunity to humanise the Serbian victims.

Similarly, to the previous phases RTS relied on multiple different techniques in order to maintain the necessary discourses. First, *agenda-setting* – in order to maintain pre-established discourses RTS would occasionally air reports about Croatian violence against the Serbs committed in either Bosnia or Croatia. However, to avoid any further escalation the frequency of

such reports was limited. Such limitation is illustrated both by the quantity of the news pertaining to Croatia, and also the length and location of reports. First, on average, a single broadcast would contain no more than one or perhaps two reports discussing Croatia. Second, such reports would usually last 5 to 10 minutes (rather than over half an hour as it was the case during 1991). Finally, those reports would usually be located in the second half of Dnevnik (as opposed to at the beginning like in 1991). Reports pertaining to the Bosnian War, elections, economy, sanctions, and reports coming from the international community dominated the early part of the news.

Second, RTS continued to *manipulate* its viewership by using historical events and various actors who would increase the validity of the discourses of threat, guilt, victimisation, valorisation, and humanisation. For example, to make the discourse of threat and guilt more persuasive (which at that time targeted both the Croats but also the international community), on September 29th 1992, RTS aired a statement made by a British woman who living in the village of Beli Manastir. In the report, she said that she was ashamed of the British media and their anti-Serb bias; that Serbian women in the village would rather kill themselves than be captured by the Ustaše forces; and that the international community and most notably Belgium were all engaging in and supporting anti-Serb policies (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/09/1992). Thus, even if an ordinary citizen did not place much confidence in testimonies or statements made by political or military figures, or even Serbian civilians, RTS ensured that foreign citizens confirmed the discourses they promoted. This is not an isolated example. Throughout the maintenance phase RTS used statements by international politicians, journalists, self-declared political commentators, ordinary civilians, and soldiers to demonstrate the threat that Croats posed to the wellbeing of the Serbs. RTS also used this technique to promote discourses targeting the Serbs. Nevertheless, in order to avoid further escalation of propaganda, RTS reduced the frequency of such reports in comparison to the escalation phase.

Third, although less than in the escalation phase, RTS also *manipulated history*. The reduced reliance on this strategy is best illustrated by the fact that in comparison to 1991 RTS substantially decreased its usage of the term Ustaša when referring to the Croatian fighting forces. Instead, they would also use terms such as Zengovci (a slang term for the members of the Croatian National Guard), MUP-ovci (a slang term for the members who fought on behalf of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Croatia), or Tudjman's fighters. Yet RTS continued to manipulate history and refer to the events that took place during World War II. For instance, on February 29th 1992 RTS invited Klara Mandić to discuss the Serb-Jewish alliance. During the interview she drew comparisons between 1940s and 1990s, thereby implying that both the Jews and the Serbs were exposed to similar dangers as before (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/02/1992).

Finally, RTS extensively relied on *denial* whenever the Serbian side was accused of misconduct or illegitimate violence, RTS would deny such reports and would devote airtime to those who supported the Serbs. For example, when the Croatian government accused the Serbian side of holding prisoners of the war in camps RTS immediately aired a report refuting such claim. In the report aired on February 29th 1992 it was stated:

> The information service of the Bihać corps of the JNA denies the claims made by the Croatian government regarding the camps in which the prisoners of the war are held on the territories controlled by the corps. It is also stated in the press release [of the crops] that there are only two very small prisons, one in Glina and one in Korenica, and that there is a very limited number of prisoners kept there who are waiting to be exchanged. The information service [of the crops] thinks that the news about the thousands of prisoners held by the JNA is a consequence of the unpreparedness of the Croatian side to tell the truth about the number of Croats who died in the fighting (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/02/1992).

Thus, similarly to the escalation phase, RTS made an effort to negate negative imagery or reports pertaining to the behaviour of the Serbian fighting forces. This technique, in turn, enabled RTS to portray the violence committed by the Serbian side as a legitimate (and sometimes pre-emptive) self-defence.[120]

While the period between 1992 and 1995 could broadly be categorised as maintenance – due to the fact that discourses did not change or evolve during this period, it is important to note that there were localised shifts. These shifts were usually caused by specific events – especially in instances in which the Croatian forces (alone or alongside Bosnian Muslim forces) attacked Serb positions in either Croatia or Bosnia. Such localised episodes of escalation cannot be compared to the national shift that took place during 1991. This is because usually they would occur within a single report, a single broadcast, or at its highest, within a couple of consecutive broadcasts. Consequently, and partly for the reasons of scope such localised escalations are not analysed further in this thesis.

De-escalation

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of RTS propaganda during the Croatian War was that in 1995 RTS propaganda towards the Croats de-escalated, whilst simultaneously escalating against the

[120]While the period between 1992 and 1995 could broadly be categorised as maintenance – due to the fact that discourses did not change or evolve during this period, it is important to note that there were localised shifts. These shifts were usually caused by specific events – especially in instances in which the Croatian forces (alone or alongside Bosnian Muslim forces) attacked Serb positions in either Croatia or Bosnia. Such localised episodes of escalation cannot be compared to the national shift that took place during 1991. This is because usually they would occur within a single report, a single broadcast, or at its highest, within a couple of consecutive broadcasts. Consequently, and partly for the reasons of scope such localised escalations are not analysed further in this thesis.

Croatian Serb leadership and its supporters. By mid-1995, Yugoslavia's[121] economy was devastated due to sanctions imposed by the international community. Simultaneously, Yugoslavia was also politically isolated as most countries blamed Yugoslavia's political leadership, and Milošević in particular, for the outbreak and the disastrous consequences of the wars. Additionally, the international community became increasingly willing to military intervene in the conflict (for further details see chapter three). Finally, Croatian forces had become stronger in comparison to 1991, whereas the Serbian forces were weakened by the fighting in Bosnia. Consequently, it became increasingly clear that should violence resume in Croatia, the Serbs were unlikely to keep control over the conquered territories. Thus, politically, militarily, and economically it was in Milošević's interest to end the war as soon as possible.

However, there were several issues with ending the war. First, the Croatian Serb leadership was unwilling to give up the territories won in 1991. Second, should Croatia successfully recapture the lost territories the status and the position of the Croatian Serb civilians was unclear. Third, having spent almost four years telling the Serbian people that they had a historical and moral right to the lands in Croatia, it was difficult for Milošević to suddenly articulate a completely opposite point and tell the Serbian people that those lands ought to be given to Croatia.

Nevertheless, Milošević found himself in a situation in which he had to make such arguments to the Serbian population. From May 1995 onwards, the increasingly strong Croatian forces launched several military operations focused on regaining the territories lost to the Serbs in 1991 and expelling the Serb population from those area – most notably, Operation Flash in May and Operation Storm in August. It is estimated that in such operations over 200,000 Serbs were forced to flee their homes, and Croatia successfully fulfilled all of its political and military aims. By the end of 1995, with the exception of Eastern Slavonija, Baranja, and Western Srem, Croatia controlled most of the territories.

To avoid a further escalation of the conflict as Croats made such advances against the Serb positions, RTS's role was crucial. Thus, throughout the second half of 1995 on top of escalating propaganda against the Croatian Serb leadership and its supporters, RTS de-escalated propaganda targeting the Croats. During this period propaganda's primary function was to *pacify* – i.e. to portray ending the war as more desirable than maintaining control over certain territories in Croatia. Milošević needed the Serbian people to actively support his peace efforts and approve of any deal that the international community proposed. This serves as an explanation as to why the news about violence committed by Croatian forces were short and relatively mild.

[121] At that point only comprising of Serbia and Montenegro (for further details see chapter three)

To illustrate, on August 3rd 1995 when discussing various meetings between politicians that took place as part of the establishment's efforts to prevent further escalation of violence in Croatia RTS aired a report stating that "the entire world and the UN are concerned about the mobilisation of the Croatian troops along the borders of RSK. They [the UN] also highlighted the letter which Milošević sent to Mladić and Izetbegović in which he invited them to end the enmity and conclude a peace deal" (TV Dnevnik 2, 03/08/1995). After this report, RTS aired several releases from the Russian media – all of which praised Milošević's letter to Mladić and Izetbegović, and insisted that Milošević receives full support in his peace efforts.

As Operation Storm escalated and as Croats made further gains on RSK territory, RTS aired a report on August 4th 1995 that noted "Milošević [in his meeting with foreign politicians] highlighted the aggressive behaviour of Croatia, especially due to the new violent operations taking place in Croatia which could further escalate tensions and create a new war" (TV Dnevnik 2, 04/08/1996). After the statement, RTS aired reports from various capital cities of the world alongside statements from foreign politicians all of whom criticised Croatia's decision to engage in violence in RSK. On August 5th, as the Croatian forces successfully captured Knin, RTS reported: that "Serbian military sources are informing us that Knin has been abandoned […] and the foreign press are informing us that the Croatian forces entered Knin, which has also been confirmed by the UN" (TV Dnevnik 2, 05/08/1995). After the segment, RTS aired multiple reports discussing the position of the civilian population that evacuated Knin, as well as statements by multiple politicians all of whom criticised the behaviour of the Croatian military and political leadership.

Whilst clearly critical of the Croatian political and military leadership, one should not fail to note the difference in tone between reports from 1995 (in which the Serbs suffered the worst territorial and human loses) and those from 1991. First, the tropes and phrases used to describe the Croats were no longer as derogatory as they were in 1991 – for instance, RTS did not use the term Ustaše at all, nor did it attempt to draw any parallels between the Croatian forces operating in 1990s with those who operated in 1940s. Instead, they would usually refer to them as "Croatian fighting forces."

Second, there were very few criticisms coming directly from the Serbian civilian population, military or political leadership. As illustrated above, during 1991 almost every report contained several statements by Serbs (whether combatants, civilians or politicians) all of whom described the events taking place and the suffering they were going through. By contrast, during 1995, usually such criticism would come from representatives of the international community. Third, the visuals of the broadcast changed – there were very few instances in which RTS directly

aired the footage from the war front or showed civilians in distress as they did in 1991. Instead, they primarily aired photos of politicians whose statements they would quote, or maps of areas which the Croatian forces conquered. Finally, the amount of airtime devoted to the events taking place in Croatia are indicative of the fact that propaganda was de-escalating. Most notably, during Operation Storm, RTS did not devote more than 10 minutes (and usually far less than that) to the reports from Croatia.

The second important function propaganda served was *identity building* – namely, in the effort to de-escalate propaganda, RTS also changed the criteria according to which it delineated between the ingroup and the outgroup. During the escalation and maintenance phase, RTS distinguished between the two groups along the ethnic lines – the Serbs belonged to the ingroup, and the Croats (or any other non-Serbs for that matter) were categorised as the outgroup. However, as propaganda began de-escalating the outgroup consisted of anyone who opposed Milošević's peace efforts, whereas the ingroup contained all of those who actively supported Milošević's aim to end the war. Most notably, RTS even included the RSK leadership and its supporters in the outgroup. Specifically, RTS accused the RSK leadership of devastating Milošević's peace efforts, thereby contributing to further violence. RTS took a turn and suggested that the biggest obstacle to peace were the Croatian Serb leadership and its supporters. On top of such claims, RTS suggested that the Croatian Serb leadership was also responsible for the terror and the territory losses that the Croatian Serbs experienced.

Such reconstructions of the ingroup and outgroup are not surprising when one considers Milošević's aims at the time. As explicated above in 1995 Milošević's primary aim was to end the war as soon as possible and create a viable peace deal to be instituted across the former Yugoslavia. The issue was that almost any peace solution offered by the international community required the Serbs to make territorial concessions which neither the Croatian Serbs nor the Bosnian Serbs were willing to accept (for the issues revolving around the latter see the following chapter). These disagreements created frictions and tensions between Milošević and the Croatian Serb leadership, who felt betrayed and abandoned by Serbia. Thus, RTS and Milošević decided to place the blame for the escalation of violence on the RSK.

RTS first developed the discourse of *guilt* – through which they portrayed the Croatian Serb leadership as guilty for both Yugoslavia's devastated economy and the suffering that Croatian Serb civilians were going through. Second, RTS developed a discourse of *threat*. Namely, the RSK leadership and all of its supporters were portrayed as a threat to Milošević's peace efforts and the stability and prosperity of the region more generally. Third, RTS completely shifted the discourse of *victimisation*. The image of Serbs as victims of violence whose right to self-determination was

denied was replaced with a portrayal of the Serbs as victims of the pro-war policies led by the Croatian Serb political leadership. Even as the Serbian side was losing substantial amounts of its territory in Croatia and hundreds of thousands of Croatian Serbs were forced to flee their homes in Croatia, RTS primarily focused on the need for peace and stability in the region. Finally, RTS also *valorised* Milošević's peace efforts in order to further the image of Milošević as a peacemaker and encourage the Serbian population to support his peace efforts and criticise the RSK leadership.[122]

To illustrate, as people were forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in Serbia, on August 7th RTS aired many reports that explicitly blamed the Croatian Serb leadership for the situation in the country and the position in which the Croatian Serbs found themselves in. Perhaps most notably RTS conducted an interview with Zoran Vujović, a Minister, and a member of the Executive Board of the SPS. In the interview, Vujović explicitly blamed the RSK leadership for the violence and the suffering of the Serbian population in Croatia:

> What is important to say is that Serbia, and Milošević, and Yugoslavia as a whole have spent years investing into politics that would enable peace – which is the primary aim our government supports. […] What happened lately clearly shows that the leadership in Pale and Knin have abandoned the politics of peace […] all of which resulted in this terrible aggression and the killings of the Serbian people. The only way to save what still can be saved, both when it comes to the territories and the people, is to engage in peaceful negotiations (TV Dnevnik 07/08/1995).

A similar report was aired on August 8th. During a meeting of the SPS politicians in Novi Sad, extensively covered by RTS, Milomir Minić (a prominent SPS politician) stated:

> The suffering and the exodus of the Serbs from RSK is directly caused by RSK and RS leadership's refusal of the peace deals offered. We should have accepted the peace deal offered a year ago, that was the most optimal outcome for us. […] They [RSK and RS leadership] were aware of the consequences of their political decisions, which they made with zero consideration for the interests of the Serbian people, and they must be held responsible. They were told that refusing the peace deal would put RSK and the Serbs living there at risk. […] The pain and the suffering of our people are felt by everyone, but the fault is only theirs.

Throughout that Dnevnik further accusations targeting the RSK leadership were made. For instance, it was suggested that a week before civilians escaped Knin all the rich members of the establishment left town and advised their kids to do the same – thereby leaving the civilian population at the hands of Croats (TV Dnevnik 2, 08/08/1995). On the same day, RTS aired a

[122] Kaliterna (2013: 101-105) provides a good summary of the difficult position Milošević found himself in. Namely, she describes how Milošević was forced to impose sanctions against both RSK and RS leadership and the costs that carried. For further details see Kaliterna (2013: 101-105).

paraphrased statement made by Zoran Andjelković (a member of the Executive Board of SPS). In the report it was stated:

> When pointing to the devastating politics of the RSK and RS leaderships, Andjelković highlighted that the main cause of the suffering of the Serbian people was the [decision made by RSK and RS leadership] to abandon a unified approach [towards the crisis] led by Belgrade, which was the only viable way to secure peace, freedom and equality to the Serbian people (TV Dnevnik 2, 08/08/1995)

Overall, the RSK leadership was portrayed as consisting of opportunistic politicians and war-profiteers who did not care for the well-being of the Serbian people and directly contributed to the violence committed against them. Moreover, many of these reports suggested that RSK leadership continuously tried to pull Yugoslavia into the war thereby frustrating Milošević's peace efforts.

It should be noted that RTS also aired reports which blamed the Croatian fighters for engaging in violence – with some reports suggesting that Tudjman could be prosecuted for war crimes. However, despite such reports, I argue that overall propaganda targeting the Croats was de-escalating – with the reports criticising RSK leadership highlighted and more prominent than the ones pertaining to the Croats.

Just like in other phases, RTS continued to rely on multiple different techniques to ensure an effective dissemination of its discourses.[123] First and foremost, they relied extensively on *agenda-setting*. Unlike in 1991, when most of the broadcasts focused on violence taking place in Croatia, in 1995 during the greatest episode of violence against the Croatian Serbs RTS barely devoted 10 minutes to events taking place at the front. In August 1995, most of the broadcasts were devoted to international and economic issues, cultural and sports news, and Milošević's meetings with foreign politicians, and further negotiations pertaining to the possible peace deals for the entirety of the former Yugoslavia.

Similarly, RTS continued to manipulate its viewership albeit in a different way than during the escalation and maintenance phase. First, instead of interviewing civilians escaping Croatia (in order to confirm the brutality of Croatian forces like they did in 1991), RTS now interviewed multiple actors to confirm the blame of the Croatian Serb leadership, and almost completely ignored testimonies from civilians who fled Croatia. As illustrated above, RTS primarily interviewed politicians from the SPS and aired statements from individuals, most of whom argued that the Croatian Serb leadership was threatening to the peace efforts. Importantly, manipulating

[123] For further details on the specific mechanisms through which such techniques assisted the process of de-escalation and other related functions of propaganda see chapter two.

historical events, and particularly the events of World War II, were completely abolished, and the term Ustaša was not used at all during this period. Instead, RTS usually used the term "Croatian forces" in its attempt to further de-escalate propaganda targeting the Croats.

And indeed, after such rapid de-escalation of propaganda targeting the Croats the Erdut Agreement was signed – which ended the war in Croatia. As discussed in chapter three, the Erdut Agreement in-effect recognised Croatia as the ultimate winner of the war – with Croatia regaining all of its territories lost in 1991, and 200,000 Serbs expelled from Croatia during Operation Storm.

Finally, as soon as the peace deal in Erdut was signed RTS de-escalated propaganda targeting the RSK leadership and its supporters and praised both the deal and its signatories. Most reports from November 1995 contained statements by Serbian and Yugoslav politicians, members of the international community, and even RSK leaders, all of whom suggested that the peace deal was adequate and that they were hopeful that this peace deal represents the end of the wars between the Croats and the Serbs. The tone of such reports was positive, and there were no indications that the peace deal was unjust or biased against the Serbs. Thus, the end of the Croatian War, was portrayed as a desirable outcome. Following the agreement, RTS no longer discussed Croatia's political situation, or the implications of the Erdut Agreement on the Serbian population. Instead, RTS devoted most of its airtime to other non-political issues, or final arrangements regarding the Dayton negotiations (which will be discussed in the following chapter).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I demonstrated the role propaganda played in the Croatian War of Independence. I showed that the functions of propaganda were more complex and subject to change than it is usually assumed in both scholarship and lay discourse. As the aims of the regime, and the regional and international political circumstances changed so did the directions and functions of propaganda. During the Croatian War of Independence, propaganda was used to de-escalate tensions and violence. Thus, a comprehensive examination of propaganda's efficiency would have to include the evolving functions of propaganda and an examination as to whether those functions were properly fulfilled.

I demonstrated that the fact that in the first weeks of the war, propaganda was not hateful and derogatory should not lead one to a conclusion that propaganda was irrelevant or ineffective. Instead, propaganda served different functions, the realisation of which did not require dehumanisation and derogatory discourses. As the political situation changed, so did the function of propaganda and it was exactly in those later stages of the war that exponential escalation of propaganda became necessary.

Thus, when examining whether propaganda was effective in the Croatian War of Independence one should not look for derogatory and dehumanising speech. Instead, one should first examine which functions propaganda served and what where the corresponding discourses and techniques used. Only once those have been established, one can begin to examine the efficacy of propaganda in altering people's views and behaviour. In the Croatian case, such analysis would involve examining whether initially people believed that the secession was illegal and threatening to the peace and stability of the region. Further, it would involve investigating whether people placed primary blame and responsibility on Croatia for the consequences of secession and subsequent violence.

Second, it would involve examining whether the attitudes of people towards united Yugoslavia changed correspondingly to the RTS's portrayals of its desirability. If indeed people became more receptive to arguments pertaining to people's right to self-determination rather than protecting Yugoslavia's territorial integrity and sovereignty, one could argue that propaganda was effective. Third, examining the efficacy of propaganda would also involve analysing whether and to what extent people adopted the attitudes about Croats as Ustaše and whether that made them more prone to perceive Croats as a threat to the Serbs and justify violence against them on those grounds. Thus, the analysis provided in this chapter could serve as a starting point for examining whether propaganda was indeed effective during the Croatian war of Independence.

In addition, this chapter also showed the processes through which propaganda evolves as it varies between the three phases. As shown in the first section, reaching a point in which it was legitimate to deem all Croats Ustaše and erase any distinction between combatants and civilians took time and extensive discourse development. Understanding the process of discourse radicalisation and knowing its precursors is important as it can serve as a way for thinking about effective strategies of countering, combating, or preventing hateful propaganda. Having explained how propaganda worked during the Croatian War of Independence, in the following chapter, I provide a similar analysis of RTS propaganda during the Bosnian War.

Chapter Six: "The War of All Against All" - The Bosnian War

Introduction

The Bosnian war was the most brutal of all the wars fought in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. According to the ICTY, more than 100,000 people died and around two million people fled the country. The worst atrocity of the Yugoslav Wars took place in Bosnia – when in July 1995, the Bosnian Serb Army (*Vojska Republike Srpske* – VRS) led by Ratko Mladić killed 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys in an act that has been deemed genocide by the ICTY. Detention centres and camps were established across the country, where mass rape and torture of civilians took place.

There were many similarities between RTS propaganda aired during the Croatian War of Independence and Bosnian War. First, in both conflicts, propaganda was extensively used to de-escalate tensions from early 1995 until December of 1995 when the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed in Paris. Second, in both conflicts, the criteria distinguishing the in-group from the out-group, changed depending on the phase of propaganda and the aims of the regime. During the escalation and maintenance phase, the two groups were differentiated according to their ethnicity. However, as the war escalated and the Bosnian Serbs refused to sign any peace deal offered by the international community, Milošević's patience and tolerance of the Bosnian Serb leadership reached its limit. Thus, from late 1994 RTS categorised all of those who opposed Milošević's peace efforts as the outgroup, and all of those who supported him as the members of the ingroup. Thus, just like in Croatian, as propaganda towards Bosniaks began de-escalating, propaganda targeting the Bosnian Serb leadership and its supporters escalated.

Despite these similarities between the two conflict, RTS propaganda targeting Bosnian Muslims was both more banal and milder than the propaganda aired during the Croatian War of Independence. The differences, which will be analysed below, can be explained by the functions propaganda served in the two respective conflicts. I argue that recruiting the Serbs from Serbia proper was not as vital in Bosnia as it was in Croatia. This is because, as covered in chapter three, in December 199, Milošević, with the assistance of Jović, re-engineered the JNA thereby in effect creating the Bosnian Serb Army and reducing the need for fighters from Serbia proper.[124] Second, the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARBiH) was far less competent and equipped when contrasted with the Croatian fighting forces (who successfully mobilised Croatians across the country and extensively benefited from the so-called Battle of Barracks)[125]. Hence, there was an

[124] For further details on how this restructuring worked, and also why it meant that there was no need to recruit the Serbs from Serbia proper see chapter three.
[125] For further details on the Croatian capture of these barracks see chapter three.

assumption that the Bosnian Serb forces were likely to win the war against ARBiH even without extensive support from Belgrade. Third, Bosnia was much more ethnically heterogenous in comparison to Croatia. According to the 1991 census, there were around 600,000 Serbs living in Croatia – around 12.2% of the country's population. In contrast a 1991 census conducted in Bosnia showed there were around 1,400,000 Serbs living in Bosnia – around 31% of the country's population. Therefore, the majority of the Bosnian Serb Army could be staffed by the Bosnian Serbs, thereby limiting the need to mobilise citizens from Serbia.

The evolving and changing political circumstances could also explain the difference in the hatefulness of propaganda. By the time that the war in Bosnia began the international community no longer supported Yugoslavia's unity, nor did it insist on protecting its territorial sovereignty and integrity. Perhaps more importantly, the international community increasingly perceived the Serbs as guilty for the outbreak of the war and excess violence that took place in Croatia. Hence, and in an attempt to avoid further conflicts with the international community and maintain the image of the Serbs as supportive of peace it is plausible that Milošević and RTS did not want to escalate propaganda targeting Bosnian Muslims as much as they did in Croatia in order to. This argument is furthered by the reports from RTS in which different Serbian politicians clearly stated that Serbia was not militarily or politically involved in the Bosnian War. Serbian politicians and RTS maintained that the Serbian involvement in the conflict was purely humanitarian – i.e., Serbia provided food and medical supplies to the devastated Bosnian Serb civilians. To the extent to which they acknowledged any political involvement in the conflict, they would always portray it as Milošević's effort to identify a sustainable, peaceful and just political solution for the Bosnian crisis.

In this chapter I analyse the three distinct phases or propaganda and the different *functions* it served during them. Furthermore, I also analyse the *discourses* and *techniques* used by RTS in order for propaganda to adequately fulfil the functions it served. Furthermore, and similarly to the previous chapter, I also demonstrate how external circumstances (i.e. developments on the front as well as the changes in the regime's aims) impacted the functions of propaganda, as well as the developed discourses and techniques.

Data

The chapter's conclusions are primarily based on the broadcasts aired on RTS between June 25th 1991 and December 15th 1995, of which I watched 107. Even though the Bosnian War only officially began on April 6th 1992, RTS often referenced the situation in Bosnia earlier. Given my analysis of the Croatian broadcasts, I was able to identify instances in which RTS mentioned the developments in Bosnia and have thus decided to include them in my analysis.

I used two sampling methods to analyse the broadcasts aired during the Bosnian War. First, I identified *key events* (the list of which is available below) and watched all the broadcasts that occurred during those events. Specifically, in instances of single events (e.g. the day when Bosnia declared independence or the Srebrenica genocide), I would watch the broadcast of the day when the event took place, and then one or two days prior to and after the event took place. If the event lasted over a sustained period of time (e.g., the siege of Sarajevo – which was the longest siege of a capital city in modern history), I choose key events during such battles or sieges (e.g. the bombing of Markale market) and watch broadcasts on the day of such events and then one or two days prior to and after the event took place. In the bibliography to this thesis, I provide a list of all the broadcasts I watched, and also indicate whenever a specific broadcast has been permanently lost in RTS archive.

The key events during the Bosnian War (and the dates of the watched broadcasts) are identified as follows:

1. **The declaration of independence and international recognition**: April 5th – 7th 1992
2. **Markale market bombing**: February 4th- 6th 1994
3. **Srebrenica**: July 11th – 15th 1995
4. **Dayton peace agreement drafted**: October 31st –November 2nd 1995
5. **Dayton peace agreement signed**: December 13th – 15th 1995

In addition to purposeful sampling, I also used *random sampling* – just like in the Croatian case, I watched the broadcast on every 16th and 29th of each month during the aforementioned period. Random sampling served two key purposes. First, unlike the Croatian War, the Bosnian War was never "paused" and thus watching random samples was necessary in order to understand the evolution of propaganda and how the discourses and functions corresponded with events taking place on the front. Second, just like in Croatia, I used random sampling to avoid possibly biased conclusions – given that it is possible to suggest that propaganda around key events would be different than propaganda more generally throughout the conflict.[126]

[126] Just like in the Croatian case, it could be argued that my random sample should have been larger since I indeed have access to the entire RTS archive dating from June 1991 all the way down to December 1995. However, as indicated in the previous chapter, the broadcasts were incredibly long, and in order to carefully analyse them, I often had to watch certain broadcasts more than once. Thus, due to time limitations, I was unable to watch a broader sample of broadcasts. Nevertheless, and like argued in the previous chapter, I firmly believe that analysis of a larger sample ought to be conducted as part of further research, as I am confident that such analysis would generate further understandings of RTS propaganda during the Bosnian War.

RTS Propaganda

RTS propaganda in the Bosnian War took a similar trajectory to that in Croatia. From the end of 1991 – when the break-up of the Federation and questions over Bosnia's borders became prevalent – RTS propaganda escalated. Nevertheless, such escalation was never as radical or as extreme as it was in Croatia. An important distinction was that RTS identified differences between the Bosnian Muslim forces and its political leadership on one hand, and Bosnian Muslim civilians on the other.

Once the war escalated towards the end of 1992, propaganda primarily focused on maintaining the discourses established throughout the previous year. During this phase, RTS continued to portray the Bosnian Muslims forces as illegitimately attacking the Serb positions; suggesting that the Serbian side primarily used force in self-defence; the ever-increasing tensions between Yugoslavia (comprising of Serbia and Montenegro) and the international community as well as all negotiations and peace proposals taking place; and RTS extensively reported about the alleged attacks that Bosnian Muslim forces were committing against their own people in Izetbegović's attempt to "internationalise the conflict" and get the international organisations to militarily intervene in Bosnia.

Finally, when in the second half of 1994 it became evident that the Bosnian Serbs were likely to lose the war and as Milošević was in a hurry to end the war and get the international community to lift the draconian sanctions imposed, RTS propaganda de-escalated. What is perhaps surprising is that RTS propaganda was de-escalating at a time when violence was escalating. In fact, as the genocide in Srebrenica was taking place RTS barely even referred to the events happening in that city and focused more on Milošević's negotiations with representatives of the international community. As the peace deal was agreed in Dayton, RTS, similarly to the Croatian case, almost completely stopped reporting about the war and focused on all the benefits that such a peace deal would bring to the Serbs and the region more generally.

Escalation

Slovenia's and Croatia's declaration of independence increased uncertainty over the future of Bosnia. Due to Bosnia's ethnic composition, it was uncertain what Bosnia's future would look like should Yugoslavia break-up. The Bosnian Serbs were inclined to secede from Bosnia and join rump Yugoslavia in the event that Bosnia declared independence from the Federation. The Bosnian Croats had preferences to unite with Croatia, whereas the Bosnian Muslims were indecisive at the very beginning of the crisis. Initially, the Bosnian Muslim leadership leaned towards a confederal solution to the crisis in the hope that such a resolution would avoid a bloody conflict.

Despite such efforts by the Bosnian Muslim leadership (supported by the Macedonian leadership) by November 1991 it was clear that the Federation would break-up. As violence escalated in Croatia and Slovenia in-effect left Yugoslavia, the likelihood of any confederal solution diminished. The Bosnian Muslim leadership increasingly supported the view that Bosnia should also secede from Yugoslavia but keep its current borders. Carving up Bosnia's territory was not an option for Izetbegović. As soon as the Bosnian Muslims shifted their position on the best solution to the Yugoslav crisis, the Bosnian Serb leadership (supported by Bosnian Serbs in a referendum),[127] immediately declared independence from Bosnia and began forming their own Republic within Bosnia's borders. At this stage, the Bosnian Serb leadership had support from Milošević, and thus RTS propaganda against the Bosnian Muslims correspondingly escalated.

In the initial stages, such escalation followed a similar trajectory to the one identified in both Slovenian and Croatian. RTS argued that if the right to self-determination was to be acknowledged to Bosnian Muslims (as well as Slovenians and Croatians), then the Serbs across Yugoslavia ought to be treated in the same way. It is important to highlight that the Bosnian Serbs only wanted to take control over territories primarily inhabited by the Serbs, and RTS ensured to air statements which made such arguments. For instance, on April 16th 1992, RTS aired a Karadžić's statement in which he said:

> The Serbian people in Bosnia are fighting for its freedom and independence. […] The Serbian people in Bosnia are not fighting for the creation of the Greater Serbia nor do we intend to take over any territories inhabited by Bosnian Muslims or Bosnian Croats. We [the Serbs] are simply fighting for our right to self-determination and self-organisation, and all accusations made about Serbia, predominately in circles of foreign politicians and most notably in the USA, are incorrect. There were many instances in which [just like in Bosnia now] national and religious communities separated, for instance in Lebanon and Cyprus. […] The Serbian people in Bosnia are not asking for any volunteers and it are not asking for any military assistance, we are strong enough exactly because we are right. We are not asking for anyone's village; we are simply asking for our own national space and our own national identity to be recognised so that we can organise ourselves and have no one dominate over us (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/04/1992).

The stories pertaining to the importance of protecting Yugoslavia's territorial integrity and sovereignty did not dominate RTS broadcasts during the Bosnian War, as by then all the relevant parties accepted that the break-up of the Federation was imminent.

However, following Bosnia's declaration of independence, and the international community's immediate recognition of it as a sovereign state on April 6th 1992, violence continued

[127] For further details see chapter three.

to escalate.[128] Correspondingly, RTS further escalated its propaganda targeting the Bosnian Muslims. On top of arguing that it was unfair and dangerous to acknowledge the right to self-determination to Bosnian Muslims and not to Bosnian Serbs, RTS began developing different stories pertaining to the behaviour of Bosnian Muslim forces towards Bosnian Serb civilians.

First, RTS developed similar discourses which portrayed the Bosnian Muslims as threatening to the well-being of the Serbian people by airing reports about the violence committed by the Bosnian Muslims against the Bosnian Serbs. Furthermore, by airing such reports RTS successfully furthered the discourse which aimed to portray Serbs as the victims. Serbs were not only the victims of unfair and biased standards when it comes to the application of the right to self-determination, but from April 1992 were again victims of indiscriminate and illegitimate violence, only this time committed by the Bosnian Muslim forces. Such evolution of propaganda should not be surprising, given that such reports presumably assisted in the regime's efforts to legitimate the violence committed against the Bosnian Muslims. If it was indeed legitimate for the Serbs to protect the lands they primarily inhabited, and if it was the case that the violence committed by ARBiH was unjust and vicious, then the violence committed by the Bosnian Serbs could be seen as legitimate as it was both self-defence and for a legitimate cause. As violence escalated throughout Bosnia during 1992, so did the number of RTS reports pertaining to the (illegitimate) violence committed by the Bosnian Muslim forces.

Second, RTS increased the number of negative tropes used to describe Bosnian Muslims, often attempting to invoke comparisons between Bosnian Muslim fighting forces and Islamist extremists as I show below. Such reports were often aired on RTS in 1992, as the regime attempted to further the image of Bosnian Muslims as threatening. Importantly though, while such terms and tropes were used to describe Bosnian Muslim fighting forces, they were rarely used to describe the Bosnian Muslim civilians. Contrary to the Croatian case, in which the difference between combatants and civilians was eliminated by November 1991 RTS somewhat maintained such a distinction in Bosnia. Furthermore, the intensity and the frequency of negative tropes used to describe Bosnian Muslim forces was much milder than in the Croatian case. As discussed in the previous chapter, by November 1991 RTS exclusively referred to all Croats as Ustaše – a loaded term which was likely to impact people's views and behaviour. On the other hand, the terms used to describe Bosnian Muslims were not used as often but were also not historically as relevant or loaded as the word "Ustaša".

The differences between the escalation phases of propaganda during the Croatian and Bosnian War becomes clearer when one contrasts the amount of airtime devoted to the reports

[128] For further details on the eruption of violence see chapter three.

from the war fronts. During the Croatian War of Independence, at least 30 minutes of each Dnevnik (and usually much more) was dedicated to the fighting on the front, whereas it was on average around half that length during the Bosnian War. Most of airtime was devoted to statements made by politicians, their disagreements, and possible solutions to the crisis. Furthermore, extensive airtime was devoted to the members of the international community and their views of the Bosnian crisis. Similarly, whilst in the escalation phase war front reports contained more distressful visual materials and footage (in comparison to the other two phases) there remains a stark contrast between the Croatian and the Bosnian case. The visual aspects of the broadcasts during the Croatian War were much more explicit, vicious, and distressful than in the Bosnian War.

Finally, RTS also devoted significant coverage to the political circumstances and events taking place in Serbia – not necessarily related to the Bosnian crisis. For instance, throughout most of the summer of 1992, RTS discussed the prospects of electing Milan Panić as the Federal Prime Minister. Throughout such reports there was no reference made to Panić's possible role in the resolution of the Bosnian crisis. Similarly, towards the end of 1992 and in the run-up to the scheduled elections in Serbia, RTS devoted more attention to promoting Milošević's party over other candidates. In such reports, RTS would primarily discuss the internal issues of Yugoslavia and how Milošević would contribute to resolving those often without making any reference to the Bosnian conflict.

Functions

During the Bosnian War, the aims of the regime were different than in Croatia and subsequently, propaganda often served different functions. Even when it did serve the same functions as it did in Croatia, their relevance and applicability was different in Bosnia. During the Bosnian War, *identity building,*[129] *recruitment, disincentivising opposition* and *brutalising the perpetrators* were all relevant during the escalation phase. However, as explicated above they were nowhere near as vital as they were during the Croatian War of Independence. Instead, the most important function propaganda served during the Bosnian War was *legitimation of violence.*

The importance of legitimising violence stems from the fact that the Bosnian War was marked with episodes of ethnic cleansing, the forced removal of the population from towns and villages, the creation of camps where civilians were tortured, and at the extreme, genocide.[130] Whilst

[129] Just like in Croatia, in the escalation phase, RTS differentiated between the in-group and out-group along the ethnic lines. Thus, the Serbs were considered the in-group, and Bosnian Muslims were considered as the out-group. As I show below, this changed during the de-escalation phase in a similar way as it did during the Croatian War.
[130] For further details on all of these events see chapter three.

RTS did not necessarily report about all instances of such violence, RTS could not completely ignore the events taking place at the front. Similarly, RTS could not completely refrain from airing statements from foreign journalists and other representatives of the international community all of whom suggested that the Serbian side was committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Bosnia. Such circumstances made the legitimation of violence the primary role propaganda served during the Bosnian War.

Discourses

Similar to the conflict in Slovenia and Croatia – RTS also developed multiple discourses to enhance the functions propaganda was serving. Primarily, RTS focused on portraying the Bosnian Muslims as threatening to the Serbian wellbeing, and as guilty of the suffering of the innocent Serb civilians. Correspondingly, RTS also developed the three key discourses which primarily targeted the Serbian population: victimisation, humanisation and valorisation. Below, I detail the development and evolution of these three discourses during the escalation phase.

Threat

First, RTS developed the discourse of *threat* – Bosnian Muslim forces were portrayed as a threat to the Bosnian Serbs. Initially, as in the Croatian case, such a threat mainly pertained to issues of peace, stability, and justifiability of their declaration of independence. However, there were still differences in how this discourse was initially framed in Bosnia vis-à-vis Croatia. In Croatia, during the first days of the crisis RTS aimed to portray unilateral secessions as threatening to the peace and stability of the region with the aim of keeping Croatia (and Slovenia) in the Federation. In the Bosnian case, RTS did not necessarily oppose Bosnia seceding from the Federation, as much as it took issue with Izetbegović refusing to allow the Bosnian Serbs to join rump Yugoslavia. Thus, in the initial days by denying the right to self-determination to the Bosnian Serbs, the Bosnian Muslims threatened the well-being of the Serbian people.

However, as violence escalated in Bosnia the relevance and relative persuasiveness of legalistic arguments pertaining to self-determination faded. Thus, RTS increasingly portrayed the Bosnian Muslims as an existential threat to the Bosnian Serbs – airing reports discussing various plans and attacks conducted by the Bosnian Muslim forces. To illustrate, April 29th 1992 RTS aired a report in which it claimed that the Bosnian Muslim troops were about to engage in combat operations:

> Today, the so-called Territorial Defence Unit of the Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat coalition declared the war to the JNA units based in Bosnia. Commander

> Colonel Hasan Efendić issued an order to implement the decision of truncated Bosnian Presidency, in which there are no representatives of the Serbian people, across 76 municipalities. In that document it is highlighted how ex-JNA troops are stealing property across Bosnia, and the [Territorial Defence Units] have been ordered to block all the roads and prevent the JNA from taking its material and technical resources. In addition, the JNA troops are prohibited from leaving the barracks. It is particularly highlighted that the JNA troops are not allowed to move around unless members of the Ministry of Internal Affairs accompany them. Finally, [in the order] it is said that combat operations will soon begin (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/04/1992).

On July 16th 1992 RTS aired a similar report in which it argued that Muslims were attacking Serb positions around Sarajevo, and that the Serbian population was under threat. It was suggested that "the Muslim forces and artillery fiercely attacked the Serb positions in Vojkovići. Grenades were falling across the Serb positions. Thankfully, [the Serbian forces] were able to efficiently respond to such attacks" (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/07/1992). Immediately after RTS also aired a report from the first barrack in Sarajevo in which the Serbs were based. From the report and the footage aired, the houses and the entire area surrounding the barrack looked devastated. The RTS reporter suggested that the destruction of the area was caused by the attacks conducted by the Bosnian Muslims forces. As part of that reports, RTS also conducted an interview with a Serb soldier based in the barrack. The interviewer asked the soldier to describe the situation in the area, to which he responded:

> At the moment, it is relatively peaceful. However, they provoke us every day, they keep on shelling our positions, and we have to respond. Two Serb soldiers were wounded today. The Muslim forces are using different kinds of weapons [he provided the names of some of them] and they are probably making the weapons in Zenica. The weapons they use are much more destructive than the regular ones. Last night was one of the worst attacks they ever conducted, in Vojkovići. […] They keep shelling us […] (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/07/1992).

That RTS propaganda was in the process of escalation is perhaps best illustrated with yet another example. On November 16th 1992 RTS aired a report from the town of Doboj in which the developments on the war front were described. It was stated:

> After a very heavy shelling this morning, Doboj was quickly under fire again. From 10am, around 100 missiles were fired on this town from Bosnian Muslim positions. Around 10 civilians were injured, and many residential and cultural institutions have been destroyed. From Tešnje, the Muslims attacked the Serbian villages as well as Teslić. An infantry incursion was also attempted by Mujaheddins (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/11/1992).

The three statements clearly indicate an escalation in the discourse of threat. The first report presents a rumour-like story about the possible attacks that the Muslims forces were (allegedly) planning. The second report provides details of an attack and aims to convince the viewers that Bosnian Muslims intend to continue to engage in such violence across the region – thereby portraying them as a threat to the Serbs. Whilst the third report discusses similar events, there is a noticeable escalation in the language and the tropes used to describe Bosnian Muslim forces. The usage of the term 'mujaheddins' was not accidental – namely, RTS was attempting to equate Bosnian Muslim forces with Islamist extremists.[131] The report also highlights the difference between the nature of the Croatian as opposed to the Bosnian Muslim threat as portrayed by RTS. And as indicated, it was not just the intensity of the reports that made RTS propaganda targeting the Bosnian Muslims milder, but also the frequency. There were significantly fewer RTS reports targeting the Bosnian Muslims during the Bosnian War in comparison to the number of such reports that targeted Croats during the Croatian War.

Such threat construction played a useful role in legitimating violence, as RTS continuously presented the VRS violence as committed in self-defence. In the initial days, by suggesting that the Serbs would be under threat should they be forced to continue to live in an independent Bosnia, RTS presumably persuaded at least some of its viewers that the mobilisation and positioning of VRS troops was justified. As violence escalated further, by portraying the Bosnian Muslims as the ones who initiated most attacks RTS more explicitly portrayed the violence committed by Bosnian Serb forces as acts of self-defence.

Guilt

Parallel to threat construction, RTS also *blamed* the Bosnian Muslims for the suffering of the Bosnian Serbs. Similar to Croatia, such *guilt* was in the initial days orientated towards the suffering caused by the denial of Bosnian Serb's right to self-determination. As war and violence escalated further, the Bosnian Muslims were also guilty of the suffering that the Bosnian Serbs and civilians were going through due to the illegitimate violence committed against them. For instance, on May 29th 1992 RTS aired the following report from Tuzla:

> In Tuzla, following several explosions, it is relatively peaceful. SRNA [the Bosnian Serb News Agency] reports that the Serbs from Tuzla are asking the international community to provide assistance and protect them [from the attacks]. The Serbs are not allowed to leave town, and even though the Serbs requested negotiations with Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats, such requests have been denied. SRNA claims that in the municipalities Kladani, Živinice and Banovići, the Serbs are going

[131] On top of comparing (or equating) the Bosnian Muslim forces with Islamist extremists, RTS often suggested in their reports that Bosnian Muslim forces were cooperating with forces operating in other Muslim countries.

> through hell. The Muslim extremists are using the most brutal methods in order to cleanse the three municipalities (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/05/1992).

Similarly, on August 16th 1992 RTS aired a report from the municipality Kalinovik. In the report it was stated that "Serbian villages in the municipality of Kalinovik no longer exist. They were all burned by the members of the Green Berets, who before setting the villages on fire, executed the entire civilian populations of those villages, mostly women, children and the elderly" (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/08/1992).

Through such reports RTS managed to further the discourse of threat construction – by pointing to all the monstrous acts of violence committed by the Bosnian Muslim fighting forces, thereby suggesting that no one was safe. Furthermore, it directly blamed the Bosnian Muslim fighting forces for the suffering of Serb civilians, the innocent lives lost, and the destruction of whole villages and municipalities. As discussed in the previous chapter, it is plausible that such discourses persuaded people that violence against the Bosnian Muslim forces was justified, or perhaps motivated some to engage in such violence.[132]

Finally, RTS also continuously blamed the Bosnian Muslim leadership and Izetbegović in particular, for attempting to "internationalise the conflict" – i.e. to get the international community more politically and militarily involved in the conflict on the side of the Bosnian Muslims. On top of claiming that Izetbegović used false stories in order to internationalise the conflict, RTS also successfully broadened the discourse of guilt so as to include the international community.

Perhaps more interestingly, when it came to the discourse of guilt RTS began primarily blaming the international community for the position of the Bosnian Serbs. Whilst, due to the scope of this thesis, I will not analyse RTS's portrayal in great depth, several points are worth mentioning in this chapter. First, unlike in the Croatian case (in which the Croats were primarily guilty for the suffering of the Serbs, and the international community was portrayed as complicit but not guilty), in the Bosnian case RTS primarily blamed the international community. I suggest that there are several ways to explain the focus of blame and responsibility. As mentioned, Milošević attempted to distance Serbia from the war in Bosnia claiming that Serbia was not enhancing Bosnian Serb's military capabilities nor was it sending its troop to fight. Furthermore, Milošević increasingly aimed to present himself as the peacemaker, and subsequently extensive negative propaganda targeting the Bosnian Muslims could possibly compromise such imagery.

Nevertheless, in order to maintain the image of the Serbs as innocent victims of indiscriminate violence and as the unfairly treated side, RTS needed to place the blame and

[132] For further details on how the discourse of guilt and threat legitimate violence see chapter two.

responsibility on someone. The international community was the obvious contender for two primary reasons. First, the international community recognised Croatia's, Slovenia's and Bosnia's independence and thereby the right to self-determination to the respective ethnicities – whereas it did not do so for the Serbian side. Whilst there were legitimate reasons grounding that attitude of the international community, it nevertheless made it easy for RTS to place blame on the international community. Second, blaming the international community was also particularly convenient given the draconian sanctions it imposed on Yugoslavia. Since the sanctions were devastating the Yugoslav economy, it was easy for RTS to persuade Serbian audiences that the international community was biased against the Serbian side, that it continuously deployed policies that were further disadvantaging the Serbs, and that thus it should be blamed for the position in which the Serbs were, as well as the disastrous war that was raging in Bosnia.

Thus, for a lot of 1992 RTS aired reports targeting the international community, and often such reports would take more airtime than those reporting developments on the war or those which negatively portrayed the Bosnian Muslim leadership or fighting forces. To illustrate, on July 16th 1992 RTS aired excerpts from an interview which Dobrica Ćosić, the President of Yugoslavia, gave to an Italian magazine. It was stated in the report:

> [Ćosić] highlighted that the politics of the European Community towards Bosnia was catastrophic and that USA's and EC's decision to recognise Bosnia [as an independent state] was a terrible mistake which produced devastating consequences. There will be no peace in Bosnia nor will the exodus end for as long as the UNSC and the EC stick to their view of the war [in which] only one side is guilty. [Nothing will change for as long as] the Serbs and Montenegrins are blamed for the war in Bosnia (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/07/1992].

RTS continued to blame the international community throughout the conflict. Along the similar lines to Ćosić, on September 29th 1992 Karadžić gave an interview to an RTS reporter in which he stated "that the war will not end unless [the international community begins to] equally treat all the conflicted sides. The international pressure exercised on the Serbian side also needs to be directed towards the Muslim and the Croatian side" (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/09/1992). Many similar and occasionally even more explicit reports blaming the international community were aired. However, for reasons of scope I will not discuss or analyse them in any greater depth.

Victimisation, humanisation, valorisation

The three most crucial discourses pertaining to the Bosnian Serb side in the escalation phase were the discourse of *victimisation, humanisation,* and *valorisation*. As with the Croatian case, external circumstances and changes in the regime's aims impacted the evolution of the three discourses. In

the early days RTS primarily focused on the denial of Bosnian Serbs' right to self-determination. Thus, RTS devoted extensive airtime to reports which legitimated the Serbs desire to live united within a single state and portrayed the Serbs as the victims of the biased application of the right to self-determination. Such portrayal presumably further legitimated the violence, as many people are likely to perceive violence as justified if they believe it is committed in the name of a legitimate aim. However, as violence in Bosnia escalated it was no longer sufficient to solely rely on portraying the Serbs as victims of the unfair application of the right to self-determination. Instead, to further legitimate the violence, it became necessary to also portray the Bosnian Serbs as victims of indiscriminate and unjust violence. Thereby, RTS further developed the discourse of victimisation – namely, the Serbs were yet again dying in the face of unjust violence just like they did during World War II, and more recently in Croatia. Thus, statements similar to those mentioned above, in which Bosnian Muslim forces were continuously accused of massacring populations of entire villages were continuously aired on RTS.

The humanisation of Serbian victims was limited compared to Croatia, and the frequency and intensity of such repots was reduced in comparison to the Croatian case. Throughout the escalation phase, RTS continued to provide details of people who were unjustly killed, and continued to particularly focus on children, the women and the elderly. Such humanisation presumably further legitimated the violence committed by the Bosnian Serb forces and also enhanced other discourses promoted on RTS during this period. As discussed in chapter two, humanisation serves to enhance feelings of empathy towards the victims and assists the audiences in identifying with the pain and suffering experienced by the humanised groups. Such increased feelings of empathy and identification, coupled with other developed discourses, further assisted RTS in persuading the Serbian audiences that violence against Bosnian Muslims was legitimate. At the extreme, it could also be suggested that it may have motivated some to even join the troops and engage in violence, although that was not the primary function propaganda served during the Bosnian War.

Valorisation of the Bosnian Serb violence was continuous throughout 1992. For instance, on April 16th 1992 RTS aired a report suggesting that around 50 grenades were fired towards Serb positions, and "the JNA was forced to use violence in order to protect the Serbs left in Bosanski Brod" (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/04/1992). On the same day, RTS aired a statement of the Commander of the Second Military District Milutin Kokanjac who stated, "if anyone attacks the Army or the troops under my command, we will not fool around. Otherwise, we will not hurt a fly" (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/04/1992). Similarly, on May 16th 1992, it was suggested that the violence used by Serbian forces in Sarajevo was only used in self-defence. In the report, RTS accused the Green

Berets of attacking areas in Sarajevo heavily populated by the Serbs, thereby prompting the Serbian forces to violently respond in order to protect the civilian population (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/05/1992).

When it came to the discourse of valorisation – RTS primarily focused on portraying the violence committed by the Bosnian Serb forces as exclusively committed in acts of self-defence, and often coupled such reports with tropes that described the VRS troops as "heroic", "liberating" and "admirable". Like in the Croatian case, RTS insisted that the Bosnian Serb forces only used violence in self-defence. Similar to the Croatian case, as violence escalated so did the intensity and frequency of reports which valorised Bosnian Serb violence (although it should be noted that again, in the Bosnian case both the frequency and intensity of such reports was reduced in comparison to the Croatian case).

Techniques

In order to make such discourses persuasive RTS relied on multiple different techniques.[133] First, RTS *invented* stories in order to enhance the discourses of threat and guilt which targeted the Bosnian Muslim forces. To illustrate, on April 16th 1992 RTS aired a report in which it stated:

> The Serbian press agency SRNA has been authorised by the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs to warn the Serbian population [of possible dangers]. Namely, according to the checked and reliable information, the Muslim paramilitary troops, consisting of criminals released from prisons, are painting cars [across the country] in white and are drawing UNPROFOR logos on them in order to be able to commit terrorist attacks and loot [the Serbian population]. Thus, we wish to warn all the citizens not to fall for this trick and not to respond to these provocations (TV Dnevnik 16/04/1992).

Despite the seriousness of this accusation, RTS never provided any supporting evidence for this claim. I have tried but failed to find any relevant literature which would confirm that Bosnian Muslims forces engaged in such activities. This is not an isolated example and as Pešić (interview 9, 2018) suggested it was a well-thought-through strategy often used by RTS.

Second, RTS often used *mirroring* – understood as a process through which RTS accused Bosnian Muslim forces of attacks in fact committed by Bosnian Serb forces. For instance, on August 16th 1992 RTS aired a report from Sarajevo in which their reporter stated "this morning in Dobrinja 3, while the civilian population was picking up packages of humanitarian aid, a mine exploded with the aim of provoking the international community to militarily intervene. The Serbian troops are suggesting that they were not fired from their positions" (TV Dnevnik 2,

[133] For details on how specific strategies enhance discourses see chapter two.

16/08/1992). From that day forward, RTS often aired reports alleging that Bosnian Muslims were bombing their own positions and civilians in order to provoke an international response. RTS never provided any further evidence to support their argument, and as I show in the maintenance section following expert analysis it was often established that the shots were fired from Serbian positions.

Third, RTS also extensively relied on *agenda-setting* and would portray certain issues as more relevant depending on the particular aims of the regime. For instance, during the election campaign that took place near the end of 1992 RTS by and large failed to report on events in Bosnia and extensively focused on airing reports that portrayed Milošević in positive light. However, after Milošević won the elections RTS increased the number of reports which criticised the international community for sanctions and attacked the Bosnian Muslims for attempting to further internationalise the conflict.

Similarly, in the early days of the conflict RTS primarily focused on issues pertaining to the application of the right to self-determination to various ethnicities. Since the status of the Bosnian Serbs and their territories was unresolved in the first months of 1992, it seemed sensible for RTS to portray this as the key issue. Even if the international community did not accept Bosnian Serbs joining rump Yugoslavia it was still logical for RTS to focus on this topic since it helped promote multiple other discourses (including the discourse of guilt, or the discourse of victimisation).

However, as the relevance and relative persuasiveness of this narratives faded,[134] it became insufficient to simply highlight the issues pertaining to the application of the right to self-determination. Thus, RTS increased the number of reports pertaining to the episodes of violence committed against the Bosnian Serbs similar to the ones analysed above.

Fourth, in order to valorise the violence committed by the Bosnian Serb forces and in order to portray the Serbs as victims, RTS also extensively relied on *denial*. Whenever the Serbs were accused of illegitimate or indiscriminate violence RTS would air reports claiming that violence was committed in self-defence, and that the Serbian side never fired the first shot. Similarly, whenever someone attempted to deny the Serbian right to the lands in Bosnia RTS would air extensive reports and statements by prominent figures rejecting such ideas.

Finally, in order to adequately promote the developed discourses RTS often *manipulated* its viewership – either by using various sources of information who would confirm their discourses, or occasionally by using past and historical events. In the early days of 1992, those actors were usually politicians, whether domestic or foreign, as well as civilians claiming that it was unfair for

[134] Due to the fact that it was becoming increasingly clear that the international community would not support Bosnian Serb aspirations.

the Bosnian Muslims to have their right to self-determination acknowledged whilst that same right was denied to the Serbs. However, as violence escalated, the topics discussed by those various actors changed. Thus, in the later stages of 1992 RTS conducted interviews with multiple Bosnian Serb civilians in distress, with a purpose of detailing all the mistreatment and horror they were faced with in Bosnia. For instance, on April 16th 1992 RTS interviewed a civilian in distress who reported:

> I was in the woods for 27 days, I have a child, it has been 30 days since the child was both, we have no food, some people gave us food, we only had bread. I am very happy that the Army came here, I was never against the JNA, and thankfully now that the Army is here we have peace, and all we want is peace and a bit of bread (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/04/1992).

Interestingly, RTS also used multiple actors to portray Bosnian Muslims as even threatening to the Bosnian Muslims themselves (thereby using manipulation to support mirroring). To illustrate, on December 29th 1992 RTS aired an interview with a Bosnian Muslim civilian who stated:

> I am a Muslim, I have lived on Grbavica for 31 years, and we needed to leave the town now because those four buildings were set on fire, it was the Green Berrets who set them on fire […] you need to run away even if you are a Muslim, the Serbs are my friends, they helped me to live here, they've been helping me for 8 months, I have no salary, it is the Serbs helping me. The only responsible person for all of this is Alija Izetbegović […] I cannot have a greater friend here in Sarajevo than a Serb, a man from Iran cannot be a greater friend to me than a Serb with whom I grew up with (TVDnevnik 2, 29/12/1992)

Similarly, RTS also often provided names and personal information of those who were killed on the front in order to invoke feelings of empathy towards those victims. Conversely, such reports were never aired about Bosnian Muslim civilian (or other) victims. Contrary to the previous cases RTS rarely *manipulated history* – on occasion they would make statements pertaining to World War II, however such instances were rare.

By the end of 1992 RTS propaganda targeting the Bosnian Muslims reached its peak – and it no longer attempted to create or change the established discourses. Overall, the purpose of the escalation phase was to legitimate violence that the Bosnian Serbs were conducting across Bosnia. Thus, portraying the Serbian aims as legitimate, and all the acts of Bosnian Muslim fighting forces or political leadership as illegitimate was of great importance. On top of portraying the Bosnian Muslim forces and its political leadership as threatening and guilty, RTS also extensively criticised the international community which was useful both because it portrayed the Serbian aims as legitimate, but also because it was placing blame on the international community for all the

struggles that Serbs from Serbia proper were faced with due to international sanctions imposed in May 1992.

Maintenance

Once RTS established the discourses discussed above, propaganda entered the maintenance phase. However, contrary to the Croatian case there were no attempts to de-escalate propaganda before entering the maintenance phase. There were, as it was in Croatia, some minor instances of escalation, but again such phases were usually triggered by a specific event and subsequently such localised instances of escalation should not be treated as escalation proper. The maintenance of propaganda correlated with an escalation of violence in Bosnia with some of the most horrific episodes of ethnic cleansing taking place during 1993.

There are several possible explanations as to why propaganda did not escalate even though violence did, on top of those listed at the beginning of this chapter. First, it is possible that further escalation of propaganda was no longer necessary if enough people accepted the discourses promoted during the escalation phase.[135] Second, as the economic crisis in Yugoslavia was escalating and the international community was increasingly losing its patience towards the Serbian political leadership, it became important for Milošević to increasingly portray himself as a peacemaker. Thus, further escalation of propaganda would contradict such an image of Milošević. Third, throughout most of the Bosnian War the Serbian political leadership claimed that Serbia was not involved in the war, and that it was a civil war fought between Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Muslims, and Bosnian Croats – thus extensively escalating propaganda would again compromise such a narrative. Hence, throughout the year RTS mainly ensured that the previously established discourses were maintained and did not attempt to further escalate propaganda.

In this period, the functions of propaganda remained largely the same: it was crucial to *legitimate violence* taking place in Bosnia. In order to secure a proper fulfilment of that function, RTS maintained the discourses of *threat* and *guilt* targeting Bosnian Muslims; as well as the discourse of *valorisation, humanisation* and *valorisation* orientated around Bosnian Serbs. Neither of the discourses changed or evolved throughout the maintenance phase.

Discourses

The Bosnian Muslims were still portrayed as guilty for the suffering of the Bosnian Serbs. Furthermore, the international community was still represented as guilty for the suffering of the

[135] And indeed, many scholars have suggested that violence begets violence (for further details see McDoom, 2020: 124; Littman and Paluck, 2015: 86-88). Thus, it is also possible a combined exposure to violence and propaganda radicalised a sufficient number of people – thereby eliminating the need for further escalation of propaganda.

Serbs, due to its biased approach to the conflict in which the Serbs were always portrayed as responsible for the horrors taking place across the region. Similarly, Bosnian Muslim forces were portrayed as a threat to the wellbeing of the Bosnian Serb civilians. To maintain those discourses, RTS aired various reports throughout 1993 and 1994. To illustrate, on January 16th 1993 RTS aired the following report:

> The Bosnian Muslim forces are attacking the territory of Yugoslavia, today they shelled Bajina Bašta. We [RTS] have offered footage to multiple international press centres, however not a single TV station was interested in airing the report. And this is not the first time that foreign media are not interested to hear the Serbian side [of the story]. (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/01/1993).

On the same day, RTS aired a report by Miodrag Popov who spent a night in trenches with the Serbian Army based around Bratunac. During the night, Popov conducted multiple interviews with the soldiers and commanders:

> **Popov**: Where are you taking us?
> **Soldier I**: We are just outside Bratunac, I am taking you to see the front lines because now we can hear that shots are being fired so we need to see what is happening over there.
> **Popov**: Where are you from?
> **Soldier I**: From Bratunac, and I was born in Kravica, my name is Novak Stojanović
> **Popov**: Aren't you afraid?
> **Soldier I**: Of course not, I would not be here if I was. We need to defend these areas, the things that still exist. We lost so much by now, my flat in Srebrenica and my house in Kravica have both been set on fire.
>
> **Popov**: They were shelling areas here around your office?
> **Milan Urošević** (Commander of the Unit): Yes, they fired a couple of grenades, the enemy is simply not giving up. They are [willing to do whatever it takes] to conquer Bratunac. But we will not let them do that. The Serbian people are determined to protect the city till the end, but also to seize control over territories that the enemy took. (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/01/1993)

Similar reports accusing Muslims of conducting attacks on various territories that historically belong to the Serbs and were inhabited by the Serbs were aired throughout 1993 and 1994. Whilst perhaps milder in comparison to the kinds of reports seen during the Croatian War of Independence, they still played an important role in portraying Bosnian Muslims as guilty and threatening. RTS continued to air statements from soldiers, commanders, and civilians, all of whom confirmed that they were going through hell in their attempts to save the territories and their lives, and that the Bosnian Muslims were guilty for that suffering as they conducted the attacks. RTS also continued to portray Bosnian Muslims as threatening by airing many reports detailing the "nasty" strategies of their attacks, as well as uncovering multiple plans that the Bosnian Muslims (allegedly) had – all of which involved attacking Bosnian Serb population and

military positions. Even in instances when ceasefire deals were signed, RTS ensured to air reports which suggested that Bosnian Muslims intended to or already had violated such agreements.

Similarly, RTS continued to blame the international community for the deteriorating circumstances of the war and the Bosnian Serb position in particular. Often such criticism would be targeted against foreign journalists, most notably Roy Gutman (for further details is see below), or media outlets. For example, on January 29th 1993 RTS aired the following report:

> The Minister of Information in the Federal government [of Yugoslavia] Miodrag Perišić spoke today about the unprecedented media campaign led against Yugoslavia. In this context, he highlighted the New York Times [NYT] which [according to him] was attempting to pressure the international community to intervene in Bosnia. […] Perišić urged all the foreign journalists to start asking further questions such as: what is happening with the Serbs located in Croatian prisons, what is happening with the Serbian women based in brothels, and why is no one allowed to see the prisons organised and controlled by Bosnian Muslims (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/01/1993).

In other instances, RTS would more directly blame the politicians and international organisations for always trying to blame Serbs for the violence in Bosnia. In such reports, RTS almost always ensured to further highlight that neither Serbia proper nor Yugoslavia as a whole were involved in the Bosnian conflict – apart from providing humanitarian aid. For instance, on October 16th 1993 RTS aired a report from a meeting between Milošević, Karadžić, and the President of the Assembly of Republika Srpska Krajišnik. Following a brief description of the key statements made during the meeting, which highlighted that the Serbian side was interested in pursuing peace deals, RTS aired a report from a commentator who provided his analysis of the current situation. The commentator stated:

> It is unreasonable that the international community and the foreign press keep tolerating everything unless they are criticising the Serbs. Even though not a single soldier from Serbia or Montenegro is based in Bosnia or Krajina, [the international community imposed] sanctions on Yugoslavia. At the same time, the Croatian Army is based in the former Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the international community has no moral or political strength to punish Tudjman's behaviour (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/10/1993).

The frequency and intensity of such reports continued to escalate as the international community became increasingly willing to engage in military operations in the region.[136] Usually, and similarly to the escalation phase, in such reports RTS also would add that Bosnian Muslims were attempting to internationalise the conflict and pressure the international community to militarily intervene in

[136] For further details see: Beale, 2004.

Bosnia. As demonstrated by these examples, the nature or the content of RTS reports did not significantly change throughout this phase and they remained similar to the reports aired during the peak of the escalation phase.

The discourses pertaining to the Bosnian Serbs followed a similar trajectory. RTS continued to valorise the violence committed by the Bosnian Serb forces. On February 16th 1993 RTS aired a report from Kravice, where heavy fighting was taking place, and suggested that the Bosnian Serb "heroic and brave" fighters were responding to Bosnian Muslim attacks (16/02/1993). As implied in examples listed above and below, the discourse of victimisation remained the same – namely, RTS still insisted that it was unfair that the Serbs right to self-determination was denied and that the Serbs were, yet again, victims of vicious violence and under a threat of annihilation.

Finally, the Serbian victims were continuously humanised throughout this phase – with RTS often detailing personal stories of those who fled their homes. At the extreme, they would share further details about those who were killed and whenever possible conduct interviews with their relatives. For instance, in the report from Bajina Bašta above RTS showed images of the killed civilians, amongst which was a child (not older than three or four) and conducted an interview with an injured civilian who spoke of the horrors he has gone through since the attack began (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/01/1993). Similarly, most of the reports aired on June 16th 1993 discussed the struggles that the Serbs were going through in areas attacked by Bosnian Muslims (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/06/1993). Thus, in the maintenance phase, RTS continued to promote the discourse of humanisation in a similar fashion in order to increase the feelings of empathy felt towards the Serbian victims. Very few reports of similar content discussing Bosnian Muslims victims were aired, and when they were, they would usually discuss Bosnian Muslim civilians executed by Bosnian Croat forces.[137]

Techniques

Correspondingly to the escalation phase, RTS relied on similar strategies in the maintenance phase and rarely used derogatory terms to describe the Bosnian Muslims forces, civilians and political leadership. First, RTS extensively relied on *agenda-setting* – as it was the case in all the three conflicts and phases. Whenever from their perspective certain issues needed to gain relevance, the amount of airtime devoted to those issues would substantially increase. One important shift can be noticed during the maintenance phase. Namely, as the number of peace proposals increased and

[137] However, as indicated, for the reasons of scope, I will not focus on RTS propaganda pertaining to the Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat conflict.

particularly since the proposal of Vance-Owen plan,[138] RTS changed the structure of its news. Instead of devoting most of the time to the discourses above or alternatively events taking place at the front, RTS increasingly began reporting about the peace proposals while occasionally indicating the positive sides of those deals.

I suggest that there are two possible explanations for such changes in RTS broadcasts. First, it aligned with the image of Milošević as a peacemaker as he was continuously portrayed as cooperative in peace negotiations. Second, I suggest that RTS began priming the population for de-escalation phase – since it was increasingly becoming possible that the Serbs would be forced to sign a peace deal to avoid further damage to its economy due to sanctions.

One could ask whether I should perhaps treat this period as de-escalation rather than maintenance. Nevertheless, I suggest that would be wrong for two primary reasons. First, the previously established discourses targeting the Bosnian Muslims, Bosnian Serbs, and the international community did not de-escalate in this phase. Second, despite devoting some airtime to peace proposals (and their positive aspects) RTS did not begin promoting or creating any discourses which actively encouraged the Serbs to support peace deals. Instead, I believe that Milošević was aware that the time might come in which he would be forced to persuade the Serbs to accept peace deals (that were likely to involve territorial concessions), and thus wanted to use RTS to prime the Serbian audiences for that possibility. However, given that in 1993 it still seemed possible for the Serbs to achieve their military and political aims (i.e. take full control over Serbian areas of Bosnia), there was no need to make such arguments, and subsequently RTS did not need to de-escalate its propaganda.

On top of agenda-setting, RTS continued *manipulating* its viewership particularly by airing statements from various actors who would confirm their discourses – thus interviews with civilians, members of the Army, domestic and regional politicians, as well as with different representatives of the international community dominated the broadcasts. Just like in the escalation phase, RTS rarely relied on *manipulation of history* – that is, they rarely attempted to justify violence against Bosnian Muslims by making references to historical events. Occasionally, they would air statements made by politicians who accused Bosnian Muslims of treason – for instance, they would sometimes air Šešelj's statements accusing Bosnian Muslims of betraying the Serbs during the Ottoman rule. However, the number of such reports was relatively low especially when compared to the number of historical references made during the Croatian War. The historical relationship between the Serbs and Bosnian Muslims on one hand, and the Serbs and Croats on the other, could potentially explicate the difference in the techniques used. While it was relatively

[138] For further details see chapter three.

easy to manipulate history and use the discourses built during World War II during the Croatian War of Independence, such legacy did not exist in relation to the Bosnian Muslims. Hence, it was difficult for RTS to engage in such discourse formation during the Bosnian War.

Given an extensive escalation of violence, and rumours that different concentration camps and detention centres were opened in Bosnia, *denial* was vital during this phase. Namely, many international journalists and observers argued that Bosnian Serbs opened detention facilities in which mass rape and torture of Bosnian Muslims (and Bosnian Croats) was taking place. Similarly, there were many instances in which the Bosnian Serbs were accused of conducting illegitimate attacks across Bosnia which primarily targeted civilians. RTS devoted extensive amount of airtime to refute such reports. The most notable examples of such denial include Roy Gutman's report about the existence of concentration camps.

In 1992, Roy Gutman worked as a journalist for Newsweek and was based in Bosnia. As part of his reporting on Bosnia Gutman discovered various concentration camps in which Bosnian Serbs held Bosnian Muslim civilians – many of whom were raped, tortured and killed. His coverage of these concentration camps gained prominence, subsequently prompted the arrival of many international journalists who came to Bosnia to investigate whether and what kind of camps existed across Bosnia. RTS needed to create an adequate response which could refute the claims made by Gutman (and other foreign reporters). Thus, on January 29th 1993 RTS aired an extensive report refuting Gutman's claims and undermining his credibility. The report stated the following:

> That in every war the first victim is always the truth was clearly experienced by the Serbian people. A powerful media campaign since the Wars began in the former Yugoslavia exclusively blamed the Serbs for everything. The Western journalists assisted this process [of blaming the Serbs], and managed to turn pure lies into truth for their audiences. One such journalist, who is also a member of the secret service, is still based here but thankfully he has been brought to justice (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/01/1993).

RTS continued to claim:

> The strength of the media campaign against the Serbs is best proved when one considers the secret services' work conducted by an American operative Roy Gutman, who works for Newsday [sic] as a correspondent for Europe based in Bohn. These documents and the diary [the footage is showing piles of paper and a notebook full of notes in English language] of the imprisoned mercenary Robert Alan from Nottingham best witness that Gutman, who is also a personal friend of many people who work for the US Administration, had a huge network of people who cooperated with him in Bosnia and Yugoslavia. In these documents, the name of Roy Gutman is mentioned multiple times, alongside his mark 2-1c [indicating that he is a member of the secret service], with whom this mercenary maintained contact and reported about the concentration camps and ethnic cleansing of

> Bosnian Muslims. I personally know that he [Gutman] published an article sometime in August in Newsday [sic] in which he claimed that the Serbs opened concentration camps around Republika Srpska. It was exactly this report that prompted the USA administration to accuse the Serbs of organising concentration camps. […] (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/01/1993)

Following this, RTS aired another report in its attempt to show how different the reality was from what Gutman was saying. It was stated "[h]ere is the actual footage from August last year when Gutman went to Manjača with other journalists and spoke to the inmates" (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/01/1993). RTS then aired a statement from one inmate in which he said "[t]he food is good, we prepare it ourselves, we also do have professional chefs. Perhaps the only issue is the quantity of the food, maybe they could send us a bit more food" (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/01/1993). Importantly, no inmate seemed in distress, and none of them appeared to look like they were tortured or starved (which is what Gutman claimed in his reports). Finally, RTS concluded "[t]his is what the inmates actually said to Gutman in Manjača. Nevertheless, his report only discussed concentration camps and ethnic cleansing across Krajina, because this time, as any other time, the only important thing was to blame the Serbs" (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/01/1993).

Despite the efforts of RTS to deny claims made by Gutman and other foreign correspondents, the investigations conducted throughout the 1990s unequivocally showed that the Serbian side opened multiple camps in which civilians were tortured, raped, and killed. However, at least during the 1990s very few Serbs (particularly those outside Belgrade) had access to alternative sources of information. Thus, it is quite plausible to suggest that many Serbs believed RTS's portrayal of detention centres across Bosnia and did not find Gutman's claims plausible. This, in turn, likely furthered the image of the international community as biased and consequently, the discourse of guilt attributed to the international community.

Along the similar lines, on February 5th 1994 an explosion took place on Markale market in Sarajevo. In the attack, 68 civilians lost their lives while shopping for groceries and around 140 were injured. Following the attack, RTS immediately aired multiple reports all of which (more or less explicitly) blamed the Bosnian Muslims for the attack and suggested that they conducted the attack so as to provoke the international community to intervene militarily. In the reports it was stated:

> At the moment, there are no official reports proving which of the sides is responsible for the deaths of at least 36 people in the explosion. No agency has made any statements suggesting which of the sides are responsible. However, Karadžić and the headquarters of VRS denied that shots were fired in that area and at that time from the Serbian positions. […] UNPROFOR [based nearby] did not register any action from the Serbian position […] The Vice-President of Republika Srpska, Koljević, notices that there seems to be a relationship between the recent

> continuation of the Geneva negotiations [about a possible peace deal in Bosnia] and the most recent massacre. According to him, the Muslims, yet again, want to discredit the Serbian side.

In a more explicit report, which directly blamed Bosnian Muslims for the attack, RTS aired Karadžić's statement:

> This massacre is a coldblooded murder conducted by the Muslim forces during the Geneva conference, so that the Serbs can be blamed for it. We demand for an international group of experts to examine this murder and we are refusing to accept any accusations [against the Serbs] because this is just another, of many massacres, organised by the Muslim leadership.

Thus, even before anyone was sent to examine who initiated the attack, RTS ensured that the Bosnian Muslim side was blamed for it thereby denying the responsibility of the Bosnian Serbs. Given the other established discourses – a lot of which focused on blaming the Bosnian Muslims for attacking their own positions in order to prompt the international community to militarily intervene – it is plausible that the Serbian audiences found this story persuasive. Responsibility for (the first) Markale bombing remains somewhat unclear – the United Nations and several other groups of experts were unable to definitively establish who fired the shell. However, the ICTY, during the trial of Stanislav Galić (a Serb general in the Siege of Sarajevo), established that the shell was fired from the Serbian position (ICTY, 2006).

RTS also used *mirroring,* particularly when it came to the stories pertaining to the concentration camps. Due to the sheer number of people suggesting that such centres were opened across Bosnia it was difficult for RTS to simply deny their existence. Thus, they accused Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats of opening their own such centres. Whilst there is evidence that such detention facilities existed on all sides, from the perspective of RTS viewership the Bosnian Serbs never opened such camps (and even when they were accused of doing such things, by foreign journalists, RTS would extensively deny that such camps existed, or denied that conditions in such camps were as bad, and argued that those camps served as places where prisoners of war were kept) and the Bosnian Serbs were only the victims of such indiscriminate and illegitimate violence.

Similarly, the stories of Bosnian Muslims bombing themselves in order to internationalise the conflict dominated the broadcasts. Often RTS would air a report from the front in which they would interview a soldier who would explain how the bombs could not have been fired from the Serb position, thereby concluding that it must have been the Bosnian Muslims. However, in many such instances unquestionable evidence emerged showing that it was not possible for the Bosnian Muslims to conduct the attack given the location of their troops. Nevertheless, RTS never retracted

their statements, nor did they air any of the statements coming from those who suggested that it must have been the Bosnian Serbs who conducted the attack.

Along similar lines, RTS would often air reports from military officials and personnel who allegedly discovered various planned actions of the Bosnian Muslim forces. For instance, on January 29th 1993 RTS aired a report from the press service of VRS. The report said:

> The press service of VRS announced today that the forces loyal to Izetbegović prepared multiple actions with the intention of executing mainly foreign representatives, in order to accuse the Serbs. The aim was to further demonise the Serbs and prompt international intervention. In the press release it is also claimed that the assassination of the French President Mitterrand was intended but that it failed due to a change in his itinerary. The military authorities also claim that Muslims were preparing an attack on General Lewis MacKenzie (Canadian general based in Bosnia). Also, in accordance with pre-established plans, the forces loyal to Izetbegovic also threw a bomb on the building of the Bosnian Presidency during the visit of the UK's Minister of Foreign Affairs (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/01/1993).

Whenever airing these kinds of reports RTS offered little to no evidence to support such claims. Even when such information turned out to be false, RTS would not publish a retraction. Similar to the escalation phase and also their reporting during the Croatian War, RTS would simply stop reporting about specific incidents and move on to discuss other topical issues.

It should be noted though, that similarly to the escalation phase, many of the discourses and techniques did not revolve around Bosnian Muslims. As indicated throughout the chapter, the Bosnian War and particularly reports from the front or narratives targeting Bosnian Muslims did not dominate the broadcasts as much as they did in Croatia or even Slovenia. Thus, all of the abovementioned techniques, and indeed even some of the discourses (namely threat and guilt) were also targeting the international community. Furthermore, during 1993 the Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat alliance collapsed, and they entered a war against each other. Thus, a lot of RTS reporting in this period also focused on violence and war between the Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats. Nevertheless, for the reasons of scope, this chapter shall not discuss those discourses in any detail although they should be part of further research.

As explicated, throughout this phase it was crucial to legitimate violence taking place in Bosnia and to portray Yugoslavia as the victim of international politics. In order to achieve this, RTS aired multiple reports that suggested that most of the violence was initiated by Bosnian Muslims, and that the Bosnian Serb forces were responding in acts of self-defence. Furthermore, they extensively denied any statements that suggested that the Bosnian Serb forces were using excess violence against Bosnian Muslim or Bosnian Serb civilians. Finally, they suggested that most of the information that the Bosnian Muslims were spreading across the globe were false with the

purpose of persuading the international community to militarily intervene in Bosnia. Furthermore, they accused the international community of unjustly treating the Bosnian Serbs and Yugoslavia in particular. Hence, most of the discourses and techniques aired in this period were already established during the escalation phase and did not evolve or change much in the maintenance phase.

De-escalation

In January of 1994 the Americans successfully brokered a peace deal between the Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims, thereby recreating an alliance that existed throughout 1992. Furthermore, it was becoming increasingly clear that neither the Croatian Serbs nor the Bosnian Serbs were likely to hold ground and keep all the advances they made throughout the wars in Bosnia and Croatia. This was partly because the Croatian forces were growing stronger whereas the Serbian forces were weakened. In addition, the international community was increasingly willing to intervene militarily against the Serbian side in Bosnia. Finally, the sanctions were devastating Yugoslavia's economy, and Milošević was in an urgent need to end the war even if that meant giving up some territory. And indeed, he was the only one able to do this as the international community perceived him as the key person who could influence the Bosnian Serbs and negotiate a peace deal.[139]

However, the Bosnian Serb side politically led by Karadžić and militarily by Mladić was unwilling to give up their territories – rejecting multiple peace deals to Milošević's great frustration (for further details see chapter three). This created tensions between the Bosnian Serb leadership and Milošević – who even introduced some sanctions against the Bosnian Serbs. Nevertheless, despite the tensions and Bosnian Serb opposition to any peace deal, it was clear that the Bosnian Serb leadership did not have the power to continue the war without Milošević's support. Furthermore, it was evident that Milošević would sit at the negotiating table and sign a peace deal on behalf of all the relevant Serbian actors and that his opinion would have more weight than that of any Bosnian Serb politician. And in order to get to a point of signing a peace deal, Milošević needed propaganda to de-escalate as otherwise it would be hard to justify territorial concessions to Serbs – particularly since the regime spent almost three years justifying excess violence in the name of protecting those lands.

Hence, in this phase the primary function of propaganda was to *pacify* the Serbian population and persuade them that peace should be the primary aim even if it came at the cost of some territory. In addition, given that violence was not de-escalating it was important to *legitimate violence* still taking place across Bosnia. And in order to achieve those functions, RTS also *built*

[139] For further details see chapter three.

identities around different set of criteria – i.e. ethnic lines were no longer crucial for delineating between the ingroup and outgroup. Exactly like in Croatia, all of those who praised Milošević's peace efforts became treated as members of the ingroup, whereas of those who opposed Milošević were portrayed as members of the outgroup. Due to Karadžić's and Mladić's unwillingness to make territorial concessions and sign peace deals, the Bosnian Serb leadership and its supporters became categorised as the outgroup. Hence, from mid-1994, RTS extensively criticised the Bosnian Serb leadership – often even more than the international community or the Bosnian Muslims.

Discourses

In order to properly achieve the functions of propaganda, RTS promoted several discourses. First, they continued promoting the discourse of *threat*, however, the content of that discourse changed. It was no longer the case that only Bosnian Muslims or the international community threatened the wellbeing and safety of the Bosnian Serbs or Serbs. Instead, it was now also the Bosnian Serb leadership that was a threat to the interests of both Bosnian Serb civilians and Serbs from Serbia proper.

To illustrate, on August 16th 1995 RTS aired a report which discussed an article published in the daily magazine Politika. In the report it was argued that Karadžić's parole "state or death"[140] led to devastating consequences and that Bosnian Serbs were now forced to flee their homes since violence was escalating due to Karadžić's failure to persuade the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Vance-Owen plan. It was suggested that Karadžić prioritised an independent state over security and safety. Thus, their opposition to peace was portrayed as the primary cause of further violence. The leadership was also blamed for the economic devastation that the Serbs from Serbia found themselves in – as it was argued that if the Bosnian Serb leadership accepted a peace deal, sanctions would be lifted (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/08/1995).

The discourse of *guilt* also evolved. Thus, it was not the case that only the Bosnian Muslims or the international community were guilty of the suffering of the Bosnian Serbs. The Bosnian Serb leadership was also portrayed as guilty. During this phase, RTS increased the number of reports from the war front, but not with a purpose of blaming or escalating the discourses targeting the Bosnian Muslims or the international community. Instead, RTS aimed to further the discourse of guilt, which was increasingly attributed to the Bosnian Serb leadership. More specifically, the Bosnian Serb leadership was blamed for the devastating circumstances of the Bosnian Serb civilian

[140] "State or death" was a slogan used for what RTS perceived as Karadžić's politics in Bosnia – namely, either the Bosnian Serbs would control the entire territories deemed Serbian by the political leadership or they would all die for the cause.

population. For instance, on May 29th 1995 when discussing the news that the Bosnian Serb troops took UNPROFOR soldiers and held them hostage, in retaliation for NATO[141] campaign, RTS said:

> The pictures of imprisoned UNPROFOR soldiers have travelled across the globe. They have, without any doubt contributed to the further satanization of the Serbs in Bosnia, but the Serbian people more generally. The decisions made, prioritisation of current opportunities for profit-making, and a lack of political wisdom will, without a doubt, impact the image that the world has about the Serbs, even though Belgrade has always pursued a peaceful policy (TV Dnevnik 2, 29/05/1995).

Even the discourse of guilt targeting the international community changed. Whilst the international community was still blamed for refusing to withdraw the sanctions imposed against Yugoslavia, the intensity and frequency of such reports decreased. Furthermore, RTS increasingly praised peace efforts demonstrated by multiple international politicians and organisations and devoted extensive airtime to the representatives of international community who wholeheartedly supported Milošević and his peace efforts.

Perhaps the best illustration of this de-escalation is that even as NATO bombed the Bosnian Serb positions, RTS reports criticising this military intervention were much milder than before. During the NATO campaign, RTS simply aired statements of international politicians who suggested that violence and military interventions would not be helpful in producing an effective peace deal, and that instead of bombing the Serb positions NATO should aim to bring everyone back to the negotiating table. When this is contrasted with statements criticising the international community from 1992 and 1993 it is evident that RTS was de-escalating propaganda. Statements from 1992 or 1993 that blamed the international community for far less violent forms of intervention taking place at the time were much more extreme than the one targeting the international community for bombing Serbian positions.

Parallel to the de-escalation of negative tropes used to describe the Bosnian Muslims, RTS also decreased their positive portrayals of the Bosnian Serb forces, thereby decreasing the *valorisation* of violence committed by the VRS. Instead, RTS primarily valorised Milošević's peace efforts. Correspondingly, RTS reconstructed the discourse of *victimisation*. The relevance assigned to conquering territories in Bosnia and protecting the lands that historically belonged to the Serbs was reduced substantially. Instead, a desire for a complete and implementable peace became the primary Serb aim – as it was suggested that anything bar a sustainable peace deal would be

[141] NATO bombing of Bosnian Serb positions in Republika Srpska began in August 1995 (Kaliterna 2013: 107). For further details on how the relationship between the Bosnian Serb leadership and Milošević broke down, but also regarding the NATO intervention in Bosnia see Kaliterna (2013, 105-109).

damaging for the Serbs. Subsequently, and similarly to the de-escalation phase during the Croatian War of Independence, the Serbs were portrayed as victims of the damaging political decisions made by the Bosnian Serb leadership.

The *humanisation* of the Serbian victims continued, however its intensity and frequency decreased in part because the reports did not contain as much detail on the specific victims of violence taking place at the front. The reports primarily focused on informing the RTS viewership about all the areas of Bosnia where violence was still taking place. Thus, it remained important for the Serbian audiences to identify and sympathise with Bosnian Serb civilians, however, the relevance assigned to that faded, as instituting peace deal across the region gained priority.

Techniques

In order to increase the chances of people deploying the newly established and reconstructed discourses, RTS relied on multiple different strategies. First, they used *agenda-setting*. As part of RTS's efforts to de-escalate propaganda, the news about all the suffering of the Bosnian Serbs substantially decreased, and the number of reports accusing Karadžić (and other representatives of the Bosnian Serb leadership) of war profiteering increased. However, it is important to note that whilst RTS did extensively criticise the Bosnian Serb leadership, they also failed to report on many instances of excess violence committed by the Bosnian Serb forces. Most notably, RTS barely reported about the events taking place in Srebrenica and if one solely relied on RTS as a source of information, one had no chances of finding out that around 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were executed and that the rest of the women and children were driven out of town. For example, on July 16th the report about Srebrenica simply stated that the Bosnian Serb troops have allowed the UN troops to enter the town and protect the civilian population (TV Dnevnik 2, 16/07/1995). However, no information regarding the massacre of the civilian population that took place over the first two weeks in July was aired on RTS.

Second, RTS continued to *manipulate* its viewership through their reliance on multiple actors to increase the validity of their reports and discourses. Nevertheless, the kind of actors and the narratives they promoted changed. Thus, one could increasingly hear representatives of the international community who praised Milošević's peace efforts; criticised states who refused to withdraw sanctions against Yugoslavia despite the political establishment's investment in reaching a peace deal; and finally those who extensively condemned the Bosnian Serb leadership for refusing the Vance-Owen plan and the Contact Group plan. The number of reports from Bosnian Serb refugees discussing their struggles in Bosnia due to attacks conducted by the joint Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat forces substantially decreased in this period.

Third, RTS also extensively relied on *denial*, however, the extent and nature of that denial changed – which further confirms that propaganda targeting the Bosnian Muslims was de-escalating. For instance, on June 16th 1995 RTS aired a report in which it was said that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) expressed concern about the Muslim offensive on Serb positions around Sarajevo, but also warned the Bosnian Serbs to stop attacking the civilian population. Contrary to the previous instances in which RTS would always deny any statements claiming that the Bosnian Serb troops were attacking civilians, this time RTS did not do so. Most notably, on August 28th 1995 when Markale market was bombed again, RTS did not attempt to persuade its viewership that Muslims fired the shells. Instead, they aired a report from the UN in which it was suggested that the shots were fired from the Serbian position. RTS concluded that whoever fired the shells and bombed the market needs to take responsibility for their act.[142]

As illustrated, there was a stark contrast between RTS response to Markale bombing in 1994 (in which they actively denied any claim that the Bosnian Serbs were responsible for the attack) and 1995. The difference between the reports could be explained by the change of the regime's aims. Namely, given the breakdown in relations between Milošević and Bosnian Serb leadership it was no longer prohibited to blame Bosnian Serb forces of indiscriminately executing Bosnian Muslims. Thus, in this period of de-escalation RTS primarily focused on denying any reports and claims which suggested that Milošević and Yugoslavia were cooperating with the Bosnian Serb leadership in obstructing peace efforts and/or episodes of excess violence against the Bosnian Muslims.

Ultimately, throughout the mid-1994 and substantial amounts of 1995 RTS was priming the Serbian population for the Dayton peace agreement. It was evident that the international community was determined to bring the three key actors – Milošević, Tudjman, and Izetbegović – to the table and force them to sign a peace deal. Nevertheless, in order for Milošević to portray such a peace deal as a victory (rather than a loss – given the number of territory concessions that the Serbian side needed to make) priming and de-escalation, coupled with portraying peace as the Serbia's best interest, was necessary. And indeed, as Milošević departed to Dayton, an increased number of reports were aired that praised Milošević (with many of such praises coming directly from moderators and international community representatives).

The final interesting aspect of the de-escalation phase was that from mid-1995 the number of overall reports regarding the Yugoslav crisis substantially decreased. War and crisis throughout 1991 until mid-1995 dominated the broadcasts – on average, if a Dnevnik lasted for about an hour at least 40 minutes would discuss the crisis. However, from mid-1995 the length of the broadcasts

[142] In the end it was confirmed that the Serbian side fired the rockets (ICTY, 2007).

substantially decreased – rarely would a Dnevnik last for more than 30 minutes, and no more than 10 minutes of it would be devoted to the crisis across the territories of the former Yugoslavia. Instead, RTS also began reporting about different crises taking place across the globe, non-war related domestic issues, as well as cultural and other shows taking place. Finally, just like in the Croatian case, once the peace deal was agreed in Dayton (a couple of weeks before the deal was officially signed in Paris), RTS, broadly stopped reporting about the events taking place in Bosnia. From RTS's point of view, the war was over.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I demonstrated the role that RTS propaganda played in the Bosnian War by detailing its phases, functions, developed discourses and techniques used to promote such discourses. Alongside such theoretical analysis, I also provided illustrations to support the argument, by quoting and paraphrasing reports directly aired on RTS between 1991 and 1995. In addition, I have shown that even though the war in Bosnia was the bloodiest of all, RTS propaganda was not as brutal or as radical as it was in the Croatian case – which perhaps is a novel, and somewhat unexpected finding.

Such a finding could be used by scholars to justify the argument that propaganda is ineffective in altering people's views and behaviour and motivating them to engage in violence. However, that would be a wrong conclusion, because as I have shown that recruitment of soldiers was not the primary aim of the Serbian regime at the time – which perhaps explains why propaganda was not as hateful as it was in the Croatian case. Thus, to examine whether propaganda was effective in the Bosnian War one ought to first consider the functions that it played – detailed in this chapter. Following this, one ought to consider the discourses and techniques developed for the purposes of fulfilling the pre-established functions. Only once those have been analysed can one begin to examine whether and to what extent propaganda was effective.

In the Bosnian case that would mean analysing whether in the first part of the war, between the end of 1991 and the end of 1993, people primarily believed that the Bosnian Serb violence was justified because it was conducted with a purpose of protecting civilians as acts of self-defence, and with the aim of conquering territories that historically and morally belonged to the Serbs. It would also involve examining whether and to what extent the attitudes towards the Bosnian Serb leadership evolved and changed as RTS propaganda increasingly blamed them for the escalation of violence and the devastating political and economic situation in Yugoslavia. Similarly, it would involve examining how the dominant attitudes towards the international community changed as RTS's portrayal of the relevant actors evolved.

Overall, throughout these three empirical chapters I aimed to demonstrate the complexity of propaganda's role with the purpose of showing that analysing propaganda's efficiency involves much more than mere examination of whether violence increased as propaganda escalated. In all three conflicts, propaganda served functions which were not at all related to motivating people to engage in violence or brutalising the perpetrators. Hopefully, this empirical analysis can serve as a starting point for examining the real efficacy of propaganda. Certainly, and as indicated, further analysis is necessary – not only when it comes to the specific mechanisms through which propaganda changes people's views and alters their behaviour – but also of the broadcasts aired on RTS more generally. Due to the scope of this thesis and time limitations, my random sample was limited, and thus further analysis of other broadcasts ought to be part of further research.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

As I write this conclusion, the Appeals Chamber of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMICT) confirmed that Ratko Mladić is guilty of genocide in Srebrenica. Despite the verdict the story of the Srebrenica genocide, and the Yugoslav Wars more generally, is far from over. The legacy and horrors of the wars continues to live in the memory of the victims, whose resentment is only furthered as states continues to deny their share of crimes. And it even seems that media organisations – considered (at least partly) responsible for the wars by many – continue to air statements and reports which often further encourage animosity between the peoples of the former Yugoslavia. The wars and trials may be over, nevertheless a lot of questions are still to be resolved.

As a Serb and a child of a journalist, it was natural for me to pursue the project which analyses the relationship between propaganda and the violent break-up of Yugoslavia – because I had access to sources that non-Serb academics did not, and because the relationship between the state, the media, and people's behaviour has a huge impact on my life. Initially, I envisaged this project as one in which I would analyse propaganda's impact on people's willingness to engage in violence. As argued in the introduction, it seemed logical as most scholars studying war propaganda primarily focus on its ability to incite violence. Similarly, most non-academic discussions on propaganda are usually centred on its ability to motivate people to engage in violence. However, my research led me to realise that propaganda's role in conflict is much broader (and under-theorised). Such finding led the key questions of my research to evolve, and I subsequently focused on the broader question of how propaganda works in conflict settings.

First, I began examining what functions propaganda may have in conflict – only to establish that legitimating violence is just one of the many roles propaganda has during a war. Second, I started analysing whether and what kind of discourses are created, shaped, and formulated as regimes and media outlets try to boost propaganda's power in altering people's views and behaviour. Finally, I researched the techniques used by media outlets as they try to effectively disseminate the discourses.

To conduct such research, I analysed the relevant scholarly literature – ranging from propaganda and conflict scholarship to psychological research which examines whether and what kind of exposure is likely to impact people's views and behaviour. To validate my theoretical insights, I also conducted an empirical examination of the Yugoslav Wars and the role propaganda played in them. More specifically, I obtained access to around 1634 RTS broadcasts aired between 1991 and 1995, of which I sampled over a 100 and analysed the materials aired during the Slovenian 10-Day War, the Croatian War of Independence, and the Bosnian War.

On the basis of this examination, I produced a framework for analysing propaganda. In the framework I detail the key *phases, functions, discourses* and *techniques* of propaganda in war. First, I identified the three key phases: *escalation* (usually taking place at the time when regimes decide that war and violence might be the best available route for acquiring or maintaining their power, or achieving their political aims), *maintenance* (usually taking place at times when there is a need to maintain the negative imagery of the out-group, but no need to actively further escalate the conflict) and *de-escalation* (usually taking place at a time when regimes want or are forced to end a conflict and establish a peace agreement). However, analysing propaganda through the framework remained too broad to arrive to more precise conclusions about the exact role(s) propaganda may have in conflict.

Subsequently, I focused on examining the exact functions propaganda may have in war and identified six distinct functions of propaganda: *identity building, legitimating violence, recruiting fighters, brutalising perpetrators, disincentivising opposition* (both among the troops and the general population) and *pacifying the population*. I proceeded to explicate the differences between these functions, and when which each of them will become more relevant, as well as the relationship between those functions more generally. In this layer of the framework, I provide a distinct contribution to propaganda scholarship – which thus far only really focused on propaganda's ability to incite violence in war. I supplemented such research with a set of other functions propaganda often serves in war, which have been thus far neglected in the scholarship.

This contribution matters as I believe that only focusing on propaganda's ability to incite violence could lead scholars to problematic or incomplete conclusions. For instance, as violence was raging in Bosnia in 1995, RTS propaganda was relatively mild. However, examining various functions of propaganda as well as the overall circumstances in the conflict shows that propaganda's mildness was a consequence of Milošević's decision to pacify the population as he urgently needed to end a war. Thus, examining whether propaganda was effective in Bosnia in 1995 would not involve examining whether it successfully incited violence. Instead, it would involve analysing whether people of Serbia became more prone to accept a peace deal, even if such a peace deal involved territorial concessions from the Bosnian Serb side.

However, an analysis which only focuses on propaganda's various functions still seems too broad – since there are multiple different paths through which media outlets and regimes can legitimate violence or brutalise the perpetrators. Thus, I further analysed the various discourses formulated and developed by media outlets in their attempt to make propaganda appear more persuasive and able to fulfil the desired functions. I identified six different discourses, three of which usually target the in-group, namely: *humanisation, victimisation,* and *valorisation*. The remaining

three targeting the out-group, namely the discourse of: *threat, guilt,* and *dehumanisation*. In this part of the framework, I analysed the nature of each of the discourses; the relationship in which they stand with one another; why and how certain discourses become more relevant depending on the phase and function of propaganda; and finally, the reasons as to why, depending on the context of the conflict, certain discourses are more likely to be deployed than others. For instance, the historical context made it sensible for RTS to link the nature of the Croatian threat to the Ustaše regime and the legacy of World War II. Similarly, it seemed unlikely that the Serbian audiences would accept the image of Croats as subhuman or inhuman, if for no other reason than because they peacefully co-existed for more than four decades – which potentially clarifies why RTS did not focus on developing the dehumanising discourses targeting the Croats.

Analysing the different discourses is also important as it can provide insights into how exactly propaganda changes people's views and behaviour. For instance, by analysing the discourse of threat and its application in the Yugoslav Wars one can get a better understanding of the discourse formation which is likely to convince people that violence is legitimate. Second, analysing the discourses can also help us understand why certain discourses are more likely to be accepted by audiences than others, and how context determines what kind of discourses will be deployed and how they will be formulated. Such understanding could further scholars' efforts in thinking of preventive measures and opposing discourses which could perhaps counter hateful propaganda.

Finally, I focused on examining the specific techniques used by media outlets as they aim to increase the validity and plausibility of the disseminated discourses. I identified five key techniques, which I named (with a varying degree of originality): *framing, inventing, manipulating, denying*, and *mirroring*. I explicate how exactly these techniques are used; why they are likely to make certain discourses more persuasive; and finally, confirm my findings in the empirical chapters in which I identified that RTS used all the aforementioned techniques in the three analysed wars. Such understanding of the techniques is important both because it tells us how exactly certain discourses need to be disseminated in order to be persuasive, but also because it can help us think of further policies which could potentially regulate media outlets and prevent them from disseminating hateful propaganda.

It is my belief that this framework helps provided a starting point for all of those who wish the examine the role(s) propaganda possibly plays in conflict. Nevertheless, further research remains necessary. First, my framework is primarily based on an empirical examination of a single media organisation, which operated in an environment which is different than the one in which we live today. It is highly likely that an increased number of privately owned media outlets and the rise of social media platforms changed the ways in which propaganda works. For instance, it seems

reasonable to assume that new methods of communicating, and social media platforms in particular, generate novel techniques of disseminating discourses. For instance, RTS, as the national broadcaster, was and remains structured and centralised, whereas social media platforms allow anyone to express their views publicly – and it remains difficult to predict whose and what kind of views will gain popularity. Thus, in future studies, scholars should examine whether and to what extent my framework changes given the evolving media environment and the new methods of communication available to modern societies.

Second, my analysis of RTS broadcasts can still be expanded upon. Most importantly, examining a larger sample of broadcasts would potentially produce new insights and conclusions about the nature of RTS propaganda. Furthermore, analysing RTS broadcasts during the Kosovo War and the NATO bombing could broaden our understanding of how RTS changed overtime, and could provide further understanding of how external circumstances impact media outlets. Additionally, one could even extend the analysis of Serbian media beyond RTS – and examine how exactly local media outlets (for example, Serbian Radio and Television located in Bosnia) operated during the wars. For instance, it is possible that the pro-war media outlets located in Bosnia were more extreme, especially since Bosnian Serb political leadership was less willing to make concessions in comparison to Milošević. Subsequently, it would be interesting to examine whether and to what extent such discourses impacted the Bosnian Serbs, especially since many of them were also exposed to RTS. Finally, coupling such analysis with interviews with direct perpetrators of violence would potentially provide new findings into the exact relationship between propaganda and people's willingness to engage in violence during the Yugoslav Wars. Importantly, such analysis should extend beyond Yugoslavia – as findings from a single case should not be overstated. Thus, examination of broadcasts during other instances of genocide and mass atrocities is another important avenue for further research.

Finally, my PhD thesis does not discuss any preventive measures or policies which could possibly be effective in preventing escalation of hateful discourses – another important area which ought to be part of further research. However, for reasons of scope, but also a lack of a theoretical account that explicates the exact mechanisms through which propaganda justifies violence, I was unable to conduct such research in-depth in this project.

Despite the limitations of this project, it is my hope that this project will help scholars approach some of the unanswered questions. By understanding the diverse phases, functions, discourses, and techniques of propaganda, as well as the way in which such propaganda materialised in Yugoslavia, I believe I provided a strong starting point to all of those who wish to examine the evolution of propaganda in light of changing media environments; the possible role

propaganda plays in justifying and motivating violence; as well as to those who wish to suggest policies which could potentially prevent hateful propaganda.

Conducting further research on propaganda's ability to incite violence and alter people's views and behaviour is particularly relevant in Yugoslavia – where media outlets continue to be (at least somewhat) controlled by the governments. Most notably, RTS, is still considered by many as a tool of the government. For instance, Gredelj (1997: 156) argues that "propaganda was used to incite hatred and fear, and was one of the most important weapons used to destroy Yugoslavia." My interviewees seem to agree with this evaluation. In my interviews with current and former RTS staff, I always had the same final question: "where do you see RTS today in comparison to the 1990?" When answering that question, Mihajlović suggests that: "It is not as bad as it was […] but still, opposition does not get any airtime on RTS. Just like in the 1990s" (interview 4, 2019). Mareš argues that: "the main issue here is not things changing, it is that things are *not* changing. RTS has not changed a bit in comparison to those times, perhaps like technically they improved, but the reasoning stays the same, they continue to have the same task" (interview 7a, 2018). Along the same lines, Pešić says: "no, nothing has changed, the only thing is that they are not yet firing people explicitly. […] When I come to Belgrade, I usually watch RTS for a couple of days and then I just can't anymore, I get sick of it" (interview 9, 2018). Finally, Gaće also says that: "Overall RTS is better now than it was before, but only when it comes to RTS2 and RTS3. When it comes to [RTS1] and its political programme, I think they still suffer from the same problems – they care too much whether Vučić will like their reports and that is their primary criteria [when deciding what to air], but that should never be the criteria of independent and professional media. The criteria must only be whether something is true or false" (interview 5, 2019).

Still today many Serbian citizens, politicians and prominent intellectuals continue to deny that genocide took place in Srebrenica. Most prominently, the current Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabić told the Deutsche Welle's 'Conflict Zone' programme that she does not "think that the terrible massacre at Srebrenica was genocide" (Rudić, 2018).[143] She received substantial criticism from the representatives of the international community for making such statements and was challenged by the President of IRMICT Theodor Meron (Rudić, 2018).[144] Current President of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić is known for the remark "for one killed Serb we will kill 100 Muslims" which he made during a session in the Serbian Parliament back in July 1995. At the time Vučić was a member of the Serbian Radical Party (led by Vojislav Šešelj – who himself was convicted of

[143] Available at https://balkaninsight.com/2018/11/20/hague-tribunal-chief-criticises-serbian-pm-s-genocide-denial-11-20-2018/ accessed 08/06/2021.
[144] Available at https://balkaninsight.com/2018/11/20/hague-tribunal-chief-criticises-serbian-pm-s-genocide-denial-11-20-2018/ accessed 08/06/2021.

war crimes by the ICTY). The historical context of Vučić's remark matters greatly – namely, during World War II and the occupation of Yugoslavia, the Nazis instituted the rule which dictated that for every injured German soldier 50 Serbs would be killed, and for each killed German soldier 100 Serbs would be killed in retaliation. Vučić has changed political parties since (and his tune about the Wars in the former Yugoslavia) and claims that the statement made in 1995 has been taken out of context. However, the transcripts of the session cast doubt on Vučić's account (for further details see: Štetin Lakić, 2015).[145]

Such remarks made by the most prominent politicians of Serbia carry weight – as they continue to legitimate the violence committed by the Serbian forces in the 1990s, thereby justifying extremist behaviour often espoused by groups within Serbia. To illustrate, a shop in Belgrade recently advertised a new brand of t-shirts on which (the shorter version) of the notorious slogan *Nož, žica* [the knife, the barbed wire] was printed.[146] After the shop was reported for hate speech, the selling of the t-shirts stopped, and the shop was closed.[147] Despite the retraction of the shirts (which presumably would not be on display if the owners did not think that a sufficient number of people would purchase them), the slogan can still be seen on many walls in Belgrade and heard on football matches and various rallies and protests.

The circumstances are not much better in neighbouring Croatia. For instance, the brand-new airport in Zagreb carries Tudjman's name, and on the 19th anniversary of his death a huge statue of his was revealed in Zagreb. Moreover, Croatia continues to celebrate the anniversary of Operation Storm as a national holiday. During one such celebrations organised in Knin in 2015, Marko Perković Thompson (a famous singer, who made a name for himself by writing songs which glorify Ustaše crimes) was invited to sing. During the concert, people could be heard chanting "kill the Serbs."[148] I attended one such celebration in Zagreb, during which for security purposes I pretended to be English. I saw the policemen (sent to secure the event) dancing to pro-Ustaše songs, and it became clear to me that anti-Serb sentiment very much lives on in Croatia.

In Bosnia the situation remains complex – with the country largely dysfunctional due to the disagreements between the representatives of the three ethnicities. To begin with, the three ethnic groups refuse to accept the official borders of the country, with Bosnian Serbs still demanding autonomy from the Federation (and at the extreme, unification with Serbia proper). Most notably, in January 2020 during the celebration hosted to mark the anniversary of the creation

[145] Available at: https://rs.n1info.com/vesti/a113168-vucic-o-100-muslimana-izvucen-iz-konteksta/ accessed 08/06/2021

[146] *Nož, žica, Srebrenica* [the knife, the barbed wire, Srebrenica] is a hateful slogan used by those who glorify the Srebrenica genocide. It rhymes in Serbian, Bosnian and Croatian language.

[147] Available at: https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/srbija-55675649 accessed: 08/06/2021.

[148] Available at: https://rs.n1info.com/region/a82644-koncert-tompsona-u-kninu/ accessed 08/06/2021.

of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik (Serb member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina) stated that "Republika Srpska, ever since January 9th 1992 was, remains, and will always be a state. A state is defined as a space inhabited by the people who have executive and legislative power, and who show the ability to rule over that space" (Stevanović, 2020).[149] He continued to argue that "[Republika Srpska] are already independent [from the Federation], this is just not formally confirmed. Bosnia and Herzegovina remains a completely divided society. The state is not functioning, this state is an imagined community. The Dayton Agreement *knocked together* this state, and there is nothing common between the peoples of this state. And now we are forced to act as if we are united [in our political views]. That is just not possible" (Stevanović, 2020).[150]

That Bosnian people are far from reconciling their differences caused by the wars is perhaps best seen through Vučić's visit to Srebrenica in 2015. Since 2010 Vučić has denounced his radical past, and started embracing a more moderate stance towards the EU and former Yugoslav states.[151] Consequently, in 2015 while serving as the Prime Minister of Serbia, Vučić decided to attend the commemoration of Srebrenica genocide and visited the Memorial Centre in Potočari. After he laid flowers inside the Memorial Centre, he was attacked by the angry crowd of Bosnian Muslims – who threw stones and bottles at him.[152] While there were no casualties, and most politicians in Bosnia condemned the attack, this example goes to show that much more needs to be done for regional conflict resolution and reconciliation.

The political environment continues to pose risks to the stability in the region, and at the very least prevents proper reconciliation and democratisation. First, many people and victims remain resentful and think that justice has not been served (perhaps in a similar way as they did in the aftermath of World War II). Second, regional politicians seem willing to play the nationalist card whenever they deem that convenient – thereby furthering the tensions between the peoples of the former Yugoslavia. Third, many political decisions and issues remain unresolved. Most notably the position of Kosovo is still contested, with Serbia (among other countries) refusing to recognise Kosovo as an independent state. Finally, there are still strong reasons to think that RTS (among other media organisations) is still far from being an independent broadcaster. Resolving these problems remains crucial – for preventing any further escalation of tensions, for regional prosperity, and the processes involved in EU accession.

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[149] Available at: https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/balkan-51547701 accessed 09/06/2021
[150] Available at: https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/balkan-51547701 accessed 09/06/2021
[151] Importantly, Mr Vučić does occasionally make statements and remarks which could be interpreted as promoting nationalistic attitudes. Additionally, many policies adopted during his rule, as well as many policies not adopted during his rule, remain incompatible with the principles promoted by the EU. Despite this, Mr Vučić's attitudes and behaviour remain moderate, particularly when contrasted with his behaviour in the 1990s.
[152] Available at: https://rs.n1info.com/vesti/a76180-vucic-napadnut-u-potocarima/ accessed 09/06/2021

Researching propaganda's ability to alter people's views and behaviour is most certainly not going to provide a complete solution to the above-mentioned problems. However, I argue that it is one of the first and more important steps necessary for a reconciliation and democratisation in the region. By understanding how governments exert control over media organisations; how such media outlets create and disseminate propaganda; and how such propaganda impacts people's views, we can begin to think of various preventive policies and legislations which could ensure adequate reporting and freedom of the press more generally.

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Interview 2 – anonymous
Interview 3 – Slobodan Stupar, journalist at Radio Belgrade, summer 2019
Interview 4 – Branka Mihajlovic, RTS reporter, summer 2018
Interview 5 – Nadežda Gaće, RTS reporter, summer 2019
Interview 6 – Gordana Suša, RTS reporter, summer 2019
Interview 7a – Vlado Mareš, RTS reporter, summer 2018
Interview 7b – Vlado Mareš, RTS reporter, summer 2019
Interview 8 – Milica Pešić, RTS reporter, summer 2018
Interview 9 – Filip David, RTS journalist, summer 2019
Interview 10a – Milorad Vučelić, RTS director, summer 2019
Interview 10b – Milorad Vučelić, RTS director, summer 2019
Interview 11 – anonymous
Interview 12 – anonymous
Interview 13 – anonymous
Interview 14 – Branislav Lečić, actor and leader of the March 9th 1991 protest, summer 2019
Interview 15 – Petar Jakonjić, technical staff member, summer 2019
Interview 16 – anonymous
Interview 17 – anonymous
Interview 18 – anonymous

Archival materials

Slovenia (watched broadcasts)

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27/06/1991
28/06/1991
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01/07/1991
02/07/1991
03/07/1991
04/07/1991
05/07/1991
08/07/1991

Slovenia (permanently lost broadcasts)

26/06/1991
30/06/1991
06/07/1991
07/07/1991

Croatia (purposeful sample, watched broadcasts)

21/08/1991
22/08/1991
23/08/1991
24/08/1991
26/08/1991
30/09/1991
01/10/1991
02/10/1991
03/10/1991
04/10/1991
07/10/1991
16/11/1991
17/11/1991
18/11/1991
19/11/1991
20/11/1991
21/11/1991
22/11/1991
23/11/1991
25/11/1991
04/12/1991
05/12/1991
06/12/1991
07/11/1991
01/01/1992

05/01/1992
06/01/1992
07/01/1992
29/05/1992
30/05/1992
01/06/1992
02/06/1992
03/08/1995
04/08/1995
05/08/1995
06/08/1995
07/08/1995
08/08/1995
09/08/1995
10/11/1995
11/11/1995
12/11/1995
13/11/1995
14/11/1995

Croatia (purposeful sample, permanently lost broadcasts)

25/08/1991
29/09/1991
05/10/1991
06/10/1991
24/11/1991
02/01/1992
03/01/1992
04/01/1992

Bosnia (purposeful sample, watched)

05/04/1992
06/04/1992
08/04/1992
04/02/1994
05/02/1994
06/02/1993
11/07/1995
12/07/1995
13/07/1995
14/07/1995
15/07/1995
31/10/1995
01/11/1995

02/11/1995
13/12/1995
14/12/1995

Bosnia (purposeful sample, permanently lost broadcasts)

15/12/1995

Croatia and Bosnia (random sample, watched)

16/07/1991
29/07/1991
16/08/1991
29/08/1991
16/09/1991
16/10/1991
29/10/1991
16/11/1991
29/11/1991
16/12/1991
29/01/1992
29/02/1992
16/03/1992
29/03/1992
16/04/1992
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16/12/1992
29/12/1992
16/01/1993
29/01/1993
16/02/1993
29/03/1993
16/04/1993
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16/11/1993
29/11/1993
29/12/1993
29/01/1994
16/02/1994
16/03/1994
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16/11/1994
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29/10/1995
16/11/1995
29/11/1995

Croatia and Bosnia (random sample, permanently lost)

29/09/1991
29/12/1991
16/01/1992
16/02/1992
16/09/1992
16/10/1992
29/10/1992
29/02/1993
16/03/1993
16/12/1993
16/01/1994
29/02/1994
29/05/1994
16/07/1994
29/02/1995
29/03/1995