(Im)Possible State(s):
Media Representations of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Republika Srpska in the Entity-Based Media in Light of the Migration 'Crisis'

By

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Abstract

Present research explores the ways in which Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and one of its entities, Republika Srpska (RS), were represented in the entity-based public broadcaster RTRS in light of the 2018 migration 'crisis'. The study is completed through a discourse analysis of the RTRS informative news show *Dnevnik 2* during the period of four months (May – August 2018). The conducted analysis demonstrates that the ruling party in RS, Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), is utilizing its control over public broadcaster with aim to frame the migration phenomena as the 'crisis' of the state. While portraying the BiH state as ineffective, with porous borders, and being controlled by the Bosniak interests solely, the RTRS narrative contests the BiH statehood itself. At the same time, and inseparable from the representations of BiH, depictions of RS as a 'state-like being' that controls its territory and protect its population, is framed as an antithesis of ineffective, and thus superflous, BiH. In this sense, the research contributes to the understanding of the role of the media in the deconstruction or contestation of states from the perspective of subnational entities. Simultaneously, the study reveals the strategies present in the media through which aspiring states are represented as states.

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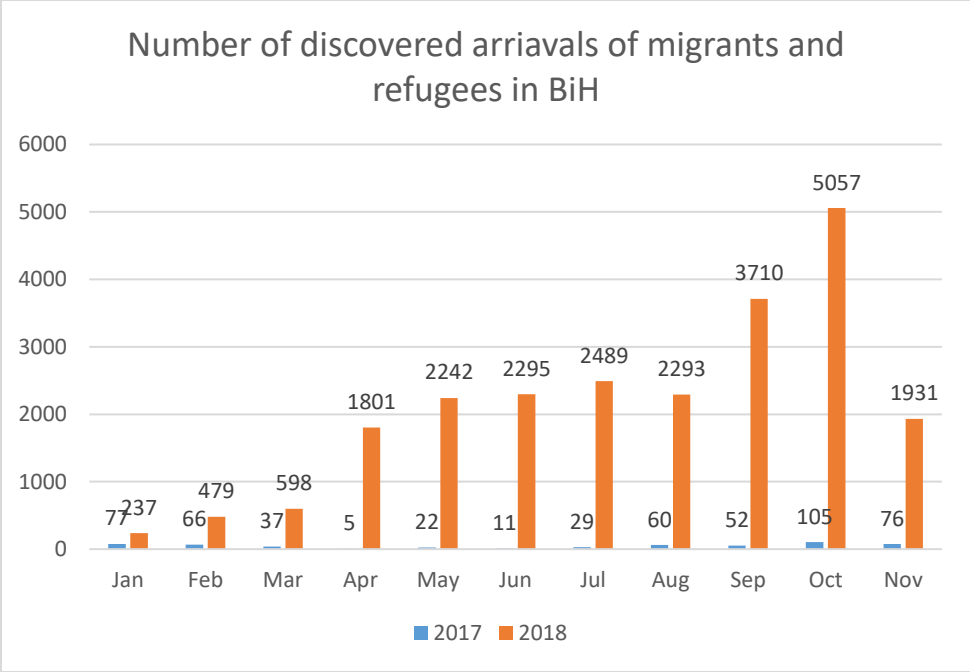
But nothing is inevitable until it happens.
There is no such thing as historical destiny.
Struggle is all.

A. Hemon, *My Mother and the Failed Experiment of Yugoslavia*

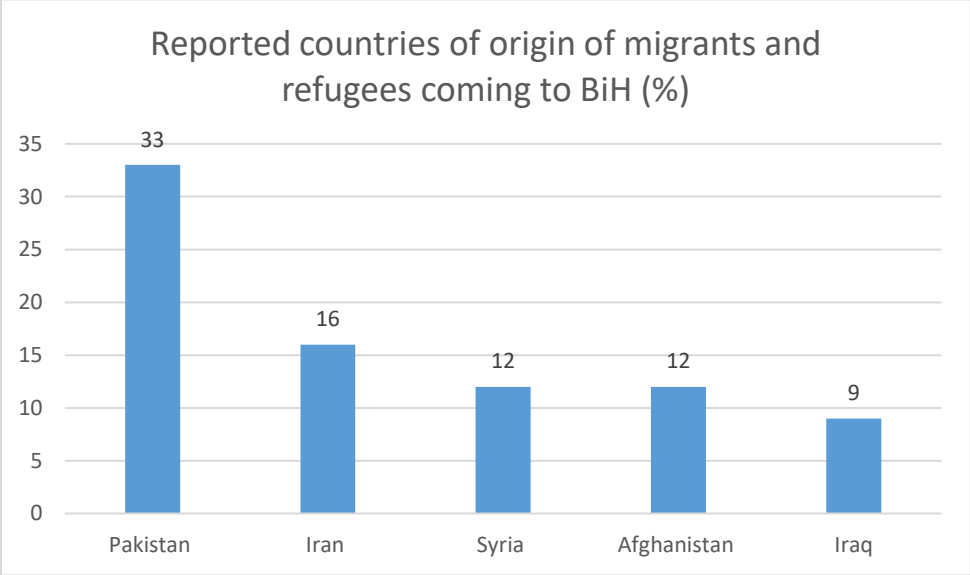
Introduction

The summer of 2015 is often termed as 'long summer of migration', as over 1 million migrants and refugees entered Europe by December that year.[1] In the early stages of what was termed migration 'crisis', many countries of the Balkans[2] - with exception of Bosnia and Hercegovina (BiH) – served as transit places for migrants/refugees[3] who were travelling towards other parts of Europe. However, things slowly started to change in the fall of 2015 when Hungary completed its fence with Serbia, and Croatia followed suit in closing all but one of its border crossings (Weber, 2016). Not long after that, in March 2016, the EU-Turkey refugee agreement was signed in the expectation that the EU would be 'relieved' of migrant flows.[4] But as EU countries were altering their migration policy, the movement of migrants changed as well, and in 2018 BiH became what metaphorically can be termed a temporary waiting room for people wanting to reach more prosperous parts of Europe. In line with this, UNHCR report states "during the first half of 2018, BiH witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of migrants and refugees entering its territory: from 237 recorded in January to 2 557 in May and 2 493 in July."[5] As the number of migrants/refugees from the Middle East and South Asia was increasing (see graph 1 and 2), and as their presence was more and more visible on the streets of Sarajevo, the notion of migration 'crisis' entered both media and political discourses in this Balkan country.

[1] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35158769
[2] According to Weber (2017), "The Balkan route went from Turkey via Greece (and to a lesser part Bulgaria) through Macedonia and Serbia via Hungary, and from the autumn 2015 via Croatia and Slovenia, to Austria.
[3] Although I am aware that migrant and refugee are two distinct legal categories, in this work I will use the terms interchangeably as I believe that the distinction between the two is not always easy to establish, and that the use of former only serves to delegitimize the movement of a certain group of people (see De Genova 2002)
[4] Deutche Welle, The EU-Turkey refugee agreement: A review.
[5] OSCE report. Assessment: Migrant and Refugee Situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina



Graph 1: Number of discovered arrivals of migrants and refugees in BiH (UNDP report)



Graph 2: Reported countries of origin of migrants and refugees coming to BiH (UNDP report)

In BiH, like in other European countries, the discussions on migration 'crisis' brought to the fore the question of borders, sovereignty, nation and the Other, namely, all the constitutive parts of what is generally imagined to be the (nation-)state. According to Makarychev (2018), migration

'crisis' in Europe has contributed to "(re)territorialization of politics and the binary conceptualization of Self-Other distinctions." Hence, the media and political discourses on migration re-activated a particular imagery of states, one that was deemed *passé* in times of increased globalization and supranationalism. But the re-territorialization of politics and Self-Other distinction did not only emerge on the level of states, they also appeared on subnational levels. Such was the case in multiethnic, highly decentralized and territorially partitioned BiH, where the migration crisis activated internal boundaries,[6] brought to question state prerogatives, and served as an occasion to strengthen the lines of imagined communities. This was especially true for the political elites of the ruling Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) in Republika Srpska (RS) entity, who used the migration 'crisis' to once again discursively contest the statehood of BiH and put forward their vision of RS as an (aspiring) state. In a notch, migration crisis activated particular representations of both state and the entity.

Therefore, the thesis is situated in the wider literature on media and nationalism, where the former is seen as an important arena for the construction of nations and the spread of nationalism (Gellner, 1983; Anderson 1991; Billing 1995). It can be argued that authors working within this field largely build their argument on Billing's (1995) concept of banal nationalism "which refers to subtle, unconscious and unnoticed reproductions of both individual nations and the world of nations" (Szulc 2017). Nevertheless, one critique to a large part of this literature is that it "easily lends itself to the false assumption that (…) modern national communicative spaces are internally homogenous and that their boundaries coincide with state borders" (Mihelj 2011:2). Moreover,

[6] On May 18, 2018 the (regional/cantonal) police of Hercegovina-Neretva canton stopped the buses with refugees/migrants organized by the national government on the 'entrance point' in the canton and held them there for five hours. See more at https://www.rferl.org/a/bosnian-croats-turn-back-buses-carrying-migrants-from-sarajevo/29235766.html

many of the works focus on the representation of Self and the Other[7] (for comprehensive overview see Mihelj 2011), while little or no research has been done on how the representations of state (and subnational entity) as such are part of the wider nationalist strategy. It is precisely here that I situate my work.

In line with this, the thesis goes beyond the focus on the imagined community and bring in the spatial aspect as well and investigate how both imagined community and spatial imagining of both RS and BiH is established. Kostovicova (2004)[8] and Björdhal (2018)[9] have both tackled the topic of spatial imagining of RS, but what both are missing is empirically grounded research and the dialectic nature of constituting the entity and the BiH state which is present in this work. Furthermore, even though it can be argued that RS political elites have challenged BiH statehood since its establishment in 1995 (see Kostovicova 2004), I posit that strategies of each ruling coalition have been different since they are situated in a determined historical moment and are strongly conditioned by the changing relationships among the political representatives of three constituent peoples in BiH (Bosniaks, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs). That being said, this thesis focuses on the ways in which the increasingly authoritarian government in RS (Bieber 2018), led by SNSD which has been in power for 12 years now,[10] imagines, performs and spatializes both RS and BiH and their respective imagined communities.

The starting point of the thesis is that "contested process of nation making and state formation" is an everyday practice, one that takes place in various arenas, mass media being one of them (Alonso 1994). Moreover, I argue that social and geographical entities (together with their

[7] In case of BiH see Sládaček and Džihana contribution to Pal Kolsto's (2009) edited volume and Radović's (2012) chapter in Communication Management Quarterly
[8] Republika Srpska and its Boundaries in Bosnian Serb Geographical Narratives in Post-Dayton Period
[9] Republika Srpska: Imaginary, performance and spatialization
[10] https://balkaninsight.com/2018/02/25/opposition-bloc-nominates-govedarica-for-republika-srpska-president-02-25-2018-1/

inhabitants) are not "things in the world" (Brubaker 2002), but that they are created in a "complex relationship between political power and social life" (Jeffry 2013). At the same time, since states do not exist without the subjectivity component – i.e. the ways people imagine this 'entity' –, the representations of state can be taken as proxy for the way some citizens might experience the state. Having in mind that inhabitants of RS do not have much contact with the BiH state – as much of the jurisdiction is transferred to lower levels of government – it can be argued that media representations are an important field where they 'meet' the BiH state. With this in mind, the present work focuses on media representations that emerged in the entity based public broadcaster RTRS in light of the migration crisis, as the latter serves as a perfect prism through which images about both RS and BiH were constructed. The underlying assumption being that representations of state in the media tell us about the "strategies through which "the imagined" becomes "second nature", embodied in (…) lived experience" (ibid., p.382). Concretely, they tell us how the national subjects, together with national space, and the larger abstract political entity called the state, are either rendered real or contested.

The importance of this topic lies in the fact that representations of state (and its non-state counterparts) are indivisible of the wider power struggle for defining social entities and their subjects, i.e. of the world-making practices (Alonso 1994). In this sense, if BiH is deemed incapable of dealing with the migration 'crisis', an often-implicit message here is that the entity is not. Therefore, representations of BiH state cannot be understood separately from the power games on the lower levels as, by contesting the authority of the BiH state, the lower levels of government are strengthening their own, and vice versa. Furthermore, representations in the media are also crucial for the ways people come to experience and perceive the mentioned entities, whether they see them as futile or necessary, etc. In light of the above-said, the questions that will be guiding

my analysis are: How is BiH (together with their territory and imagined community) represented in RTRS discourses on migration? How is RS (together with their territory and imagined community) represented in RTRS discourses on migration? Why precisely these representations are put forward in the media? What are the possible effects of these representations?

In order to answer these questions, I start by presenting my theoretical framework in chapter 1 which mainly focuses on the ways in which the state is conceptualized within academia. Since this concept has been approached from many different perspectives, I situate my work within political anthropology, as I find it the most suitable. Furthermore, inseparable from theorizing the state is the concept of nation-state which, although not being synonymous to the former, still affects to a great extent the way that we understand the state. For this reason, I devote one section to what Aretxaga (2003) rightfully called the "seemingly self-evident link" – to the notion of nation-state. Lastly, I outline how migration relates to the nation-state, and by following the performative approach introduced by Butler, I demonstrate how the two are inseparable from one another. More precisely, the concept of migrant only exists in relation to state, i.e. to the notion of national (or a citizen). In this sense, migration becomes a field where the nation-state is both contested and created, but I will mainly focus on the second option.

In chapter 2, I offer background information on BiH, its institutional and administrative set up, as each nation-building and state-making process is deeply conditioned by historical and current institutional structures. In line with this, the mentioned section provides the necessary context for understanding the empirical findings. In chapter 3, I outline the methods used in this thesis and provide justification for the choice of the media outlet. The following chapter is reserved for the presentation of empirical findings and their discussion. The last part of the thesis is reserved for concluding remarks.

1. Theoretical Framework: What is a State?

The present chapter essentially tries to answer the question of what do we mean when we say 'the state'. Since the concept of state travels across disciplines, here I would focus mostly on contributions from political anthropology, nationalism studies, and partly sociology. In this sense, the chapter provides a short history of the concept of state, with special attention to how state is conceptualized within the cultural turn in anthropology. Next, the relationship between the state and nation is discussed, while the last section is devoted to the ways in which migration and the state are interdependent.

1.1 What is the State: An Overview

The concept of state, like any other in social sciences, has its particular social genesis, but what may be specific to theorizing the state is the perception that it is endowed with "meta-capital"[11] (Bourdieu 1999), namely, the ability to command an imaginary of power and simultaneously represent a "screen for political desire as well as fear" (Aretxaga 2003). In line with this, Ferguson and Gupta (2002:982) proposed the term "vertical encompassment", i.e. the idea that the state is perceived and experienced as "an institution somehow "above" civil society, community and family," representing the last concentric circle integrating all instances of social life, starting from family to nation. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that Anter (2014:9) posits, "Every attempt to define "the State" runs up against the question of whether such a constantly changing, abstract, complex structure can be reduced to one clear concept." Notwithstanding the difficulties to capture the "elusive body of the state" (Aretxaga 2003), social

[11] Bourdieu called this *capital étatique*, defined as a collection of different forms of capital with which the state is endowed: capital of physical force, economic capital, informational capital, and symbolic capital

scientists have tried to delimit its boundaries. Even though the literature on the state is much richer and not so easy to compartmentalize, I will argue that it can be reduced to two broad approaches: 1) institutionalist, and 2) cultural. In this thesis I will follow the latter approach, but first the main premises of the former will be outlined since they provide the intellectual backdrop against which the second approach emerges.

Conventional social science theories of the state largely draw from Weberian or Marxist understanding of the concept, namely, the state is presented "as a set of institutions that perform specific functions related to governance and security" (Sharma and Gupta 2006:10). In line with this, Max Weber posits that state has monopoly over legal violence and adds other criteria such as "the political, institutional and organizational character of the state, the nature of [its] administrative staff, of legitimation and of order" (Weber in Anter, 2014:11). Similar to Weber's definition, much of the Marxist tradition defines the state in terms of State apparatus[12] and State power, where the control of the latter is the objective of the ruling classes (see Althusser 2006). Thus, in both approaches the state is perceived as an apparatus which regulates "diverse areas of social life such as law, education, health, crime, national security" (Aretxaga 2003). What these two perspectives have in common is that they conceive the state as "an analyzed given" (Nagengast 1994: 116), an understanding that will be challenged by those espousing the cultural approach to studying the state, such is the case in this thesis.

1.2 State in the Cultural Turn

The cultural turn in studying the state is mostly confined to anthropology and it offers an alternative conceptualization to the 'state as a unitary power' and an 'entity above society'. It can be argued that this approach seeks to capture what Taussig (1997) called the "subjectivity of the

[12] Namely, the police, the courts, the prisons, the army, the government, the public administration

state being". In order to arrive at what is meant by this, I will start with the three main premises on which the cultural turn built its edifice. Firstly, Aretxaga (2003:395) posits that "Foucault's analysis of power as a field of multiple forces challenged the notion of state as a unitary center of power." Secondly, those subscribing to the cultural approach challenge the notion that culture is solely produced by the state, and instead affirm that states (and state-like entities) are effects of cultural processes, thus collapsing the state-society distinction (Sharma and Gupta 2006:10). Thirdly, as opposed to being "an analyzed given" (Nagengast 1994: 116), it is understood as constantly being in the process of (de)construction (Steinmetz 1999:9).

Moreover, it can be argued that the cultural turn in studying the state relies on the notion of performativity, initially introduced by Judith Butler with regards to gender. Performativity implies that any subject – in this case, the state – lacks any ontological foundations, i.e. that it does not exist as pre-given. In the article entitled *Performative States*, Weber (1990:90) argues that states, "like sex and gender for Butler, are forever in the realm of discourse and cultural, not in the realm of the natural." Furthermore, the representation, or, alternatively, "the identity of the state is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results" (Weber 1990:90). The mentioned expressions often come in the form of reiterative and citational practices (see Butler 1992). It is precisely through discourses and practices – namely, representations – that states come into being. The implications of this approach are twofold. First, it means that the prerogatives and the existence of a state can be questioned on the discursive level, such that its legitimacy and imaginary is contested to the point of its futility. Second, performativity allows one to investigate how an aspiring state – in this case, a subnational entity RS – can be (discursively, and beyond) constructed as a state, something that I find very useful in my case.

This being said, it is important to keep in mind that "Neither the shape of the state, nor its oppositional cultures, can be properly understood without the context of mutually formative (and continuing) struggle between them, in other words: historically" (Corrigan and Sayer quoted in Alonso 1994:380). Said differently, performances of state (or state-like entities) together with their accompanying representations, are never created *ex nihilio*, rather, they are deeply embedded in past historical experiences and institutional frameworks. Consequently, each state-making and nation-building process is context specific, which is what made Anderson (1991) suggest that nationalism is of modular character. In line with this, state can be understood as a "*field of power*" (Bourdieu 1999:58) where different actors try to fill this concept with a meaning that will ensure their power. One arena where representations of state are present is in mass media, which provide a space for actors to articulate their visions of the (aspiring) state. Thus, I follow Gupta (1995:385) who argues, "representations of the state are constituted, contested and transformed in public culture," which in my case is in the mass media.

1.3 State and its Representations in Mass Media

Within the cultural turn, there are two focus areas in studying the state: 1) representations that produce the idea of state (Sharma and Gupta 2006), or to 2) subjective encounters with the state (i.e. people's experience with bureaucracy, security apparatus, etc.). Since I am focusing on the representations of state in the media, I am, in a sense, taking a middle ground approach between the two options. Even though the discourse about the state in the media can be qualified in the first focus area, the fact that the larger public is also exposed to these representations, leads me to suggest that "representations and performances of statehood crucially shape people's perceptions about the nature of the state" (Gupta 1995; Sharma and Gupta 2006:18). Hence, media analysis, besides providing us with an insight to how political actors imagine the state also reveal the modes

"by which the state is symbolically represented to its employees and to citizens of the nation" (Gupta 1995:377).

At the same time, it should be emphasized that although discourses in the media can provide insights in how the state is imagined, they do not represent the privileged form of knowledge. More precisely, "not everyone imagines the state in quite the same manner" (Gupta 1995:390), as "the impact of state power is felt differently at various levels of national community" (Aretxaga 2003). Similarly, the same principle can be applied to the actors invoking the state, as representations of the state largely depend on actor's position in the overall hierarchy (Gupta 1995). More precisely, state "can be constructed in different ways at different levels of the body politic" (Stacul 2016:224). Due to my choice of media outlet – the entity-based public broadcaster RTRS –, my focus here is on the ways how subnational (i.e. entity) politicians imagine and perform the BiH state and RS. Nevertheless, and as the empirical analysis will demonstrate, actors from state institutions will provide a different perspective, thus reinforcing the notion that state is essentially a "field of power". More precisely, Haraway (in Gupta 1995) is right when she suggests that there is no privileged point from which to visualize "the state", only numerous situated knowledges.

In line with this, state can be represented in a multiplicity of ways: as an entity protecting its citizens, or as being remote and careless, thus "generating a discourse of state deficit, as insufficient state which has abandoned its citizens" (Aretxaga 2003). Between these two representations exists a range of other options, which will also be of my interest. Furthermore, as I have argued that states and state-like entities do not exist *a priori* one way to empirically investigate them is to pay attention to "state processes and practices", i.e. to state effects (Trouillot 2001:126) through which states come into being:

> (1) an *isolation effect*, that is the production of atomized individualized subjects molded and modeled for governance as part of an undifferentiated by specific

> "public"; (2) an *identification effect*, that is, a realignment of the atomized subjectivities along collective lines within which individuals recognize themselves as the same; (3) a *legibility effect*, that is the production of both language and a knowledge for governance and of theoretical and empirical tools that classify and regulate collectivities; and (4) a *spatialization effect*, that is, the production of boundaries and jurisdiction.

I argue that by looking at these effects, one can obtain a rather complex image of the state and its subjects, namely, its representation. As it can be noticed, representation goes beyond simple identification of imagined community (or the Self-Other dichotomy), it includes territorial aspect of the state and also state competencies. In this sense, by looking at state effects one can obtain a more complete understanding of the state. The mentioned effects will be elaborated further in the section on migration as they will serve as guiding principles for the empirical analysis.

1.3.1 Nation-State, or, the untenable hyphen?

So far I have been discussing only the notion of state, while disregarding one of its often used synonyms, namely, the nation(-state). Even though the relationship between the two parts of the "hyphenated dyad" (Aretxaga 2003) is at best ambiguous (Trouillot 1990) it, nevertheless, should be addressed. But before proceeding to discuss the link between the nation and state the definition of the former concept is needed. Although there are many approaches to what nation is, starting from more objectivist *a priori* criteria to more subjectivist ones (see Hobsbawm 1993),[13] here I follow Verdery (1993) as her conceptualization fits very well into the political anthropology approach followed in this thesis. The author posits that the nation "is an ideological construct essential to assigning subject positions in the modern state, as well as in the international order" (ibid, p. 38). Furthermore, similarly like the state, the nation is not predetermined, but rather it is

[13] Hobsbawm additionally differentiates from more objectivist *a priori* criteria that defines a nation, to more subjectivist ones. For an overview of many definitions of nation see Hobsbawm *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*

a symbol, and as such, its meaning is ambiguous and interpreted differently in order to mobilize different audiences (Verdery 1993). In this sense, one can conceptualize the nation as an imagined community, putting the emphasis on 'imagining' and 'creation' (Anderson 1991). Therefore, although state and nation-state are not completely synonymous, they are nevertheless closely related phenomena.

Having said this, a caveat is in order. Even though in many instances the term nation is conflated with ethnicity, here I will offer a brief clarification of the latter. According to the Alonso (1994:391), ethnicity is "an effect of particularizing projects of state formation",[14] as the latter "generates categories of Self and Other within polity". One way in which the relationship between these two categories is established is through boundary setting practices (Barth 1969), which are always contextual. The important thing to note here is that ethnicity is fluid, but the "fluidity is limited by hegemonic processes of inscription, and by the relations of forces in society" (ibid., p. 392). In this sense, those designated as Other in the past might not be the Other of today, as the strength and importance of boundary changes over time. Furthermore, when social boundaries are joined with territorial ones, ethnic groups, if having claims for proper state, come very close to being conceptualized as a nation. It can be argued that in the case of an aspiring state the more appropriate term for its imagined community would be an ethnic group (rather than a nation), but sometimes ethnic groups are presented and referred to as nations precisely to (at least on discursive level) come closer to the desired status of a nation. In a notch, although ethnicity and nation are two distinct analytical categories, they operate in similar ways, as they both categorize those who belong and those who do not, only on different levels.

[14] In this sense, nation is homogenizing effect of state formation

Therefore, I posit that the nation-state is one of the aspects of representation of the state. The isolation and identification effects mentioned above (section 1.3) correspond to what is termed a nation as states are often perceived as producing "a particular kind of subjects as an atomized member of a public" (Trouillot 2001:131). In this reading, the state is understood as a container for a particular community, where the link between the two is realized through the principle of citizenship, where the "imagined national state (…) is supposed to provide for its citizens" (Aretxaga 2003:396). Nevertheless, as Aretxaga (2003) warns, the idea of homogenous and compact national community "clashes with the actual experience of marginalization, disempowerment and violence." Besides determining the nationals of a 'state', the nation simultaneously designates those who do not belong, i.e. the Others. As already mentioned, the Others need not be outside the nation as they could also be found on the inside.

While aware of the fantasy of a nation-state, in this work I will rely on this concept as I believe it still holds a privileged position in our way of thinking about the world (see Bourdieu 1999). Thus, I will refer to the work of Malkki (1995) who elaborates on the "national order of things", something that will be clearer when the concept of migration is introduced in the following section. Furthermore, several authors point out that although the nation-state is in retreat, so the speak, it is, paradoxically, also reified through certain processes. In this sense, Trouillot (2001) affirms that the current century presents us with "two contradictory images: The power of national state sometimes seems more visible and encroaching and sometimes less effective and less relevant."[15] In my view, it is particularly in the field of migration where today the nation-state comes to reassert itself as the next section will show.

[15] None of this means that the relevance of the state is declining, if by "state" we mean more than the apparatus of national gov. If the state is indeed a set of practices and processes and their effects as much as a way to look at them, we need to track down these practices, processes, and effects (Trouillot 2001:131).

1.4 Migration 'Crisis' and the Representation of the (Nation-)State

Having in mind that states – or better said, the discourses and practices that form the idea of state – are incessantly constituted and changing, the migration 'crisis' serves as an event which delimits my research. In this sense I reflect Gupta's (1995) approach to the state as he examined it through the discourses of corruption which, in this thesis, will be substituted for migration. In line with this, the author argues "I see it [corruption] as a mechanism through which "the state" itself is discursively constituted" (Gupta 1995:376). Moreover, the discourse of corruption comes to be understood as "a means by which a fairly complex picture of the state was symbolically constructed in public culture" (ibid.). The choice of substituting the discourse of corruption with the one on migration is not arbitrary, as the following lines will demonstrate how migration relates to four state effects outlined above. It is precisely the correspondence between the two that make the migration 'crisis' a suitable lens for observing the representations of the state. But first I will introduce the notion of migration and how it relates to the (nation-)state.

The dominant imaginary of the state as a bounded and sovereign national space is often deemed as challenged by migrants and refugees crossing state borders. Similarly, Bigo (2002:65) argues that the perception of immigration "as a risk is based on our conception of the state as a body or container for the polity." In the popular understanding, the 'uncontrolled' movement of people across borders points to a demise of the nation-state (Sharma and Gupta 2006).[16] Nevertheless, according to performative approach espoused here, "the "crisis" resulting from the latter's [migrant/refugee] entry into the former's sovereign space is, counter-intuitively, *essential* to the nation-state because its identity can only be articulated in relation to the differences (i.e.

[16] None of this means that the relevance of the state is declining, if by "state" we mean more than the apparatus of national gov. If the state is indeed a set of practices and processes and their effects as much as a way to look at them, we need to track down these practices, processes, and effects (Trouillot 2001, p. 131).

threats)" (Feldman 2005:214, emphasis in the original). Therefore, "nation-state is constituted in practices that reproduce, and are produced by, such binary oppositions as citizens/alien, (…), security/crisis, safety/threat, and domestic/foreign" (Feldman 2005: 214). Thus, it can be argued that the arrival of migrants, i.e. Others, opens a new arena "in which the state and its enemies are created and recreated as powerful fictional realities" (Aretxaga 2003:402).

Furthermore, the discussion of migration and the state is deeply embedded in what Malkki (1995), and later Czajka (2014), called "national order of things". In this perspective, the status of migrants and refugees is always seen from the vantage point of imagined nation-state which is perceived as homogenous territorial unit under threat from the outsiders.[17] In line with this De Genova (2002:422) affirms, "illegality" – or the qualification of someone as a migrant or a refugee – "is a juridical status that entails a social relation to the state." Hence, the identification of an outsider simultaneously implies the identification of "us". When considering the constitution of "us" and "them" it would be beneficial to introduce the concept of cultural fundamentalism (Stolcke 1995) which condenses this worldview. While discussing new rhetoric of exclusion in Europe, Stolcke (1995) argues that racism has been substituted by cultural fundamentalism, namely, "the assumption that the territorial state and its people are founded on cultural heritage that is bounded, compact and distinct." In this sense, current anti-immigrant discourses and policies are founded on the assumption that danger comes from those with a different culture, those identified as strangers, foreigners, and Others to a national community. Additionally, it is implied that cultures should be segregated spatially – rather than hierarchically, as is the case with racism – "each culture in its place" (Stolcke 1995:8). Thus, the notion of 'national order of things'

[17] It is true that there are categories of good and bad migrants. Conventionally, the migrants and refugees that are more welcomed are those that are culturally similar to us

essentially points to the widespread naturalization of the nation-state order and "capacity of states to impose themselves as a frame of mind" when considering migration (Bigo 2002:67).

Similarly, the qualification of migration as an issue is a "social construction" that allows those representing the state to manage it and consequently to "justify their own authority" (Bigo 2002). Additionally, De Genova (2002) rightly argues that the notion of migration 'crisis' that emerged in the media and public discourses since the 2015 is "largely equated (…) with the crisis of control over the ostensible borders of Europe" rather than with the plight of people moving across borders.[18] The representation of nation-state as territorially and culturally bounded makes "the metaphor of the penetration of something foreign [migrant/refugee] into a body (…) [of nation-state] so powerful" (Bigo 2002). On the level of language, this metaphor is most often expressed in framing of the migration 'crisis' as a "tidal wave" (Bigo, 2002) or an "immigration flood" (Stolcke, 1995), i.e. as something inherently threatening to the 'island' of nation-state. In order to prevent the danger, 'we' should protect 'our way of life' from 'them', because they are culturally different (Stolcke 1995).

1.4.1 Migration 'Crisis' and State Effects

Having presented the relationship between nation-state and migration, now it is time to outline the ways in which migration 'crisis' serves as a prism for the state effects. To observe the state effects that emerge in discourses and practices on migration is to follow the ways in which those identified as the state enact their fantasy vis-à-vis their population and Others (Taussig 2011; Aretxaga 2003). Since isolation and identification effects were discussed in relation to the nation, more attention will be given to the latter two effects. Nevertheless, when it comes to migration and

[18] At the same time, he argues against victimization of 'people on the move across borders' as this takes away their agency, and represents them solely in terms of objects, rather than subjects, of their own destinies – a point I agree with

the first two effects, it is important to mention that often migrant/refugee is portrayed as ultimate Other. In line with this, Bigo (2002) argues that the migrant is an inverted image of the good citizen.

When it comes to the legibility effect it can be reduced to what Aretxaga (2003) called "the fantasy of total control". James C. Scott's (1998) book *Seeing Like a State* is one of the most often quoted works in this regard, as the author is essentially interested in the ways how, what we call state, ""sees", categorizes and attempts to manage an otherwise illegible sea of humanity" (Feldman 2005 following Scott). More broadly, the legibility effect is closely related to Foucault's notion of governmentality, i.e. the production of censuses, maps, and different kind of legibility tools about the population. When it comes to migration, the legibility is related to 'reading' the threat to the nation, and 'putting it under control'. Thus, for example, the existence of statistics on the number of migrants in a country is part of the legibility effect together with knowing their countries of origin and other relevant data. It can be argued that state bureaucracies that partially fail in this endeavor could be labelled as incompetent, further leading to negative representations of the states in question, as they are 'unable' to exert the 'fantasy of control' over their territory.

Last effect to be discussed here is the spatialization one which, according to Trouillot (2001), can be boiled down to "production of boundaries and jurisdiction". In this sense, (aspiring) states are necessarily imagined "as reified entities with particular spatial properties" (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:982). More precisely, "the transformation of space into territory (…) has been central to nationalism" as it relies on the "conceptualization of people as living within a single, shared spatial frame" (Alonso 1994:382). In line with this, it can be argued, "territorial boundaries are one of the major elements of ethnic and political identity," as the latter are always tied or 'placed' within a 'bounded' territory (Kolossov, 2005: 615). Similarly like sociocultural boundaries, the

territorial ones reinforce the separation between inside and outside of a particular community. It can be argued that the first order borders are those between states, thus distinguishing between nationals and non-nationals, which in this case can be migrants/refugees, and second order border which distinguish between the Self and the internal Other.

However, it must be noted that territoriality is "primary geographic expression of social power" (Sack 1986:5). In this sense, it is closely related to sovereignty as an expression of that power, or better said, of control. What has to be emphasized is that borders within which sovereignty is exercised need not only be that of states, as borders are now understood more as "socio-territorial constructs" (Van Houtum 2005). This understanding opens space for investigating different types of borders and boundaries, be they administrative, regional, poorly enforced, etc. These insights point to the changes in border studies, where borders – together with sovereignty – have increasingly been seen "as being shaped and produced by a multiplicity of actors, movements and discourses" that seek to control people's relations through control of the space, i.e. territoriality (De Genova et al. 2015). In a notch, 'actors and discourses' that determine the movement of people over a certain territory come to form a border regime.

Having in mind the above-mentioned, here I would to summarize main aspects of my theoretical approach. In this thesis, embedded within the cultural turn, I define a state as a set of discourses and practices (Nagengast 1994; Abrams 1988; Trouillout 2001; Aretxaga 2003; Sharma and Gupta 2006) that form the *idea* of state (Abrams 1988, emphasis in the original). Therefore, I echo Brown (1995:174 in Aretxaga 2003) who posits, "the state is not a thing, system or subject, but a significantly unbounded terrain of powers and techniques, an ensemble of discourses (…) and practices" which, in my understanding, form a particular representation of state. Said

differently, state is not a material object of study,[19] but rather, it is "essentially imaginative construction" (Abrams 1988:76) that comes to life through discourses and practices. Moreover, as I espouse the performativity approach, I posit that representations of (aspiring) states are more than just that, as their "identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results (Weber 1999:82 following Butler). At the same time, it should be emphasized that this imaginative construction, or a representation, is always formulated within the existing historical and institutional frameworks and legacies. Furthermore, in order to make the concept of state more suitable for analysis I pay attention to the three[20] state effects through which, according to Trouillot (2001:), states (and state-like entities) come into being: identification, legibility and spatialization effect.

[19] Although it can manifest itself in material forms (see Sharma and Gupta 2006, p. 18)

[20] Essentially there are four state effects outlined by Trouillot (2001) I subsume the isolation effect under the identification one

2. Context: Dayton BiH and the Migration Crisis

As I established earlier, contested processes of nation-making and state formation (or representations) are conditioned by historical processes and present institutional set-up, the following chapter will briefly outline the history of the BiH state, starting from the period of its independence in 1992. The emphasis is on the competing, and sometimes clashing, visions for the emerging BiH state, as the aim is to outline main processes and actors that affected its creation in the present form. In line with this, Dayton Peace Agreement (1995) which is dealt with in the second section, represents the most important milestone in the creation of post-war BiH as it inscribes in law a particular vision of the state and its imagined community. In the last part of the chapter, I revisit the migration crisis in BiH in order to provide information that did not find its place in the introduction of the thesis.

2.1 The emergence of BiH as an independent state

In the early 1990s it was becoming increasingly clear that Yugoslavia would cease to exist in its current form, as three of its constituent republics, Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia declared independence in 1991. As the borders of six republics were deemed as only possible limits within which self-determination can be exercised[21] BiH soon found itself in a puzzling position. The issue was that the new state model needed to accommodate a societal structure that was simultaneously "composite and integral" (Lovrenović 2014) or, more precisely, it needed to account for the "uni-multi-intercultural nature of BiH"[22] imagined community (Stipić, 2019). In line with this, BiH is

[21] See opinions of the Arbitration Commission of the Conference on Yugoslavia, known as Badinter Commission, which was set up by the Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community on 27 August 1991 to provide legal advice for the dissolution of Yugoslavia

[22] According to the author, "BiH is imaginatively constructed via competing visions as: 1) conflictual or harmonious sum of parts implied in the notion of multi-cultural ambivalence (democracy of constitutive peoples); 2) uniform national project (unicultural Bosnian citizenship), and 3) existing potential of multiple cultural interactions, where common identity is not simply articulated as sum of its parts but as distinct and dynamic cultural artefact

a multiethnic country where the dominant groups are Bosnian Muslims (from 1993 commonly referred to as Bosniaks), Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, together with other citizens who do not identify with either of these categories. The three mentioned ethnic groups "speak the same language and have largely similar traditions and cultural habits" while the main difference is in the realm of religion "with Serbs adhering to the Serbian Orthodox Church, Croats following the Catholic Church and Bosniaks being Muslims" (Bieber, 2005:2). Consequently, it can be argued that the relationship between the Self and Other is a constant in everyday life in BiH as the three communities share many 'traits', while at the same time being distinct. The important question that emerges here is how to institutionally accommodate all these complexities.

As history showed, the three ethno-national parties that won the elections of the 1990 – SDS (Serb Democratic Party)[23], SDA (Party of Democratic Action),[24] and HDZ BiH (Croat Democratic Union)[25] – could not agree on their vision for post-Yugoslav BiH. The political representatives of Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks – envisioned BiH as a sovereign state, while SDS wanted the country to remain in the political community of what was left of Yugoslavia or, alternatively, for the country to be divided into ethnic territories (Maksić, 2017:5). For this reason, in March 1992 a referendum on country's independence from Yugoslavia was organized. Political representatives of Bosniaks (SDA) and of Croats (HDZ BiH) encouraged their respective populations to vote for independence, while SDS called its supporters to boycott it (Bieber 2005). With the majority of population voting in favor, BiH became an independent state on April 6 (Hromadžić 2015), leaving

constantly shaped and elaborated by all of its historically contributing factors."

[23] SDS party was formed on 12 July 1990. Radovan Karadžić was its founding member, and its president from July 1990 to July 1996. He was a Chairman of the National Security Council of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was created on 27 March 1992. He was also the sole President of the RS and the Supreme Commander of the RS armed forces from 17 Dec. 1992 until about 19 July 1996 (ICTY Case No. IT-95-5/18-PT, p. 26337)

[24] SDA is the main Bosniak party in BiH

[25] HDZ BiH is the main Bosnian Croat party in BiH

Bosnian Serb leadership dissatisfied. As the following years will show, the declaration of independence did not signify an end to the conflicting imaginations of the BiH state, rather it ushered in a war. Sadly, the political negotiations for a new state moved from the political sphere to the battlefield.

Soon after the declaration of independence, came the shift in leadership of HDZ ushering an end in support for "multi-ethnic character and territorial indivisibility of Bosnia" (Bjelakovic and Strazzi 1999) and the beginning of a military campaign for creating an ethnically pure space for Bosnian Croats – Herceg-Bosna. Bosnian Serb leadership pursued a similar strategy as they declared the existence of Republic of the Serb People of Bosnia and Herzegovina – later to be renamed Republika Srpska –, whose faith would fluctuate between an independent republic and joining Serbia (Stjepanović 2015). War time president of RS, Radovan Karadžić (SDS), summarized the prevailing sentiment of Serb leadership as follows: "Separation and delineation from Muslims and Croats is our top priority political and strategic goal. A multicultural society, in our case – is like putting together what can't go together, water and oil" (Karadžić quoted in Kostovicova 2004). Likewise, although SDA leadership remained dedicated to the territorial integrity of the country, some have criticized it for remaining annihilating towards other identities (Markovina 2018). Björkdahl (2018) sums up the situation in the following way, "such ethnonationalist imaginaries proved devastating for the multiethnic BiH, which failed to fit the nation-state model."

2.2 Emergence of Dayton BiH

The clashing ethnonational visions of the BiH state and nation could be said to be at the root of the 1992-1995 war, and they will to a great extent shape the post-war context. This is the case because it was precisely the ethno-national entrepreneurs who negotiated and signed the Dayton

Peace Agreement (DPA) in 1995, thus laying down the institutional framework which will define BiH state and its imagined community. In the first instance, DPA established a state that was "an empty shell with the Serb Republic governing itself autonomously and the Croat cantons in the Federation having a comparable degree of self-governance" (Bieber 2005:40). Even though the minimal functions of the BiH state[26] increased over the years,[27] the state itself "still remain[s] weak in relation to other, even federal countries" (Bieber 2005:40). Said differently, BiH is highly decentralized country where two entities – RS and Federation BiH (FBiH) – together with 10 cantons of FBiH, are made in quasi-states as they each have their own governments, constitutions, police forces, flags, territory – virtually all constitutive elements of a state. Even though there is nothing inherently wrong in decentralization of power, this institutional set-up makes BiH an easy target of accusations of a weak and ineffective state, as in many cases (migration 'crisis' being one of them) it has to rely on the cooperation of lower levels of government if it is to implement policies.

Furthermore, when it comes to imagined community, DPA established BiH as a consociational democracy of three constitutive people, Bosniaks, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats.[28] In this sense, BiH became a "tri-national state" Bieber (2005), as here the term ethnic group became interchangeable with nation. The privileged reading of BiH imagined community institutionalized in DPA is that of cultural fundamentalism, where the emphasis is the "incommensurability of mutually hostile, spatially segregated ethnicities, which are treated as rooted, bounded and

[26] According to country's constitution BiH state is in charge of a) Foreign policy, b) Foreign trade policy, c) Customs policy, d) Monetary policy as provided in Article VII, e) Finances of the institutions and for the international obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, f) Immigration, refugee, and asylum policy and regulation, g) International and inter-Entity criminal law enforcement, including relations with Interpol, h) Establishment and operation of common and international communication facilities, i) Regulation of inter-Entity transportation, j) Air traffic control

[27] They will be expanded to VAT collection, creation of army, and some other areas

[28] According to 2013 census, the make-up of BiH population is the following: Bosniaks (50,1%), Bosnian Serbs (30,8%), Bosnian Croats (15,4%), Others (3,7%)

homogeneous" (Hromadžić 2015, following Verdery). Therefore, DPA essentially built territorial and institutional fences that would keep the Self and Other from interacting and "continually negotiat[ing] tensions and conflicts that are integral part of everyday life in any community, especially in culturally diverse regions" (ibid., p.13). The prevailing lack of (physical) contact with the Other will provide a fertile ground for inflammatory rhetoric employed by political elites on all three sides, as their preferred mode of governance has been that of sowing fear of Other(s).

2.2.1 RS within Dayton BiH

Even though DPA "reserved the term state only for Bosnia-Herzegovina, while Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina are exclusively referred as 'entities'" (Kostovicova 2004:276), this did not completely remove the contestation coming from Serb leadership. They based their claims on the 'situation on the ground', as after the war, RS emerged as a highly homogenous entity with the percentage of Serb population increasing from 55,5% in 1991 to 81,5 in 2013.[29] Furthermore, in contrast to FBiH, power is highly centralized in RS. At the same time, the separation of RS imagined community from its Others (both Bosniaks and Croats), was inscribed in physical space. More precisely, RS was administratively separated from FBiH with an Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL). IEBL marked the gains of Bosnian Serb Army during the war, and thus it materialized the "spatialization of ethnonational imaginaries" on the map of BiH after 1995 (Kostovicova 2004). Even though it was never intended to be border, it is at times performed as such. In the interpretation of IEBL as a border, it serves a purpose of rounding-off RS imagined community and tying it to a specific territory that becomes national territory of Bosnian Serbs. Said differently, it provides a feeling for Bosnian Serbs that they live in a "single, shared spatial frame" (Alonso 1994).

[29] http://www.statistika.ba/#link3

In the framework of state representations, it can be argued that DPA created a potentiality for RS leadership to perform RS as a state or, more precisely, a "state in the making" or an "aspiring state" (Björkdahl, 2018). Nevertheless, this potentiality need not necessarily be taken advantage of, or, it might be used in different ways, depending on a context. As argued earlier, in the following section and chapter I will explore the ways in which the imaginary of both RS and BiH was mobilized in the context of a migration 'crisis'.

2.3 Dayton BiH and the Migration 'crisis'

Similar like in other Balkan countries, the incoming refugees in BiH "presented an exceptional test to public institutions in terms of securing transportation, shelter, and humanitarian aid for hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants, not to mention the challenge for asylum systems that were dealing with only a few hundred cases per year" (Weber, 2017:6). More precisely, according to the constitution, it is BiH government, namely the Council of Ministers, that has jurisdiction over questions of migration (see footnote 24). But, having in mind the decentralized nature of the state, this body has to act in cooperation with lower levels of government in order to carry out certain decisions (e.g. provide accommodation to migrants). Considering this, it can be argued that migration 'crisis' emerged as a field where different levels of government competed for legitimacy and authority, thus coming to create a particular idea of the state and its constitutive parts.

More to the point, it should be mentioned that much of the post-Dayton politics takes place within the registrar of ethno-national hegemony (Stipić 2017), which means that many important issues get sideline for the sake of supposed ethno-nation (dis)interest. This is especially true for

the SNSD ruling coalition[30] in RS, as it "is strongly opposed to any strengthening of Bosnia's central institutions,"[31] i.e. to any 'meddling' of BiH institutions within its jurisdiction. Moreover, SNDS has been a strong advocate of independence of RS. Therefore, in case of RS ruling party, migration crisis represent just another occasion where they can put in question competencies of BiH as a state, while at the same time reinforcing their vision of RS as a stable (almost) state. Said differently, through the discourses on migration, the idea of BiH state was "constituted through a complex set of spatially intersecting representations and practices" (Gupta 1995:377), and here I focus on how RS officials and entity-based media represented it, while at the same time, revealing their imaginary of RS.

[30] Besides SNDS, the coalition government is form by DNS (Democratic People's Alliance) and SP (Socialist Party) (see https://balkaneu.com/snsd-dns-and-sp-renewed-coalition-in-bih/)
[31] https://balkaninsight.com/2018/09/24/key-political-parties-09-21-2018/

3. Methodology

The present chapter outlines the methodology used in this thesis, together with the justification for the selected method. I start this section by offering a description of the methodology and then detail the way I collected the data Next, I make the case for the choice of the media outlet I focus on.

3.1 Research Method

In order to answer the research questions posed in the introduction, I conducted discourse analysis (DA) of the media material. Here, I follow Fairclough (1995:54) who posits that discourse refers to "spoken or written language use" and also it can be extended "to include other types of semiotic activity (i.e. activity which produces meanings), such as visual images." One of the main assumptions underlying DA is that "discourse is much more than language as such: it is constitutive of the social world" (Bryman 2008:499). More precisely, media discourse creates *representations*, *identities*, and *social relations* (Fairclough 1995, emphasis in the original). Having in mind that my focus is on the on representations of RS and BiH, and their respective imagined communities, the choice of methodology is well in line with my research interest.

The way I collected the data was the following. I watched RTRS informative news program (Dnevnik 2) at 19:30 from 1.5.2018 to 31.8.2018. May was the first month of my research because it was precisely then when the presence of migrants on the streets of the capital city Sarajevo became difficult to ignore, and when the government took its first 'visible' step of relocating the newcomers to the accommodation center near Mostar on the 18th of May. Furthermore, I chose August to be the last month of my investigation as I reached data saturation point, more precisely,

no completely new discursive strategies were emerging with regards to the migration crisis, and the four-month period of news provided me with enough material for this thesis.[32]

After watching a news segment, I would make a note in the table that I created and ordered by dates whether the migration crisis in BiH was mentioned or not, by simply putting yes or no in the table. Second, I would re-watch all news segments which mentioned the migration crisis and write down everything what was said in the news excerpt, noting who the speaker is (reporter, government official, expert, citizens, etc.). Thus, I ended up with a comprehensive document that outlined the media and political discourse on migration. Next, I referred back to the theoretical framework, especially to my definition of the state, in order to find clues for the empirical evidence that will be used in the analysis. More precisely, I separated the gathered data according to state effects outlined by Trouillot (2001), so I ended up with three separate documents. The process of putting the material in three categories was not straightforward, as some statements could be placed in several analytical categories. I resolved the issue while reading the documents one last time and deciding for which category the repeated material offers better explanatory power.

3.2 Choice of Media

RTRS is one of the three public broadcasters in BiH, other two being FTV and BHT. BHT has national coverage, while FTV is dominant in parts of FBiH while RTRS covers RS. In line with this, it can be argued that RTRS is mainly directed to cater the audience in RS, i.e. to those who largely identify as Bosnian Serbs. The choice of TV outlet over print media is justified by fact that for large part of BiH population (64%)[33] television remains a dominant source of news. Even

[32] This does not mean that there have been no new developments with regards to the migration crisis, but rather that due to the limited space and the focus of this work, the new developments that emerged after 31st August remain outside of purview of this thesis.
[33] Media Plan Institute, research on media freedom (2009-2015)

though there is no reliable and consistent data on the viewership of TV channels (Turčilo 2017), a research done by Vukojević (2015),[34] found that RTRS Dnevnik 2 has the largest audience compared to other informative news shows in RS, the other one being BN Dnevnik 2. In line with this, the researcher points out the "influence and significance of [entity]public broadcaster in the creation of daily agenda."[35]

When it comes to editorial policy of RTRS (two other public broadcasters included), Turčilo (2017) underlies the significant influence of political elites over public media outlets. In case of RTRS, it is precisely the ruling party, SNSD, which has put this broadcaster under its direct control (ibid.,). This will emerge as obvious from my analysis as well, as I did not come across occasions in which the journalist would critically asses the information or possibly look for contradictions in what was said by SNSD party members. Moreover, members of the ruling party, and especially the party's president, Milorad Dodik,[36] were given disproportionally more airtime than members of the opposition (ibid., p. 43). In line with this, it can be argued that media and political discourses in the entity-based public broadcaster are deeply intertwined in case of RTRS. With regards to my research, this is not a disadvantage, rather it is one of the reasons why I chose RTRS as a source. Said differently, considering the 12-year long dominance of SNSD on the political scene of RS and their increasing authoritarianism, the ways in which they perceive both RS and BiH are

[34] This research is featured on two trusted websites that deal with media related topics in BiH, first one being Mediacentar (see https://www.media.ba/bs/vijesti-i-dogadaji-vijesti/istrazivanje-elektronski-mediji-u-republici-srpskoj) and the second one, European Journalism Observatory (EJO) (see https://rs.ejo-online.eu/novinarstvo/elektronski-mediji-u-republici-srpskoj)

[35] Vukojević referring to this research in an article, see https://rs.ejo-online.eu/novinarstvo/elektronski-mediji-u-republici-srpskoj

[36] Milorad Dodik was Prime Minister of Republika Srpska 1998-2001 and 2006-2010; he was also president of Republika Srpska from 2010-2018. Currently he is elected for the state-level presidency, representing Serbs. This means that Dodik has been in power for over 15 years now, and just like in case of Putin, Erdogan, and Vučić, the power resides in him personally, and not in the institutions he occupies. Additionally, 2018 Freedom House Report stated that Dodik "is the most influential Serbian politician in BiH"

important to account for as they have the power to act upon these representations and make them a reality.

4. Empirical Chapter: Media Representations of BiH and RS

In this chapter, I outline the dominant ways in which BiH state and RS were represented in the public entity-based public broadcaster RTRS. First, I start with the way in which the migration crisis was produced in the media, as this is the entry point of my analysis. The sections that follow are essentially state effects outlined by Trouillot (2001) that will enable me to analyze the representations of RS and BiH. Due to the layered state structure in BiH it was important to pay attention to which level of government the speaker belongs to, since as Gupta (1995) argued, each actor's discourse on the state is highly dependent on his/her position in this hierarchy. It is therefore important to situate a certain symbolic construction of the state with respect to the particular context in which it is realized (Gupta 1995).

3.1 Producing the migration 'crisis'

The reviewed material from RTRS demonstrates that in the first days when the presence of migrants/refugees on the streets of Sarajevo became more and more noticeable, the term migration 'crisis' entered the media discourse, even though RTRS reported that in May there were 3 592 migrants in BiH.[37] In this sense, RTRS reporter stated "migration crisis severely threatens BiH" (11.5), or "migration crisis (…) overtook BiH" (18.5). Furthermore, the feeling of 'crisis' was amplified with the use of metaphors of the incoming "migrant tsunami" (11.5; 7.6) and "migrant wave" (12.5). Besides the reporters, RS officials also contributed to the qualification of migrant presence as crisis or a problem. In line with this, the president of RS government, Željka Cvijanović, said "if all of them continue entering, (…), this then is too big of a problem" (19.5). But since the number of migrants in the country was rather low in these initial months, it begs the

[37] For a country of 3.5 million inhabitants it is safe to assume that the number of 3 500 newcomers should not constitute any significant challenge

question on which grounds was this declared a crisis or, in the words of De Genova (2002), it is pertinent to ask, "Whose crisis?". More precisely, rather than offering an explanation as to why the arrival of migrants represents a problem – especially having in mind that majority of them were in FBiH, rather than in RS – the entity officials declared BiH to be in the state of crisis.

According to the performativity approach espoused here, rather than describing the objective conditions on the ground, the 'crisis' – just like the state – has "no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitutes its reality" (Butler in Feldman 2005:221). In this case, the discursive repetition of the word 'crisis', 'problem', 'migrant tsunami' and alike, are crucial in creating the crisis itself. Furthermore, the evocation of the latter "enables, rather than objectively threatens, the nation-state" allowing it to emerge "as a subject position in opposition to other positions such as the immigrant" (Feldman 2005). In line with this, the 'warnings' about the crisis can be understood in terms of what Bigo (2005) saw as the production of problem that will enable the RS officials to "manage them in order to justify their own authority" (Bigo 2002: 69) while, at the same time, undermining that of BiH institutions as it will be shown in the following lines. Said differently, once the crisis was discursively produced, this allowed for two complementary – yet opposite – representations of RS and BiH to emerge.

With regards to the 'crisis', the BiH level of government, and its officials, were portrayed as incapable and unwilling to identifying or perceiving potential threats to the nation(s), while the impression was created that RS officials are able to recognize them – just like true politicians should. An emblematic statement of this kind comes from a reporter who states "For months now President [Dodik] and RS institutions were giving warnings about the uncontrolled inflow of migrants in BiH while in Sarajevo [they] kept quiet or in the best case scenario they were saying that everything is under control" (21.7; see also 26.7; 29.7). RS Minister of Interior, Dragan Lukač

(SNSD), "pointed out that the government in Sarajevo[38] is ignoring everything that happens with regards to migration crisis, and [they] claim every day that this is not a crisis or a big problem" (12.8). Consequently, the discursive creation of crisis allowed RS officials and RTRS journalists to describe BiH government as "deaf and mute" (6.6), "dormant" (6.6), "keeping its eyes closed" in the face of problem (11.6), "indolent" (11.6), while similar 'negative' adjectives were never used in relation to RS. It can be argued that these discursive strategies performed BiH state as incapable – and by extension, ineffective – in detecting and resolving 'problems', while at the same time, RS is represented in a completely opposite light.

Furthermore, it is pertinent to analyze which level of government is deemed responsible for the 'crisis'. In this vein Košarac (SNSD) noted "it is completely unacceptable that suddenly, this problem which was caused by the common institutions (…) is transferred on the RS field" (25.7). Additionally, the reporter paraphrased Dodik by saying that he believes "the greatest responsibility to lie with the common BiH institutions" (11.6). Lukač seems to be of the similar opinion as he believes "that in the prevention of crisis, more needed to be done on the BiH level" (29.6). What is interesting to note here is that the move of locating the responsibility for the crisis within BiH institutions allowed the RS politicians to extricate themselves from any kind of responsibility (and potential criticism) for the way in which the 'crisis' was managed. Simultaneously, this framing of the responsibility also dissimulated the fact that the ineffectiveness of the BiH government was, to an extent, produced by the refusal of the entity level to accept any of its solutions for which the cooperation between the two levels was needed – most emblematic example being the accommodation of migrants on RS territory (see section 3.4). This representation of BiH could be boiled down to Aretxaga's (2003:396) observation that the state, "which is supposed to provide

[38] Government in Sarajevo is a metonym for the common BiH government, i.e. the Council of Ministers

for its citizens seems remote and careless, not fulfilling its obligations and generating a discourse of state deficit", but what we actually have here "is not a deficit of state, but an excess of statehood practices as many actors compete[ing] to perform as state."

The contingency of the so-called 'crisis' is more evident when the statements of BiH officials are taken into consideration. In contrast to RS officials who claimed in unison that the arrival of migrants constitutes a 'crisis', some of their colleagues on BiH level had different opinion. On the 18th of May BiH Minister of Security Dragan Mektić (SDS)[39] said "I would not call this a migrant crisis, I claim this responsibly and with certainty," although the statement itself was aired only a month later (18.6). Furthermore, two months after he argued, "And nothing different is taking place [in BiH] than in all Western Balkans states through which these migrants are going through, nothing different than what is happening here in BiH" (7.8). Hence, it can be posited that RTRS favored one kind of narrative, one that actively produced migrant 'crisis', leaving very little space to differing opinions. This was noticed by Mektić, as he stated "I do not want to speak, because every time I do talk about migration RTRS (…) does not transmit any of my words, they just write the text that has nothing to do with what I said" (19.7). The way that Mektić's reading of the situation differs from that put forward by SNDS members demonstrates how actually state is a contested field of power, where different politicians compete to offer a convincing reading or representation of reality. The complaint that Mektić made with regards to airtime given in RTRS further shows how media are powerful in creating daily agenda in the sense that they give voice to some actors while denying it to others. Furthermore, his statement just comes to show the contingent nature of the migration 'crisis' which does not exist as an objective condition rather, it is produced both in discourse and in practice.

[39] SDS went from being the biggest opposition party to SNDS in RS to a party that is losing support

3.2 Identification Effect: Who is the Other and Who are We?

As it was stated in the theoretical framework, one of the important effects of the state, but also of regional, local and other similar 'entities' is the production of subjects. More precisely, this effect is about "the capacity to develop a shared conviction that "we are all in the same boat" (Trouillot 2001:132), and in this case it will be interesting to see who do entity officials deem (not) to be in need of protection from the 'ultimate Other', i.e. migrants/refugees. Here, I would elucidate the boundaries of imagined communities by espousing Stolcke (1995) argument that the collective Self is established through the "production of difference" with regards to the (internal) Other. In this vein, one of the narratives which emerged in the RTRS reporting on the migration 'crisis' was its effect on the 'population structure' in BiH. Far from solely establishing difference between the national and non-national (i.e. immigrant), the entity level introduced an internal Other as the following examples will show. This particular understanding of the Other is immersed in the local context where representatives of RS tried to reinforce the image of the entity as an imagined community of Serbs, while BiH was portrayed as solely a 'Muslim state', in spite of the fact that both constitutions[40] - that of BiH and RS –, and the actual makeup of the population tell a different story.

In line with this, migrants coming to BiH were – implicitly or explicitly – portrayed as Muslims. Firstly, this was achieved by using tropes that in popular consciousness might evoke an image of Muslim. One example is the story about the 'mosque route', which according to the reports constitutes of a number of mosques that offer help to 'their own people' crossing borders (1.6; 2.6). Also, references to Islamic jihad or Islamic terrorism played into this narrative. Secondly, more explicit qualifications of migrants and refugees as Muslims emerged as the RS

[40] See Article 1. of RS constitution and Preamble of the BiH constitution which stipulate that BiH and RS are communities of the three constituent people together with other citizens

President Dodik discursively connected the local Muslim population (Bosniaks) with the newcomers based on their (supposedly) shared religion. Dodik stated "It is the Bosniaks who generated this story [migration 'crisis']. Here, it is about their people, of the same religion" (19.5). Similarly, reporter claims that Dodik blames "Political Sarajevo, secret service and SDA [Party of Democratic Action] for the intention of brining 150 000 migrants until elections" (23.6).

With this discursive move, Dodik tied in the national (or internal) and external Other into one, thus presenting migrants and Bosniaks as antagonistic Others. Having in mind that Košarac stated that the 'crisis' could "provoke certain problems to us, the Serb people in BiH" (31.7), it is quite clear that Bosniaks are the constitutive Other for the Serb imagined community. At the same time, this discourse is silent about the third constituent people in BiH, and it can be argued that this represents a change from the constitution of 'Us' in RS which was for years imagined in opposition to both Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats (see Kostovicova 2004; Björkdahl 2018). This change in the designation of the constitutive Other is complementary to the politics of rapprochement that is visible in the last few years between SNSD and the main Croat party, HDZ BiH.[41] Additionally, Dodik's point of view obscures the fact that many Bosniaks actually feel the same way about migrants as their fellows Bosnian Serbs, as for them, migrants and refugees also represent the Other – something that could be concluded from their statements on RTRS.

According to Dodik, one of the reasons why the 'crisis' might constitute a problem is because "Here exists a covert Sarajevo[42] structure which wishes to – through settling of Syrians (…), Afghanis, primarily Muslims – strengthen in 4, 5 or 10 years the structure [of Muslim

[41] This rapprochement is largely due to the fact that Dodik and the current leader of HDZ BiH have common interest in reducing the power of the central state, as such development would inevitably leverage them more political power.
[42] Sarajevo serves as a metonym for Bosniak political stronghold, namely, it is a metonym for both BiH-level politics and Bosniak one, since the two are mostly equated. In the discourses of Serb politicians, Sarajevo usually carries associations of Bosniak political elite wish for a unitary BiH.

population]. And then to say, this is a majority Bosniak, that is, Muslim country."[43] The presented threat of migrants as a 'Trojan horse' of the Bosniak elite can be boiled down to the alleged danger of "Migrants, after three years of the asylum status, automatically be gaining citizenship, which will then put pressure on the electoral system, the constituency, and the configuration of government" (2.6). In his reading, BiH government is portrayed as under control of the Bosniak political elite who wishes to make it a 'Muslim country', which implicitly would be harmful for non-Muslims (i.e. Bosnian Serbs), although it is not stated in which way precisely. Thus, BiH is represented as a Bosniak state, disregarding the fact that it is imagined and made as a state of Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats and that representatives of the last two ethnic groups also participate in its institutions. The trope of BiH state as solely Bosniak is present within the RS political elite as statements like these justify the existence of RS, which is there to protect the interests of Bosnian Serbs who are not of interest for the common government. Beyond this, it is valuable to raise a critical question of whether migrants actually want to stay in BiH? It seems that Dodik was divided on this issue, as he – besides other SNDS officials[44] – contradicted himself by stating that migrants actually want to continue to other European countries. As expected, this contradiction was not 'caught' and mentioned by RTRS journalists.

3.2.1 BiH State and its suffering Serb population

At the same time, the discourse on migration also produced BiH population that is suffering at the hand of BiH state. Even though almost all interviewed citizens (coming from different parts of the country) voiced their concerns about the way in which the state dealt with migration 'crisis', in RTRS program, special attention was given to the decision of Council of Ministers to make accommodation center for migrants in what reporters termed as, 'returnee Serb villages': Medeno

[43] RTRS, Ukrštenica: Interview with Milorad Dodik.
[44] On 12.5. Cvijanović stated that migrants want, before anything, to continue to EU

polje[45] and Lipa[46] in FBiH (19.7). This topic was in the news for seven days (19.7-21.7 and 23.7-26.7), and it took a rather significant portion of the news segment on migration. A reporter stated "[Lukač] said that Mektić, obviously following orders of Sarajevo government [and] carrying out Bosniak interests is trying to settle migrants in Serb villages (…) which will result in the emigration of those people" (28.7).[47] The mentioned discourse again brings up the trope of BiH as a Bosniak state which seems to be making 'harmful' decisions for its Serb population (who have to emigrate).

Furthermore, the 'neglect' of BiH government towards its Serb population was taken to another level with Chairman of the Committee for the Protection of Serb Property in FBiH, Đordje Radanović's statement that this potential move constitutes "ethnic cleansing"[48] (19.7). This discursive representation refers not only to the current 'harmful' behavior of the BiH government with regards to its Serb population, but also brining in the past, namely the echoes of the 1992-1995 war. The negative effect of this decision is further substantiated by statements of the local population. A returnee said "if some people should be settled here, they should move us out. This would be the second time that one is moved from his home"[49] (19.7). In line with this, Mektić was termed by Lukač as "executor of Petrovac[50] Serbs (…) due to his vassal relationship to the Sarajevo government [he] is betraying (…) the survival of Serbs, and [Lukač] calls for Serb patriots to call for Mektić's resignation," (25.7), which was done the following day.[51] Thus, it is not only the

[45] According to the last census in 2013 Medeno Polje has 27 inhabitants, of which 19 declared themselves as Serbs, 5 as Bosniaks, and 3 as Others (source: www.statistika.ba)
[46] What is interesting to note, is how is village Lipe termed as 'Serb returnee village', while, according to the reporter, there is only one family living, and from their story one can conclude that they are of different ethnicities. So, the question becomes, how exactly is this a Serb village?
[47] "We have information that the Bosniak government intends to keep larger number of migrants, on the FBiH territory, that is, in Serb returnee villages so that it would completely change the demographic structure, not only in Federation but also in the whole BiH, [RS] Minister of Interior Dragan Lukac warned" (28.7).
[48] See footnote 21
[49] Referring to first time when this happened, namely, during the 1992-1995 war
[50] Medeno Polje is one of the settlements of Bosanski Petrovac municipality
[51] Two ruling parties in RS (SNDS and DNS) in the House of Representatives of BiH House of Representatives of BiH is one (lower) of the two chambers of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, the other one being House of Peoples of BiH

'Sarajevo government' which always wanted to "ethnically cleanse" the Serb population, but it is also the 'Serb representatives' within it, as they are supposedly acting upon 'Bosniak orders'. Having in mind that Mektić comes from the main opposition party in RS – SDS – the migration crisis also served for the RS ruling coalition to recon with its local political rivals by bringing them in connection with the 'harmful' decisions on the BiH level. Simultaneously, the insistence on the 'harmful' decisions of BiH level towards Serb population in FBiH hides the neglect of RS officials, as earlier that year, SNDS representatives voted against the law which would make Serbs a constitute people in five cantons of FBiH.[52]

3.3 Legibility Effect: Not knowing and not 'seeing' - just like a BiH State

Another important state effect is the ability of its institutions to 'read' and have 'regulatory tools' (such as plans) for what is happening within their jurisdictions, i.e. to enact the "fantasy of control" (Aretxaga, 2003). In the case of migration crisis in BiH there were two discursive strategies that rendered its abilities in this realm futile. First was the insistence that BiH institutions do not know the actual number of migrants/refugees on its territory and the second was the negative qualification for all its plans with regards to the accommodation of migrants.

Three patterns emerged with regards to the legibility capability of BiH institutions, all of which seemed to point out that BiH cannot properly carry out this state function. Firstly, reporters often repeated a version of the following sentence, "BiH government does not know how many [migrants] have entered or stayed in BiH" (6.6; 7.6; 3.7; 17.7; 29.7). Secondly, the journalists pointed to the 'contradictory data' offered by those representing BiH institutions, namely, Minister

[52] https://www.index.ba/politicka-licemjernost-na-djelu-snsd-glasao-protiv-konstitutivnosti-srba-u-fbih/ Those who voted against were: Borjana Krišto (HDZ BiH), Miroslav Milanovic (SNSD), Lazar Prodanovic (SNDS), Milica Marković (SNDS), Dušanka Majkić (SNDS), Staša Košarac (SNDS) Predrag Kožul (HDZ BiH), Nikola Lovernovic (HDZ BiH)

Mektić and his deputy. In line with this, a reporter stated, "information about the number of migrants who illegally crossed the BiH border [the two] could not harmonize earlier, and not even today" (6.6). His statement is followed by a shot of Mektić stating that concluding with today there are 5 664 migrants registered and his deputy who puts the number over 6000 registered entrances to BiH (6.6; see also 21.6). Thirdly, representatives from RS would claim that the figures provided by the state level institutions are either "five times higher" (23.6) than reported (according to Dodik), while Member of BiH Parliament and Vice President of SNDS, Nikola Špirić reportedly claimed "that Service for Foreigner's Affairs does not have the correct data because they are in collision with the data of the countries in the region, according to which there is many more migrants in BiH than it is officially stated" (25.7; 31.7 same exact phrasing). Nevertheless, it is not stated to which reports Špirić is referring to – or even, to which countries precisely – and so, one cannot verify his assertion. Overall, these discursive strategies point to the inability of BiH institutions to fully read – and produce statistics – on the population on its territory, something that institutions of modern state should be able to do.

In contrast to high levels of skepticism demonstrated with regards to BiH institutions, the numbers put forward by RS officials, or more precisely, by SNDS party members, were never questioned or put into doubt. In line with this, when Dodik stated that "our data says that in the following month, month and a half on BiH borders there will come at least 180 000 migrants" (18.6), the RTRS reporters never came back to this statement and commented its truthfulness, like they did with the data provided by the officials from the state level. Furthermore, although Lukač stated that "it is impossible to apprehend every man" and that "many have gone through without being registered" (21.7), these considerations were never taken into account when RS officials or RTRS reporters described the response of the BiH institutions.

Besides the number of migrants in the country it is interesting to consider the qualifications of the plans that the BiH institutions put forward. At first, Cvijanović reportedly declared that "It is obvious, that no one developed plans that would precisely state who does what" (22.5). Furthermore, Dodik expanded "now we know that they [common institutions] do not have any plan, just like they do not usually have, BiH has no plan for anything. It [BiH] is lost, incapable, and unfinished" (27.6).

Even though BiH institutions did generate plans for the migration 'crisis' RTRS focused on the so-called tent-settlements which epitomized the overall failure of the former to carry out actions with regards to different aspects of migration 'crisis'. A reporter stated, "How ready the BiH institutions are is obvious from the example of Sarajevo [municipality] Novi Grad where migrants erected tent-settlement, where there is no organized provision of food while the youngest were left to the will of locals" (12.5). Similarly, Cvijanović noted "When you hear the statements [from] Council of Ministers that things are well prepared and organized, and then, on the other hand you see a bunch of migrants in parks, on the streets rumored to sleep on the staircases of buildings, without garbage bags provided, and let alone anything else, then we really wonder what for were the BiH institutions getting ready" (12.5)? These statements were often followed with pictures of these camps, and in image 1 one such camp in the town of Velika Kladuša is seen. Even though the response of BiH state should have been better in terms of satisfying essential needs of every migrant/refugee, these images were shown in order to attest to the failing responses of BiH government in all of its aspects, because a better organized and better prepared state would have more orderly response to this 'crisis'. Thus, in a sense, these tent-settlements represent the mirror image of the BiH state, an entity that is unable to provide accommodation, food, sanitation and other things which are indispensable for a dignified life of every human being.

Image 1: Screen shot of Velika Kladuša camp for refugees (12.6)

3.4 Spatialization: Where exactly is BiH?

The representation of migration 'crisis' in RTRS news brought into purview the spatialization of BiH state and RS. If we understand sovereignty to be "the discursive means by which states appear to be" (Weber 1999), then the rhetoric on sovereignty can tell us a lot about state representation. In line with this, RTRS reporters often referred to BiH border as "porous" (11.5, 18.5, 24.7) and "permeable" (12.5, 23.5) thus highlighting the BiH officials' inability to control the country's sovereign space, and painting a picture of a weak state that cannot enact its fantasy vis-à-vis its Others (Taussig 2011; Aretxaga 2003). At the same time, the movement of migrants over BiH territory is described by verbs that point to lack of controlled movement such as "cruising", "roaming" (30.6), "migrants penetrate to the BiH soil" (30.6) – all of which evoke a limited sovereignty of the BiH state over its territory. In contrast, the activities of RS institutions with regards to migrants were always explained in terms of references which evoke the notion of control. In line with this, the RS police "apprehended 1500 people" (20.7; see also 15.5, 21.7) "identified 95 illegal migrants" (28.7), or, in the such and such municipality or town in RS a

number of "illegal migrants were found" (28.7). These news fragments were often followed by a visual segment of a police car with RS police officers escorting migrants, thus reinforcing the notion of control and action visually (see image 2). In this sense, the sovereignty of BiH state is directly brought into question, while that of RS is reinforced.

Image 2: RS police officers waiting for migrants/refugees to leave the police car

Moreover, RS is at times endowed with its own territory and borders, thus evoking the idea of 'proper' state. A deputy in RS Parliament Darko Banjac (DNS), stated that he will "ask from the [RS] Ministry of Interior to go out on RS borders" (21.6). This statement raises the question which borders precisely did he have in mind, since much of the RS 'borders' actually coincide with that of BiH, with the only exception of IELB line. Likewise, in order to counteract BiH's inability to control its territory, RS institutions established "Coordinating body for the surveillance of the illegal migrants across RS territory" with the purpose to carry out "surveillance of entry, staying, movement of migrants and their prompt passage through RS" (31.7). According to Dodik, the purpose of the coordinating body is to "secure them [migrants] safe passage, and the fastest

possible transit through RS" (18.5). In line with this, RS institutions reified its territory by establishing a border regime that is different from that in BiH.

At the very beginning of the 'crisis', two most prominent RS officials, Dodik and Cvijanović, discursively, and in practice, 'removed' RS territory from BiH jurisdiction, and its decisions with regards to migration. A journalist paraphrased Cvijanović "no (…) decision of CoM that refers to the measures on its [RS] territory will be accepted without the agreement of Srpska" (13.5). Even though here she ends the sentence with "without the agreement", thus offering some space for compromise, nevertheless, she was quite clearly establishing separate sovereignty of BiH and RS. In line with this, RS institutions are established as primary and, it seems, the only holders of sovereignty on its territory, while BiH's jurisdiction is implicitly reduced to the territory of FBiH. This became obvious when it came to the accommodation center for migrants which, although planned on RS territory (Banjaluka and Kalinovik), never actually materialized as RS institutions were against it. Dodik was direct, "if those from Sarajevo try to establish or do something on the territory of RS related to the collective center or whatever they call them, we will reject this" (18.5). Hence, RS territory is discursively created as an entity that exists besides or in parallel to BiH, and in no way being an integral part of it. In line with this, according to the reporter "Lukač stated that (…) additional number of men will be engaged in order to detain the illegal entrance of migrants in [Republika] Srpska and BiH" (29.6).

Conclusion

This thesis started from the premise that states, just like entities, cantons, etc., are not things in the world, but rather that they are the product of social processes and practices. In this sense, the work set out to investigate the representations and articulations of BiH and RS in the entity based public broadcaster RTRS in the light of migration 'crisis'. The underlying assumption here was that due to the decentralized nature of BiH, citizens of RS very rarely 'meet' the common state, such that entity-based media become an important arena where their opinions about the state are formed and shaped. At the same time, the dominant representations of BiH also reveal how SNSD politicians envision and imagine RS.

The analyzed material points to the fact that BiH is represented in exclusively negative terms in RTRS news. First step in this direction was the discursive production of the 'crisis'. Represented as a sole responsibility of BiH government, the crisis narrative enabled RS level to completely extricate itself from coordinating any action with the common government. Hence, whatever 'problem' emerged with regards to the 'crisis' it was attributed to the ineffectiveness and unpreparedness of the BiH state, dissimulating the fact that a rather 'shallow' state of BiH cannot function properly without the cooperation of lower levels of government. Secondly, the 'crisis' allowed RS politicians to draw the boundaries of imagined community, presenting themselves as protectors of Bosnian Serbs against the BiH state and its external (migrants/refugees) and internal Others (Bosniaks), being the two discursively linked together on religious basis. The antagonistic drawing of boundaries went so far as to deem that BiH state, by wanting to build accommodation centers for migrants in the two 'Serb returnee villages' wishes to ethnically cleanse this area, again. Thirdly, BiH was represented as not being able to produce credible statistics about and plans for the migrants and refugees on its territory, something that any functioning state should be able to

do in the age of governamantality. Lastly, BiH was deemed as unable to exert sovereignty over its territory – which, according to many, is the basic prerogative of the state – as its borders were qualified as porous, and the accent was put on the uncontrolled movement of migrants.

On the contrary, and closely related to the representations of BiH as a non-functioning state, depictions of RS construct a state-like entity that can detect the dangers for its population and act upon it. This could be deducted from numerous repeating of the fact that RS (or more precisely, its officials) warned Sarajevo government to act sooner with regards to migration crisis and the images of RS police who are successfully patrolling its territory. One thing that was omitted from the news is that RS politicians did not do much to 'protect' its population, but rather their main strategy was to shift the responsibility (and migrants) elsewhere. Furthermore, an imaginary of RS as a state was put forward as its territory was removed from the jurisdiction of BiH government. Next, the notion of RS 'borders' entered public sphere, as calls emerged for their patrolling. The tropes of borders together with a separate regime that was established by entity government all work toward invoking an imaginary of RS as a state.

As it was stated earlier, both representations of BiH and RS are part of the larger power struggle and should be viewed from that perspective. In this sense, I would like to suggest a few possible answers to the question why particularly these representations were put forward in the media. When it comes to negative portrayals of BiH state they should be understood as a part of SNSD strategy to delegitimize the state and make it superfluous in the eyes of RS citizens. More to the point, SNSD is actively working in deconstructing any possible positive connections those living in RS might have with the state. The reason behind this might be that they are preparing ground for possible independence or, alternatively, they want to maintain the crisis as a status quo, as in this case their accountability will not be questioned as the first order of business would be to

protect RS from outside enemies. On the other hand, the representations of RS as a state also work in favor of the ruling elites as they guarantee them considerable political power, which in a different state set-up would be impossible. So essentially, they are preserving their power.

Lastly, when it comes to the effects these representations might have, I would like to point out that negative representations of BiH make RS citizens perceive it as futile and unnecessary entity. The assertion that BiH is a Bosniak state largely plays into this feeling of disconnectedness that many citizens of RS might have towards BiH. This feeling is further reinforced by the representations of state government's actions as inherently harmful to Serb population (e.g. the case of 'Serb returnee villages'). In contrast, the positive representations of RS in the media paint in the eyes of Bosnian Serbs a picture of the national entity (a state) that is protecting their interests. So, it might be argued that many citizens of RS have very personal connection to RS, which is not wrong in any way, rather it just comes to show how identification with entities (states) are products of contingent practices. At the same time, both negative representations of BiH and positive ones of RS serve to dissimulate the internal violence and inequality present in RS.

Going beyond the cases of BiH and RS, this research further contributes to the literature on the intersection of media and nationalism. Its specific contributions to the field comprise of demonstrating how even in times of peace media representations might be used to delegitimize certain states and make them seem superfluous to their citizens. In this vein, it expands the existing literature on how everyday belonging to the state is built in the media, by demonstrating how equally it can be deconstructed. Moreover, it also goes beyond the usual unit of analysis, which is the nation-state, and expands it to subnational entities. Therefore, it demonstrates how not only state level nationalism is present in the media, but also how media are an important resource for (aspiring) states which, by being presented as such, actually render this presentation real.

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