

MEDIA TRANSITIONS IN BOSNIA

From Propagandistic Past to Uncertain Future

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Abstract / Many Central and Eastern European nations are emerging from Communism. Along with the political transition also comes a media transition. This article examines the media transition in the newly formed nation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Once part of Yugoslavia, Bosnia's media history includes wartime nationalism and propaganda that continue to shape both media development and public acceptance of media messages. This article also reports on the emergence of an independent media and then examines the public perceptions of these new, independent media in Bosnia.

Keywords / Bosnia-Herzegovina / independent media / media development / propaganda / state media

In 1946 Josip Broz Tito, with the help of the Soviet Union, formed the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. Six republics, each representing different ethnic groups, eventually composed the nation. Tito's authoritarian leadership kept the nation together for over 30 years. However, the Yugoslavian Federation started to collapse after Tito's death in 1980. The wealthy Yugoslavian republics of Slovenia and Croatia had declared their independence by 1991. Bosnia, located in the center of the nation, unsuccessfully attempted to declare its own independence. In 1992, Bosnian political leaders, seeking to extend their territory, had mobilized their respective ethnic group members and the Bosnian Civil War began.

The conflict engulfed Bosniaks (Muslims), Bosnian Serbs (Orthodox Christians) and Bosnian Croats (Catholics), displaced approximately 6 million people, and left over 200,000 dead. The Bosniaks, led by Alija Izetbegovic, suffered the brunt of the human and property losses. Hundreds of thousands of Bosniaks were forced from their homes first by Bosnian Serbs, and then by Bosnian Croats. By the end of the war, Bosnian Serbs, led by Radovan Karadzic, had carved out the Republika Srpska from two enclaves on the east and west sides of the Bosnian territory. At the same time, Bosnian Croats, loyal to Croatian president Franjo Tudjman, expelled Bosniaks and Serbs from central Bosnia and took control of the Herzegovina region.

In the latter half of the 20th century, Yugoslavia was heralded as the model multiethnic state, but today, many of the regions of Yugoslavia that were once ethnically integrated are now ethnically 'cleansed.' The Bosnia region is home to

mostly Bosniaks, the Herzegovina territory is composed of Croats and Republika Srpska is almost entirely Serb. Ethnic minorities who once lived in each region are now refugees. Local and regional governmental control over media has contributed to the dismal economic, social and political situation in the region.

Today, privatization of the media is a trend in many European and former Communist states (Schulz, 1992). However, as Wilson (1994) found, because of unique social, historical and economic factors, not all media transitions yield the same outcome. The purpose of this article is to describe the media transition in Bosnia. Media in the former Yugoslavia, and today in Bosnia, have played an important role in the social and political scene. This article examines the media transition in the region before, during and after the war. It traces the media transition from Titoism (1945–80), through wartime nationalist propaganda (1990–5), to postwar development of an independent, private media (1996 to present). In the first section, the article describes the media situation in the former Yugoslavia and looks at how nationalism and propagandistic forces contributed to the ethnic violence that destroyed the former Yugoslavia. In the second section, this article reports on the progress of the growing number of media outlets that are independent of government control, and offers a case study of media development in the region. To contextualize media development in Bosnia, the third section provides excerpts from interviews with 32 independent editors and journalists as they describe their organization's goals and practices. While independent journalists in Bosnia believe that they are having a significant impact on political and social development, many citizens are suspicious of their activities. Thus, to further understand the relationship between the independent media and the public, the fourth section of this article explores some of the reasons for public mistrust of the media. It reports data collected from 10 focus groups in Bosnia that inquired into media credibility. Credible media are one foundation of a democratic society and this article concludes with a discussion of the implications of distrust of the media for the political and social transition in the region.

Media Development in Yugoslavia

Media Under Tito

In the early years of Tito's republic, Yugoslavia's media system was modeled after the Soviet Union's system (Robinson, 1977). Under Tito's socialism, the media served the state's needs. Journalists were employed by the state, for the state and to protect the state. While there were a few objective sources of information in the former Yugoslavia, including Voice of America and the BBC, many citizens did not possess the media literacy required to compare the messages of state media to the messages of the international media. Domestically, a few maverick media outlets, most notably the Sarajevo-based newspaper *Oslobodjenje*, attempted to act as a 'genuinely democratic media enterprise' (Gjeltén, 1995: 7), but citizens in the former Yugoslavia were never taught how to be judicious media consumers.

Nelson (1997) explained that the USA decided not to broadcast Radio Free Europe (RFE) into the region. George Urban, a former director of RFE, recounted, 'after its expulsion from the Cominform in 1948, Tito's realm was, in effect, on the Western side of the power equation and thus no appropriate target for surrogate broadcasting' (Urban, 1997: 7). After Yugoslavia's political break with the Soviet Union, there was a media transition from an authoritarian model of the press controlled by a centralized source (Siebert et al., 1963), to a more decentralized media that 'switched from state subsidy to market demand, and press and broadcasting were converted from governmental institutions into autonomous cooperatives' (Robinson, 1977: 25). Considerable press freedom, whereby content was filtered by low levels of bureaucratic control, allowed the media to comment on cultural issues. This lasted until the late 1950s. However, after two crises (the Hungarian Revolt in 1956 and the subsequent Soviet response and political infighting between Tito and Central Committee member Milovan Djilas), the Yugoslavian media began to again follow a path that supported government control over content and tone of political information. Robinson captured the paradox of the Yugoslav media when she explained, 'the transition media had to fulfill two seemingly incompatible functions: they transmitted political information as interpreted by the top, and at the same time encouraged economic and cultural comment as seen from the bottom' (Robinson, 1977: 35).

In the 1970s, as the economy expanded and professionalism in journalism grew, Yugoslavia experienced small eruptions of ethnic nationalism and the media adopted the role of government apologist rather than the role of critical observer (Robinson, 1977: 124). Although there was more freedom in Yugoslavia than other Eastern European nations, Paulu found that there were some areas that could not be covered in the Yugoslavian media:

Some things cannot be said: the basic Communist system is not to be criticized; the animosities of Yugoslavia's nationalities must not be incited; foreign intervention is not to be invited by undue criticism of the Soviet Union; and President Tito personally is above all criticism. (Paulu, 1974: 471)

The Yugoslavian state media carried propagandistic messages that supported the state and the party. Typical programming included news and information about party leaders and governmental policies. Programming was never critical of the government and, although it was considered bland, the programming showed the *commonalties* of the Yugoslavian people rather than focusing on the *differences*. Citizens knew that the media served the interests of the state. Although people usually accepted the messages, they did not always trust the source (Glenny, 1996). Such ambivalence is not uncommon in authoritarian media systems. Halpern, exploring media dependency in Chile, concluded that although state-controlled media suffered from low credibility, 'contrary to what small media effects theories suggest . . . in an authoritarian political system, media dependency might have a significant impact on political perceptions' (Halpern, 1994: 51). In other words, even through citizens mistrusted the source of state-controlled messages, the cultural ideology behind the messages was part of their everyday existence.

Propaganda and Nationalism Lead to Civil War

When Tito died in 1980, Yugoslavia began a slow descent into ethnic conflict. Although a revolving presidency that included leaders of the major ethnic groups was formulated to minimize tensions, the Yugoslavian Federation started to collapse. Ethnic leaders continued to use the state-controlled media for political purposes; only this time, the politics took a more sinister turn – ethnic nationalism. During the Bosnian Civil War, all sides used the media to motivate their ethnic group members to war. The media were used to carry vivid stories about wartime atrocities and casualties. In many towns under siege, radio emerged as the dominant source of information and entertainment. Nationalistic songs urged people to persevere, while news reports featured information about military operations and ethnic cleansing by the ‘enemy.’ The media played an important unifying function for each ethnic group.

Tragically, media messages created ethnic unity by reinforcing cultural stereotypes and demonizing the other ethnic groups (Taylor, 1999). The next section of this article examines the media transition to nationalist propaganda.

Propaganda

What forces motivated people who had lived together for over 40 years to kill their neighbors? One explanation for the Bosnian tragedy may be found in an understanding of the relationship between propaganda and nationalism. According to Silber and Little (1996), government control and manipulation of the media not only contributed to the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, but, more importantly, fueled the hatred that led to the violence. Thus, one consequence of nationalistic propaganda was the genocide of 1992–5.

Activities said to be ‘propagandistic’ have been identified by Jowett and O’Donnell (1992) that date back nearly 2000 years. Although the term ‘propaganda’ has been used to refer to processes both benevolent and malevolent, originally the phrase referred to a variety of processes of social influence which ranged from the subtle to the overt (Sproule, 1987). Propaganda is a multi-faceted phenomenon that generally requires institutional machinery, legitimization and support, to take place.

During the Bosnian Civil War, all sides used propaganda to mobilize mass audiences. Targets for war propaganda usually fell along ethnic lines with Bosniak leaders using propaganda to motivate Bosniaks, Serb leaders attempting to mobilize Serbs, and Croat leaders targeting Croats. These messages not only affected the intended audiences but were also successful as tools of intimidation that scared ethnic minorities living in each region. Once propaganda started invading the media and mobilizing the masses, ethnic minorities realized that it was time to leave their homes and seek refuge in other locations. Those who did not leave were forced from their homes or lost their lives.

Propaganda campaigns function along two characteristic chronemic continuums. First, short-term, or immediate, propaganda seeks to excite an audience, to gain and maintain an audience’s attention and interest by relying on an assortment of ‘persuasive’ strategies such as fear, guilt (Cooper and

Nothstine, 1992: 378–9; Dovlatov, 1990; Wander, 1984: 356; Wright, 1991: 73, 76ff.), or national sentiment (Bartlett, 1973: 76; Daughton, 1993; Riegel, 1936: 10). To excite Serbs and gain political attention, Milosevic's 'Battle of Kosovo' speech is credited by many with stirring anti-Muslim sentiments (Glenny, 1996; Maass, 1996; Silber and Little, 1996).

Second, long-term propaganda is most interested in creating an atmosphere where citizens feel that the stated goals of the propagandist are synonymous with their own personal goals. The single-party and Communist states are the best examples of this type of propaganda. Indeed, in Yugoslavia, the state engaged in explicit forms of educational control and manipulation. The state controls the outlets of the mass media in an effort to keep citizens in both a constant state of arousal and to limit exposure to competing ideological messages (see Bartlett, 1973; Riegel, 1936). Efforts are made to channel ideological sentiment toward state interests and also to generate, manipulate and shape the character of political indoctrination efforts (see Lilly, 1994). State control over the media allowed this to happen in all regions of Bosnia. During the collapse of the nation, when ethnic leaders assumed power in different regions, the media were vehicles for increasing ethnic tensions.

Finally, single-party states often actively engage in efforts to shape and manipulate their citizens' education such that citizens are not taught competing explanations for events or exposed to competing viewpoints (see Bartlett, 1973; Cooper and Nothstine, 1992: 384–6; Lee, 1952; Lilly, 1994). From the time that Tito died in 1980 to the beginning of the war in 1992, schoolbooks and popular reading materials began to reflect the goals of the local government in power rather than the Yugoslavian national goals.

Ethnic Nationalism

Nationalism is 'neither a new phenomenon nor unique to the Balkans' (Danopoulos and Messas, 1997: 2). Leaders in the region, including Tito, have used state-controlled media to spread nationalist sentiments and propagandistic messages. A review of the theoretical treatments of nationalism reveals that there are common features present in most theories of nationalism: nationalism as a story (see Brass, 1994; Hobsbawm, 1994; Young, 1994); nationalism as a manifestation of ideology (see Kedourie, 1994; Young, 1994); nationalism as a tool for mobilization of the masses (see Deutsch, 1994; Weber, 1994); nationalism as linguistic rather than ethnic identification (Stevenson, 1994); and nationalism as a collective creation or reinterpretation of history (see Deutsch, 1994; Hobsbawm, 1994; Kedourie, 1994). Nationalism is not a discrete construct or phenomenon; rather, nationalism refers to a collection of behaviors and beliefs that become most relevant (and perhaps identifiable) when aroused. Given this dynamic, nationalism requires that certain sociopolitical structures be in place. To understand nationalism it is useful to consider the generic characteristics that seem to make up any nationalist movement.

The first characteristic of nationalism is that nationalism describes, or represents, the collective 'story' of a people – their beliefs, values and interests (see Brass, 1994; Hobsbawm, 1994; Young, 1994). Nationalism, however, is more

than just a story. While nationalism is a story crafted from the collective reservoir of a culture's strivings, longings, heroes, villains and historic roots, it is also a story that is largely created by a nation's elite citizens (see Gilkes, 1991). Nationalism does not simply appear in the minds of all citizens in the same way and at the same time. It is a crafted phenomenon that exists by dint of a multitude of individuals' collective striving. In the former Yugoslavia, during the late 1980s and the early 1990s, leaders such as Slobodan Milosevic and Franjo Tudjman created heroic stories for their respective ethnic group members. These stories portrayed in-group members as brave heroes and depicted out-group members as villains plotting to destroy them. Language also intensified in-group/out-group identification. In Croatia, for example, street signs were changed to reflect identification with the dominant political coalitions, and use of the Cyrillic alphabet (common among Serbs) was abolished in favor of Latin script. As Glenny (1996: 12) explains, in 1990, 'literary Croat [was pronounced] as the only language of administration in Croatia'. Ethnic Serbs immediately began to feel as the out-group in Croatian areas.

A second characteristic of nationalism is that it is based on manifestations of ideology drawn from the larger social realm (see Gilkes, 1991; Kedourie, 1994; Young, 1994). That is, it is based on shared cultural values and beliefs that have been exploited by elites. Nationalism is a kind of ideology that is created, or at least exploited, by individuals to placate, justify, inform or persuade others about their place in history. The ideology that nationalism draws upon is often not synonymous with reality as perceived by outsiders. It is an 'appropriation' (see Schiappa, 1990) of historical individuals and events that is useful for creating support for causes and activities. As Kedourie explains:

In nationalist doctrine, language, race, culture, and sometimes even religion, constitute different aspects of the same primordial entity, the nation. The theory admits here of no great precision, and it is misplaced ingenuity to try to classify nationalisms according to the particular aspects which they choose to emphasize. What is beyond doubt is that the doctrine divides humanity into separate and distinct nations. (Kedourie, 1994: 49)

Ideological doctrines provide the basis for identification and vary by region and group. However, all features are more or less present depending upon the extent to which they have been exploited by elites. In pre-war Bosnia, nationalist doctrines were communicated through the state-controlled media. Bosniaks, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats were all guilty of using historic appropriation to bolster their claims for territory and cultural sovereignty.

A third feature of nationalism revolves around a mobilization of the masses by individuals, institutions and groups (see Deutsch, 1994; Weber, 1994). All people identify with some group(s) and/or the state; and all individuals who reside within the borders of a 'state' are identified at some level nationalistically with their state. To possess a nationalist ideology, however – one that is strong enough to compel someone to support or 'defend' the state, or to kill one's neighbors – requires that citizens' emotions, fears and sentiments be aroused, or heightened, by another (or by external events) sufficiently to compel them to act in the state's 'best interest'. Nationalism requires the intervention of another – a catalyst or a motivator – to 'stir' public sentiment. Nationalism is

not something that simply happens when people get 'excited about their country'; it is something that occurs only in certain circumstances and under certain conditions – such as a powerful leader rallying the 'true believers' to 'defend the faith'. There must also be, as Deutsch (1994: 26) points out, 'a common history to be experienced as common . . . [and] a community of complementary habits and facilities of communication'. Both Croatian nationalists and Serbian nationalists used this strategy to motivate the masses. In Croat territories, leaders insisted that Catholicism was at risk because of the Orthodox and Muslim minorities. In Serb territories, Milosevic used the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo to rally Serb hatred against Muslims (Glenny, 1996; Maass, 1996; Silber and Little, 1996). This strategy allowed him to rise to his party's leadership and mobilize Serbs for war.

Finally, the fourth characteristic of nationalism is a collective creation or reinterpretation of history (see Deutsch, 1994; Hobsbawm, 1994; Kedourie, 1994). The 'official' history of a nation is based on beliefs and ideals prevalent within that society. The 'sanctioned' history of a nation, that is the one that receives widespread support and is used to indoctrinate/educate a nation's youth, is rooted in time-worn beliefs about what it means to be a citizen of the nation, and also how the nation is different from other nations. The history of a nation reflects both the positive associations of what it means to be a member of that nation, and what it means to be an enemy. Both versions are perspectival and do not necessarily reflect the same history told by a nation's neighbors or underclasses. In Bosnia, there is a pattern of one group victimizing the others (Danopoulos and Messas, 1997). The history of the region has been rewritten to vindicate certain groups and to castigate others. For instance, Croat children are told about past Muslim and Serb atrocities against their ancestors while Serbs tell stories about the Croat-controlled concentration camp that conducted genocide against Serbs during the Second World War. All groups have reasons for ethnic nationalism and for distrust of 'others'. However, nationalism alone is not to blame for the civil war in Bosnia. Nationalists relied on the already established propaganda machines to spread their messages. The next section looks at the transition out of this destructive period in Bosnian history.

The Emergence of Independent Media in Bosnia

In Bosnia, nationalism created messages that divided people along ethnic lines. Political leaders used propaganda to spread these messages and this combination of forces contributed to the Bosnian Civil War. The history of media in Bosnia provides an excellent example of the tragic combination of nationalism and propaganda. Finally, after four years of fighting, and the long awaited intervention of the international community, all sides of the conflict signed the Dayton peace accord in 1995. Dayton mandated important liberties for citizens including freedom of assembly, freedom of movement and the protection of privately owned media in the region. The creation of media systems that support democratic principles is not new. In postwar Japan, 'the Allies viewed mass media as potentially playing a vital role in helping realize [democracy] . . . the reformation of broadcasting was one of the occupation's principal goals' (Luther

and Boyd, 1997: 39–40). Although Splichal (1992: 3) argued that certain media outlets in the former Yugoslavia ‘were agents of revolutionary political changes’, the media were still dragged into the ugliness of the war. Today, with support from international organizations, Bosnian independent media offer alternative perspectives to the state media. Independent radio, television and print outlets now serve many regions of the nations.

The international community has donated millions of dollars to support independent media and has naturally assumed that new media in Bosnia would be popular, respected and trusted. This assumption has not been borne out in Bosnia, and may have been ethnocentric and naive. The reality has been that the independent media still carry the same baggage associated with their predecessors and are often not perceived as any more credible sources of information than the state media. Jakubowicz (1995: 130) predicted that there is a ‘less than optimistic outlook for the future’ for Bosnian media because the country has not yet made the difficult transition to either a fully democratic political system or free media.

One underlying assumption guiding assistance for the media transition was that since the media contributed to the violence during the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, the media could also be a part of the peace solution. Today, the government in Bosnia continues to control the content of most state and municipal radio, television and print outlets. However, with the assistance of the international community, there are now many new, commercial media outlets. Commercial media, known as ‘independent’, include radio, television and print outlets that now serve many regions of the nation. These private media are in nascent stages of development and face many challenges. The most challenging issue in the development of independent media is the economy. The high unemployment rate limits people’s ability to purchase consumer goods and, more importantly for the independent print media, there is no money to purchase newspapers or magazines. Likewise, small business owners lack revenue with which to advertise with the local media. The media also face harassment from the regional and municipal governments that they criticize. Journalists and editors face physical and property threats and often have materials or services needed for operations – electricity, access to radio frequencies, equipment, paper, ink, printing presses – withheld (Taylor, 1999).

The term ‘independent’ means that the media are independent of government control over content and tone. The creation of an independent media is a slow, time-consuming process. Hamilton and Krinsky (1996) captured the paradox of the emergence of an independent press when they commented,

Perhaps no foreign-aid task is more difficult than fostering a free press. A truly independent press, in the financial and editorial sense, is more difficult to create than a market economy, because a self-supporting media system requires a free market system as a precondition. Without the means to earn its own way through advertising and profit-making ventures, a press must be linked to special interests – such as a government, a party, or a narrow business concern. (Hamilton and Krinsky, 1996: 95)

The differences between Bosnian state-controlled media and independent media are clear. Independent media differ from state media in terms of mission,

scope, financial support, audience and implications for democracy. The mission of independent media is to report alternative perspectives, challenge or critique government officials and contribute to the democracy process (Taylor, 1999). The scope of the independent media outlets is to cover topics that may not be covered by state media. And the financial support for independent outlets is also different than state media. Independent media in Bosnia must rely on international donor organizations, and while this may give them the needed financial help necessary to achieve their objectives, funding must be renewed on a regular basis and all requests must be approved by the donor organization. The funding process for independent media is directly related to an organization's ability to show how their efforts will serve the peace process. Dragon Kesic, a political transition officer for USAID/OTI (US Agency for International Development/Office of Transition Initiatives), explained the grantee-donor relationship,

When people want to do something that will help build democracy, they can come to us [USAID/OTI] and ask for our help. We tell them to write up a proposal and explain in it how their project will contribute to democracy and peace. We usually begin giving them support for a specific event or in the case of media – we will underwrite a program or issue discussion. If they do a good job, and show that they can do more, then we will continue funding them for other projects. (Dragon Kesic, May 1998, Banja Luka, Republika Srpska)

It is the last two differences between independent and state media – audience and implications for democracy – that may best distinguish the two. At one time, all people in Bosnia received state messages. Today, there are many multiple alternative outlets for information. The primary audience for independent media includes those who seek out alternative perspectives. That is, it serves those people who have consciously changed their listening, viewing or reading choices. State media continue to serve those who are faithful to the party line and whose viewpoints are convergent with government policies and positions. As for implications for democracy, independent media are central to democratic processes because they allow alternative voices to be heard (Aumente, 1999). Because state media support pro-government positions, opposition candidates and parties have little opportunity for fair, or in-depth coverage. Independent media provide alternative voices for political leaders that call for different interpretations of events.

While the distinctions between state and independent media seem clear, the degree of independence that media enjoy differs. The convergence of ideals between independent media and opposition political parties may influence the content of media messages. For example, in the Republika Srpska, opposition leader, and deputy prime minister, Dodik helped finance the creation of *Nezavisne Novine*, a popular Serbian newspaper. Although Dodik does not exercise any control over editorial content and tone, his financial support most likely has had some influence on the paper's coverage of his policies and positions.

With support from international news and humanitarian organizations, Bosnian independent media offer different perspectives than the state media. For television, the Open Broadcast Network is active in over a dozen urban areas. This loose relationship of member stations allows many Bosnians to have

alternative viewpoints on local, regional and international news. Additionally, hundreds of small radio stations, some broadcasting with a very small, local footprint, and some broadcasting with power that covers towns on both sides of the Inter-Entity Border Line have emerged as independent media sources. Many receive programming support from Voice of America, BBC and Radio Deutsche Welle. Newspapers and magazines now are distributed in almost every geographic area of both entities. Provocative daily newspapers such as *Oslobodjenje* in the Bosnian Croat Federation and *Nezavisne Novine* in the Republika Srpska have emerged. Weekly news magazines such as *Svjet* and *Dani* in the Federation and *Reporter* in the Republika Srpska also provide alternative perspectives. Indigenous newswire services have also emerged. Services such as AIM, ONASA and FLASH distribute local, regional and international news to all types of media. As for media training, Bosnian journalists can learn from the Soros Open Society project, INTERNEWS, and conferences and seminars arranged through the journalism faculty at the University of Sarajevo.

Independent Bosnian media play a critical role in the political, social and economic development in the region. 'They are both observers and participants' in the civil society process (Shiras, 1996: 109). The media have become a part of the democratization process; yet as journalists they must still report on the political and social scene for their audiences.

Independent media are not only a tool for public communication but they are also a tool for bringing like-minded groups together to articulate needs, pressure government, and represent the voices of isolated interests and groups. Thus, the function of the media places the Bosnian independent media squarely at the center of building civil society. (Taylor, 1999)

The transition from state-controlled media to independent media is a long road. Jakubowicz (1995) critically examined media transitions in Eastern Europe and identified several processes that affect media development in post-Communist systems. In the early days of a media transition, nations must dismantle the institutional and individual controls over media content, create commercialization, foster specialization and establish ways to internationalize media content (see Jakubowicz, 1995: 130–2). According to Jakubowicz, Bosnian media development lags behind other Eastern European nations that have emerged from Communism. The next section of this article offers a closer look at the media transition in Bosnia by asking and answering three questions: What is the level of development in Bosnian media? Has professionalism, a necessary component for media differentiation, occurred? And perhaps most importantly, what is the public acceptance of independent media messages? To answer these questions a two-part study was conducted involving interviews with independent journalists and editors, and focus groups with Bosnian citizens.

Case Study Methodology

As part of a 1998 USAID international evaluation project, site visits and interviews were conducted with media outlets that had received support for transition projects. Lee used a similar model, conducting in-depth interviews with

journalists and editors to examine the media transition in South Korea. Lee found the methodology useful to 'document concrete experiences of practicing journalists who have gone through the detail of the structured changes of democratization at the scene of news making' (Lee, 1997: 138). The first part of this study consisted of interviews with 32 journalists and editors of independent media in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska (20 radio, four television and eight print). The selected media outlets were grant recipients of the USAID. Approximately 70 percent of those interviewed had also received some form of support from other international organizations such as the UN, Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and the Soros Open Society fund. In-depth interviews with media representatives were conducted with the assistance of Bosnian translators. Media interviewees were asked a series of questions ranging from their organizational missions, their organization's contributions to peace and democracy in their localities, and the needs and obstacles that impair their activities. Interviews were tape-recorded and translated. The translated versions were brought back to the USA, examined by a second Bosnian national for accuracy in translation, and then transcribed for analysis. The goal of the interviews was to identify the issues facing the new, independent media and to chart their transition. The best way to understand the goals and issues facing independent media is to use the words of the reporters and editors who work in the region to describe media development.

Media transitions do not occur in a vacuum. For the media to be effective, they must be perceived as credible and reliable. Thus, a second part of this study was designed to learn how postwar Bosnians interpret and use independent media. USAID again helped to finance focus group interviews with Bosniak, Croat and Serb citizens in the region. Focus groups are a useful tool to 'reveal underlying cognitive or ideological premises that structure arguments, the ways in which various discourses rooted in particular contexts and given experiences are brought to bear on interpretations' (Lunt and Livingston, 1996: 96). As a research method, focus groups can help 'evaluate the outcome of a program or intervention' (Morgan, 1997: 3). Ten focus groups were held in three cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Tuzla and Zenica) and the Republika Srpska (Banja Luka). These cities were selected because they have the largest variety of independent and state-controlled media sources. Focus groups were held during summer 1998 and participant responses were audio-taped. To create an open and comfortable environment for participants, five homogeneous focus groups were conducted with Bosnian males and five were conducted with Bosnian females. Sessions were grouped around people with similar ethnicities and experiences. That is, every effort was made to match gender, age, ethnicity and educational levels within each group. Educational levels of the focus group members varied from completion of primary school to advanced university degrees. Each focus group lasted approximately 1.5 hours and the size of groups ranged from five to 13 participants. The ages of the participants ranged from early twenties to late seventies.

Focus group participants were members of civil society non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Bosnia such as women's groups, demobilized soldiers, cultural organizations, or were recipients of these NGOs' humanitarian efforts.

Participants did not receive any compensation (other than refreshments) but their organizations were given a small donation to thank for them for organizing the group. Focus groups were conducted following standard research procedures (Morgan, 1997, 1998; Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). Bosnian nationals were hired and trained to conduct the focus groups. Practice interviews allowed increased confidence for the moderators. And in all cases but one, trained moderators were from the same ethnic group as the participants. Focus group participants included demobilized soldiers, young men and young women, political activists, women's group members, young mothers, refugees and female lawyers. To ensure the comfort of the participants, the focus groups met in community rooms or in offices of the group that helped to organize the focus group session. For instance, in Banja Luka, focus group participants met in the community center. In Tuzla, the participants met in a meeting room in the recently renovated, community forum. In Zenica, participants met either in the USAID conference room or in their organization's office.

Focus group data are not generalizable; however, attempts were made to have equivalent groups in both the Bosnian Federation and the Republika of Srpska (e.g. demobilized soldiers, younger women, older women, educated women). This allowed an understanding of the media needs and experiences of citizens from different segments of Bosnian society. As noted, recorded interviews were translated and transcribed twice – with each focus group moderator translating the focus groups into English for the researchers who reviewed the tapes. Small adjustments were then made on-site in Bosnia to better target the questions and encourage responses. Once back in the USA, a second Bosnian national translated the tapes and double-checked the translations for accuracy.

As Morgan (1990: 10) noted, focus group 'discussions provide direct evidence about similarities and differences in the participants' opinions and experiences as opposed to reaching such conclusions from post-hoc analyses of separate statements from each interview'. There is significant value in listening to the voices of the people who receive both government-controlled and independent media messages. The next section looks at the issues facing independent media in the region and then examines public response to these media.

Independent Media in Bosnia

The situation for independent media is tenuous. The economy in Bosnia is very poor and commercial media have an almost impossible time sustaining their operations without some type of assistance from international granting agencies. In spite of this, there are independent radio, television and print outlets serving both Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska.

Small radio stations in remote or sensitive regions are proving to be effective ways to reach large numbers of people. Many stations rebroadcast Radio Free Europe, Voice of America or Deutsche Welle and these international news services are important sources of information about different parts of the world. However, Bosnians also want to learn about local stories and news events. Indigenous news services including ONASA, AIM and FLASH are important for disseminating local news stories to independent media outlets. The print media

that are distributed throughout the two entities are considered very provocative. Unfortunately, they are also expensive for the average Bosnian and many citizens believe that they are targeted only to elites. The print media allow in-depth coverage and analysis. News exchanges between the Federation- and Republika Srpska-based newspapers and magazines are an important way to foster unity and correct misinformation. In support of the Dayton peace accord, information exchanges such as these have built, and will continue to build, inter-entity understanding. Moreover, exchanges extend the reach of independent media into key regions that may be underserved by objective media. Finally, television is a popular source of information and entertainment. Many Bosnians have satellite dishes and receive programming from the USA and Europe.

As part of the USAID evaluation, journalists, managing editors and owners were asked a series of questions. Two of those questions are used for this analysis of the media transition in Bosnia:

- What is your organization's objective and how is its mission different from the old system of media?
- Who are your target publics? (Please describe the impact that you have had on these publics.)

Objectives of Independent Media

The people who work in independent media are very proud of their accomplishments. Although they have limited financial resources, they believe that they are making significant progress to opening Bosnian society to a free flow of information. In Bosnia, some regions have many media outlets while others, especially those in remote regions that have had their populations forced out, have very few choices. International support for these small outlets is very important. One objective of these remote media outlets is to prepare people for elections. Ismael Smailovic, director of Radio Sapna Drine, a refugee radio station, had his entire staff driven from the highly contested area of Zvornik. Smailovic explained his station's preparations for the next elections noting:

In order to contribute to democracy and to introduce people to what is going on, and help them to be better informed for elections, we divided this into a program called Elections 1998 and it consists of three parts. The first part to educate people is to have them actually giving their vote and that program is finished with 27 July, last day for voting. We are happy with results because 90 percent of people from this area voted. In the second part we are trying to inform people about the basic rules of democratic life, 'Alphabet of Democracy', a brochure from SOROS is what we use for the program that we emit twice a week with a length of 60 minutes. We consider this important because voters need to know about creating a state, what is liberalism, conservatism, etc. The program we currently are preparing is the third part in which we inform people about the anonymity of their votes and about their rights to vote. (Ismael Smailovic, June 1998, Sapna, Bosnia-Herzegovina)

The same enthusiasm for media contributing to democracy occurs in the Republika Srpska. For instance, when Zeljko Kopanja, the editor of the largest daily newspaper in Republika Srpska, *Nezavisne Novine*, and its affiliate radio

station, Radio NES, recounted the creation of the paper he described its objective to limit government power.

The newspaper began as a project of people who disagreed with the current government. They wanted to break out of media darkness and in the beginning they wanted to help Dayton. When Dayton was signed, all of Banja Luka celebrated it and we believed that is what our people want for us. We got some money from relatives and some from Mr Dodik [an opposition leader who eventually became deputy prime minister]. Our first issue was on 27 December 1995. It was a surprise and refreshing for everybody. This was the first newspaper going against the SDS [Serbian Democratic Socialist Party]. Our first journalists were professionals who investigated and showed the wrong-doings of the SDS party. People congratulated us but not publicly as though they were afraid of the current regime. We knew then that we are going in the right direction. (Zeljko Kopanja, June 1998, Banja Luka, Republika Srpska)

Another objective for independent media is to hire young journalists who were not associated with the former media system. According to Perica Vuanovic, editor of the most influential Serb weekly magazine, *Reporter*,

We gathered journalists who did not work in journalism before the war at all. We think that all journalists who were working in journalism in this area before the war are all corrupted people. They were simply communists before, then nationalists, and now they are cosmopolites. I think that if a man changes his ideals three times in his career he simply lacks the power of good judgement. (Perica Vuanovic, June 1998, Banja Luka, Republika Srpska)

Professionalism is necessary for any media transition and it is a recurrent theme in the answers of the independent media. There are many definitions of what professionalism is and what makes a media outlet independent. Many critics of independent media believe that they merely serve as mouthpieces of the opposition parties and candidates. Senad Pecanin, the editor-in-chief of one of the most successful Bosnian weekly magazines, *Dani*, described the importance of professionalism and independence:

We are trying to practice independence and if you ask me what does independent mean in our conditions I see independence in journalism as a synonym for professional journalism. We are trying to keep and preserve the same distances in our writing between government and opposition party. We criticize the government more because it has more responsibility and power. We are very often situated as opposition media which I disagree with but that is because we place sharp criticism on our authorities. And this is the first point of our work and the difference between us and the other media, that is, however, very often dangerous. Professionalism is to write about criminals who are top officials, confusion between Islamic society and government rule, and nepotism and the army, investigations about war crimes made by Bosniaks and Serbs and Croats. We are okay, but from the very beginning we were criticized by the nationalistic government and party and have been accused of being enemies of Islam, traitors, paid journalists, West spies, just the same that we had in Communism. That argument is something that is very interesting. (Senad Pecanin, June 1998, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina)

A related professionalism objective is the development of associations of independent journalists. As Jakubowicz (1995) observed, one long-term goal of media change is to have media laws that foster objective information flows. Although Bosnia lacks any significant media laws that protect journalists and freedom of speech, there is a growing movement for independent journalists to

become members of professional associations that can lobby for increased media freedom and easier media ownership. Approximately 50 percent of the journalists and editors interviewed were members of associations of independent journalists. Enacting laws to protect journalists is one important objective for independent media. According to Branko Peric, director of the Union of Independent Journalists in the Republika Srpska, and the director of AIM, an independent newswire service, the regional governments continue to dominate all media ownership and regulations. Speaking about media laws, Peric noted,

A month ago I spoke with the Minister for Information and Media and he told me that his ministry is in no hurry [to pass media laws]. That is very clear to me. It seems that the new government likes the old laws because it provides them with a monopoly. We want to form modern laws to help out independent media. There will be no political opening without media. First, freedom of press and speech, and then – democracy. (Branko Peric, June 1998, Banja Luka, Republika Srpska)

Splichal (1992: 11) found that in many Central and Eastern European nations, 'the change of media policy remains a highly politicized question: political debates about legal changes in the media sphere attract as much attention as the questions of constitutional changes'. Bosnia is no exception to this trend. Although there is an attempt not to bring any of the baggage of the former system into the new media, the independent media must overcome several obstacles before they can gain the public trust and perform a significant social role in the transition. The next section explores public acceptance of the independent media in both the Federation and the Republika Srpska.

Public Acceptance of Independent Media

Media are often used for entertainment and informational purposes (Blumler and Katz, 1974). That is, publics consume media because they want to be entertained and/or informed. In the industrialized and democratic regions of the world, and in regions where the concept of a free press exists, this is largely the case. Radio and television are used primarily as entertainment media; and the decline in newspaper readership may indicate waning interest in hard news.

The interviews with independent journalists show that there is a concerted effort to develop a free and objective press in Bosnia. To ascertain general media uses and perceptions in Bosnia, focus group participants were asked the following broad questions, as well as several follow-up prompts by the moderator:

- Please describe the ways in which you use media (print, radio, television).
- What do you think about the independent media?

Media Usage

The focus groups showed that younger and less educated respondents use the media primarily for entertainment while more educated consumers use the media for information about politics, economics and legal issues. When focus group participants were asked to describe the ways in which they use the media

their answers fell along a continuum from information-seeking behaviors to entertainment-seeking behaviors. In this study, education level and occupation were the major influences in determining media usage. Among the more educated focus group participants, one lawyer remarked, 'We need to be updated on what is going on. I need to know so I know how to react, advise my clients.' One schoolteacher noted that she liked newspapers because 'they are informative and now many are free in their reporting'.

Younger, less educated respondents favored the broadcast media over print for entertainment. Respondents reported that they viewed television in the evenings and wanted to watch sports, fashion and entertainment programming. One young Serb refugee was disappointed with Bosnian media because she

... want[s] music and fashion programming. There is none of that on our stations. I have to watch HRT [Croatian National Television] because it is much better than ours. If there is anything about fashion on our stations, then they probably took it from Serbia or HRT. We need better TV.

Younger participants were particularly critical of the media and disappointed that they did not meet their entertainment needs.

Most interviewees agreed that print media such as newspapers and magazines are targeted to the educated and elite. Bosnian newspapers are very expensive for the majority of people who have no reliable means of income. However, respondents often read other people's magazines and newspapers. In Bosnia, newspaper editors estimate that there are nine readers for every one newspaper sold. One unemployed man said, 'I can't afford to buy papers. But, when I get one from a neighbor, I will read everything.' Magazines are now available but they are also expensive. This is unfortunate because magazines are considered some of the most provocative sources of information in both the Federation and Republika Srpska. Independent magazines attract attention at the kiosks by featuring controversial covers. As one participant noted, 'when you go by the kiosk you can always tell which one is *Reporter Magazine* [a Serb weekly]. It is always the one with the naked body or provocative headline.'

Many respondents have access to pirated satellite television and identified the Cartoon Network, shows about animals – programs that can be enjoyed without the ability to understand the language they are produced in – and foreign movies as favorite programs. Language is a major issue for these viewers because many cannot follow the current affairs programs in German, English or Italian, and so they skip those channels. One effect of the proliferation of pirated satellite television is that it is increasing expectations about what quality programming and technical production should look like. Bosnian television, state or independent, cannot compete with these high expectations. Many of the older respondents complained about the quality of contemporary media (both state and independent) and reminisced about the quality of programming under the former system. As one interviewee noted:

Today, there are no skilled television technicians. Even state television looks cheap. We all know that the best journalists and producers left during the war. Media need to re-evaluate scheduling, writing, and quality. There are no professionals, no education for journalists.

Radio is one medium that everyone seems to agree is the most useful for both entertainment and information. Most radio stations broadcast news on the hour, so when respondents need information quickly, they turn to their favorite radio stations. News programming reports local, national and relevant international information in short, 4–6 minute summaries. Many stations subscribe to Voice of America, Radio Free Europe or Radio Deutsche Welle and offer different perspectives about events than the state-controlled media.

Radio stations were a popular source of news and entertainment before the war and new stations have boomed since the end of the war (Woodward, 1981). Small, local stations, often supported by international money, have emerged as important and sometimes the *only* source of local, state and international information. Radio is broadcast everywhere and at all times in Bosnia – it pervades the cafes, shopping areas, automobiles and the workplace. Daytime radio is usually music programming and evening formats include news and information shows.

The participants in this study live in areas that enjoy multiple media outlets – both state-controlled and independent. Thus, access to alternative perspectives does not appear to be a problem for these focus group participants. Yet they do not appear to be taking advantage of the ‘objective’ information communicated by the newly formed commercial media. The second question posed to respondents asked them what they thought about the independent media.

Credibility of Independent Media

The 40 years of state domination of the media are one of the major problems facing the independent media in Bosnia (Silber and Little, 1996). Yugoslavia’s history of a univocal media together with an education system that did not teach media literacy are both having profound effects on citizens’ perceptions of source credibility. It is the international communities’ goal that media outlets independent of state control will offer objective and useful information to Bosnians. Humanitarian organizations support independent media in order to negate the nationalist voices that plunged the region into war. Yet, ironically, the most common response from *all* focus group participants was that there are *no* independent media in Bosnia.

It should be noted that most Bosnians use the terms ‘alternative media’ and ‘independent media’ interchangeably. To insure rigor in this study, during the focus group interviews moderators would gain consensus on how each term was being used. Alternative media were understood as a general category of media that were free of state control. Some municipal stations that do not follow the state-controlled media would be considered ‘alternative’. Independent media were generally understood as financially and politically independent outlets that did not rely on state-controlled sources of information.

There is deep suspicion about both the goals of state media and the independent media in Bosnia. As mentioned previously, the state-controlled media are blamed by Bosnians and many foreigners for contributing to the war. One focus group participant claimed that he lost all interest in news during the war because:

SRT [Serb Radio and Television] was the only [form of] media available during the war. It was tough. Only one movie per week and you usually switched channels when the news started. I didn't watch political news. I wanted something more relaxing. SRT told us how horrible the Muslims were and I don't believe this. But, even today, I can't stand to watch news. There are too many bad memories.

In the Bosniak region, an older man agreed, 'during the war all state stations were too much to handle. You can't decide what is the truth, so you have to not watch.'

The independent media were 'intended' to be different than the state-controlled media. They were created to offer new perspectives and showcase tolerant voices. Their financial independence from government was supposed to win public approval and attention. However, as one respondent, a demobilized soldier, noted:

I would have to tell you that we don't have any independent media here. They are all under the influence of certain factors. No one is self-financing. How can they be in this economy? Even so-called independent media are funded and supported by foreign international institutions or political parties.

Another respondent, a Bosnian Croat, claimed that:

Everyone is supported by someone who is telling them what to say. Look at the state media – you know whose interests they serve. Alternative media do the same thing only they work for the opposition parties. You know that opposition parties or foreign governments are behind their messages.

This mistrust of independent media transcended gender, ethnic, socio-economic and educational categories. All participants seem to agree with the statement of a young, Bosnian Serb refugee, who said, 'you can't trust anyone because everyone is always trying to justify their own side. No matter how much alternative media we have, we still can't trust it. The trust was a long time ago lost.'

Indeed, in follow-up questions many participants noted that there was not a noticeable difference in the programming between state and independent media. One interviewee said, 'there is no independent media. Programming on all television is boring. They all broadcast the same things. Politics plays such a big role in all media that you can't say that there is an alternative approach.'

While the category of independent media may have a credibility problem, certain independent newspapers and radio stations enjoy varying degrees of support. Small, local radio stations are usually accepted as useful alternatives to the government stations and people appreciate the local focus of these stations. Too many of the media, however, are viewed as 'sensational tools of the opposition parties', and 'too interested in the bad things and not interested in what is good'.

The focus group responses suggest that independent media lack credibility in Bosnia. This may be attributed to a societal attitude toward media that goes back to the nationalist propaganda before and during the war and a suspicion of *any* media. Or, it may mean that the independent media need to improve

their reputations by adhering to higher standards of objectivity and fairness than the state media, thus disproving the widespread belief that they are tools of the opposition or international community. Regardless of the causes, the independent media in Bosnia need to address their lack of credibility before they can have the impact on democracy that everyone hoped they would have. Although this conclusion may be disappointing to those organizations that have devoted vast resources to creating independent media, it is an inevitable outcome of the ubiquitous propaganda and nationalism prevalent during the war and still present today.

The Future of Independent Media in Bosnia

The basis for a free and democratic society is a free media (Siebert et al., 1963). The people of Bosnia have suffered under a state-controlled media for over 40 years. Today, they have the choice of continuing to rely on the blatantly biased state media or seeking out alternative media sources. The focus group responses show that many Bosnians are neither ready to entirely disregard the state media nor willing to fully embrace the independent media. Several implications for the media transition and democracy building in Bosnia have emerged.

Media Must Clarify the Terms 'Independent' and 'Alternative'

Focus group participants suggested that although people like having alternatives to the state media, they do not view them as entirely independent. *Every* focus group member commented that they did not always believe the messages of independent media. Reasons for this attitude include the belief that the media are arms of the opposition, are told what to say by the international community and are only out to embarrass the government. Bosnian citizens need to understand the relationship between the international community and the independent media. Public acceptance of independent media faces many obstacles because, according to the 1997 Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, state-controlled media have attempted to obscure the real situation in an effort to undermine the credibility of the independent media.

The international community *does* support independent media by underwriting printing costs, distribution, equipment and training. However, it does not dictate content to grantees. Organizations such as the Soros Open Society project, USAID and others have clear policies about employees influencing media content. While it may be naive to believe that every media outlet that receives financial assistance from the international community is free from influence, it is equally naive to believe that all independent media are merely mouthpieces of Western governments. An information campaign that focuses on the difference between the state media and the independent media might educate citizens about the motives of each type of media. Clarification of the terms 'state', 'alternative' and 'independent' media may begin to address public suspicions of media messages.

Media Education for Citizens

Focus group participants' responses suggest that many people are not ready for the aggressive messages communicated by independent media. Many interviewees noted that they were tired of negative stories, investigative reporting, overtly political content and the scandal mentality of the independent media. Because Bosnian citizens are not yet sophisticated consumers of media, messages that may appear to Westerners to be part of normal journalism are actually creating a *backlash* on the perceived credibility of the independent media. This backlash is an unintended consequence of transplanting one type of media system – free press – into a region with only one tradition of media activity – state control.

One way to address this issue is to prepare people to deal with multiple, and conflicting, media messages. Critical thinking skills cannot come overnight, they are developed over the course of a lifetime. Media literacy, although often associated with media education in elementary and high schools (Christ and Potter, 1998), is needed in the general Bosnian society. Because of this, media groups, NGOs and journalists should organize a series of informational programs aimed at fostering media literacy. For instance, reporters could visit schools and talk about how investigative reporting and independent media contribute to democratic societies. Bosnians need to become more critical of information disseminated by all media.

Increased Training for Young Journalists

Jakubowicz (1995) identified professionalism as an important milestone for independent media. Focus group participants believe that the media lack professionalism. Many journalists are young, inexperienced and lack professional standards. One of the reasons that many Bosnians have doubts about the credibility of alternative outlets can be attributed to the lack of experience on the part of reporters. Many of Yugoslavia's best journalists either left during the war or were killed. Moreover, many of today's senior journalists worked in the former system for the state-controlled media and also worked for nationalist media outlets during the war. The public is suspicious of journalists who were once communists, then nationalists and now democrats.

The future of Bosnian media may rest with those young journalists who have no past relationship with the state media. Training workshops to promote journalistic professionalism are needed. Workshops might address issues such as standards of objective reporting or how to report both sides of an issue. As the staff members at the independent media outlets become more objective in their news coverage, citizens will come to expect more balanced stories, and may become more sophisticated media consumers.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this article, we suggested that we would examine the media transitions in the Bosnia region before, during and after the Civil War. It

is imperative to have independent media in the region. Five years after Dayton, many Bosnians are still refugees and political reform is still quite far off. Some state-controlled media continue to broadcast hate messages and feed public fears. Indeed, as the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights reported, the state controlled media's:

Persistent propaganda played a major role in shaping the stances of listeners. Hence, the Serbian radio was doing precisely what it was tasked with: it turned Serbs in the RS against cooperation with the FB&H and discouraged them from returning to their homes in the other entity. (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, 1997: 1)

Much of the current mistrust of the media by Bosnian citizens can be traced back first to the state dominance over media under Titoism, and second to the nationalistic and propagandistic political traditions of the ethnic leaders during and after the Bosnian Civil War. Obviously, there are no easy answers as to how the current independent media can differentiate themselves from the continuing propagandistic apparatus of the state media in the eyes of their citizens. But, given the history of the region, it is important for the independent media to continue to offer alternative voices in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska.

The independent media perform an important and beneficial civil society function when they report on governmental scandal and intrigue. Independent journalists believe that it is their responsibility to inform the public and to build professionalism for future journalists. Unfortunately, 40 years of state dominance of the media and 10 years of inflammatory messages excoriating those who oppose the government have created a populace who distrust the media.

Questions of media development, professionalism and public acceptance of media messages are paradoxical. On the one hand, there are growing levels of professionalism and privatization in the Bosnian media. Alternative voices are now available for citizens and the state media must compete, or, at the very least, acknowledge that positions divergent from the government exist. However, on the other hand, all of the good intentions and lofty dreams of the independent media are not readily accepted by the Bosnian public. People continue to be suspicious of independent media, their messages and their affiliations with opposition parties and international organizations.

This article has discussed the uses and perceptions of media in Bosnia and explained how the features of propaganda and nationalism that have historically influenced citizens' perceptions of the media continue to influence perceptions today. As pointed out previously, exclusivity, or control, over the media can lead to nationalist propaganda. Because of the legacy of media control in the former Yugoslavia, citizens possess very poor media literacy skills. For 40 years, public sources of information have been regulated and controlled by the state to the point where citizens collectively mistrust all passionate messages, even messages intended to give voice to alternative positions and question the dominant political structure.

Another important issue raised in this article has been how the new commercial media should market themselves as independent in light of Yugoslavia's oppressive past. As the focus group interviews indicate, a cross-section of

citizens in Bosnia do not view the independent media as 'objective', pointing out that all media support someone's agenda. Their observations are accurate. The independent media do represent particular ideologies – democratic ideologies. The specter of decades of nationalistic rhetoric has left citizens in Bosnia suspicious. Instead of the new, independent media being perceived as voices of reason in a wilderness of propaganda, they are perceived as 'alternative' propagandists.

For the independent media sources to differentiate themselves from the propagandists, they will require a new model of media, one that recognizes that the current model of a 'free marketplace of ideas' will not suffice in an environment where all ideas are equally suspect. The independent media need to change the public perception that all media support some agenda. The suggestions offered in this article – clarification of the concept of independent media, societal media literacy and increased training for young journalists – are starting points for independent media to build increased acceptance with the Bosnian people. There are many challenges ahead for the new commercial media. They must work to convince the public that they are really alternative voices, or voices of a future that could be.

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