Breeding a Dog for the Fight: U.S. Media Representation of the Kosovo Crisis Pre-intervention

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ABSTRACT

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On February 17, 2008 Kosovo declared independence from Serbia and was recognized by 66 countries, including the U.S., while Russia considers the declaration illegal and refuses to recognize the Republic of Kosovo. All of this has occurred while NATO peacekeepers, including U.S. troops, remain stationed in the area. The news, momentous as it was, was barely covered by news outlets. The lack of coverage got me interested in the Kosovo Crisis and so I began researching it. One of the aspects which baffled me was the manner in which the crisis was covered before NATO began airstrikes on March 24, 1998. The more I read, the more I began to wonder about exactly how the U.S. media portrayed the crisis to Americans.

In order to find patterns which existed in media coverage, I looked at articles from The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal. These two papers are considered the papers of record for both liberal and conservative views, respectively, and are also considered the papers read by the decision-makers in the U.S. government. I also looked at footage from CNN coverage of the Kosovo Crisis because CNN was the largest cable news provider in the U.S. in 1998-1999. I read or watched the reports and found that patterns emerged. I also attempted to access polls from the period and to find any government documents relating to the crisis, but these two sources proved far more difficult to find.

What I uncovered during my research process were three distinct categories that likely provided an emotional charge to a reader or viewer: first were descriptions of massacres and atrocities committed by Serbian forces in Kosovo, second were reminders of the Bosnian War four years prior, and third were descriptions vilifying Milosevic. These three patterns created a sense of urgency around the Kosovo Crisis and supported an intervention by NATO. While there is a possibility that any public opinion created by the media helped pressure the Clinton Administration, I was not able to find any definite evidence to support that concept. Regardless, the study effectively shows that three major U.S. media outlets covered the Kosovo Crisis in a manner which supported military intervention.
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Introduction

In the early 1990’s, ethnic and nationalist sentiments threatened to pull Yugoslavia apart at the seams. Activists and journalists in NATO nations, including the U.S., asked policymakers what their plans for the coming violence were. When asked that questions, then U.S. Secretary of State James Baker III famously replied, “We have no dog in that fight.” By not intervening, or keeping their dog out, NATO and the U.S. inaction permitted ethnic violence and warfare to permeate throughout the Balkan region. The killing in Bosnia resulted in the deaths of thousands until the U.S. decided to intervene in 1995.

In March 1998, news arrived from the Serbian province of Kosovo that ethnic killing apparently started. For the next year, the U.S. and NATO engaged Slobodan Milosevic, President of Yugoslavia, in a diplomatic duel which became known as the beginning stages of the Kosovo Crisis. The United States, though, had no vested interest in Kosovo. Intervention seemed out of place when most American foreign policy decisions since the end of World War II were made using Realpolitik, making policy decisions based on power-relationships and national goals over ideals. Analyzing the crisis revealed a great deal of media coverage dedicated to the Kosovo Crisis. While studying this coverage, patterns emerged which caused intervention to seem a palatable, possibly necessary, option to the American public. The media emphasized the failures of Western governments in Bosnia four years earlier, showed new reports of Serbian aggression and atrocities in Kosovo, and resurrected a familiar enemy, Slobodan Milosevic, whom Americans were predisposed to mistrust and vilify because of the Bosnian War four years prior.
In the year leading up to NATO intervention, the situation in Kosovo was covered extensively by the media. The media attention caused the American public’s attention to be drawn to the Balkan region. A Pew Research Center Poll in March 1998 found that only 17 percent of respondents followed the “ethnic conflict in Kosovo,” likely referring to the recent massacre near the Kosovo village of Drenica, either very closely or fairly closely. A poll conducted in October 1998 showed the percent of respondents following the Kosovo Crisis very closely or fairly closely had risen to 51 percent. By March 1999, Pew Research Center conducted 33 polls concerned with the Kosovo Crisis and the NATO intervention. The American public and political leaders viewed images and heard words describing the horrors in Kosovo by Serbian forces. Journalists flooded the television and print media with stories of massacres and mutilations while simultaneously reporting stories about stalled American efforts to negotiate with Milosevic. Furthermore, the media rehashed stories about the massacres in Bosnia four years earlier.

This study will examine reports dating from January 1, 1998 to March 24, 1999. March 24 was the day NATO began air strikes against targets inside Serbia. The paper will cite articles from *The New York Times*, widely considered the voice of the liberals and a paper of record, *The Wall Street Journal*, considered the voice of the conservatives and another paper of record, and the Cable News Network, the largest television news media outlet in 1998-1999. The study will endeavor to show that the media’s coverage of Kosovo framed the crisis in a way to push the American public and the U.S. government toward intervention.

There has been surprisingly little scholarship written about the media’s influence on government policy leading up to Operation Allied Force. The work which has been
done usually falls into two camps. The first argued that the NATO governments were
eager to intervene and either manipulated the stories reported from Kosovo or did not dig
deeply to investigate the media’s reports. The second group argued it was the media who
altered the facts coming from Kosovo. However, much of the scholarship in both camps
is provocative, bordering on accusatory. These biases make secondary research
problematic.

Two articles fall into the first group. Seth Ackerman and Jim Naureckas present a
highly biased examination of the media’s involvement in the Kosovo crisis in their article
“Following Washington’s Script: The United States Media and Kosovo.”¹ The pair
argues that intervention was NATO’s objective from the beginning and the media was
more than willing to follow along. Both men work for FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in
Reporting), a media watch dog group. Jim Naureckas is the editor of Extra! Magazine
and responsible for the publication of FAIR, while Seth Ackerman is a writer for the
organization. Professor Edward Herman and David Peterson argue in “CNN: Selling
NATO’s War Globally” that CNN, which had styled itself as a world news network,
failed to maintain neutrality and unbiased reporting by only reporting the NATO side of
the story.² They condemn both the NATO governments and CNN for what they see as
both unprofessional and irresponsible. These authors felt the NATO intervention was
either unjust or unnecessary.

¹ Seth Ackerman and Jim Naureckas, “Following Washington’s Script: The United States Media and
Kosovo,” in Degraded Capability: The Media and the Kosovo Crisis, eds Philip Hammond and Edward S.
² Edward S. Herman and David Peterson, “CNN: Selling NATO’s War Globally,” in Degraded Capability:
The Media and the Kosovo Crisis, eds Philip Hammond and Edward S. Herman (London: Pluto Press,
2000).
Two other articles illustrate to the second. Former professor Marina Blagojević writes in her article “War on Kosovo: A Victory for the Media?” that the Western media distorted and distended the facts of the Kosovo-Serbia conflict to create a situation where intervention was a viable option.³ She argues that the media made war seem like a foregone conclusion and created weak ethical justification for intervention; however, her article does not delve deeply into the debate but rather skims the surface when she argued the Western media did to manipulate the situation. Professor Anelia Dimitrova argues that CNN took advantage of the turmoil in Kosovo by manipulating how atrocities and massacres were portrayed in her article “Nightmares in the Nightly News: CNN Covers Atrocities in Kosovo,” and that the portrayal was seized upon by the U.S. government, and spun to create a reason conditions conducive to intervention.⁴ This article provides a focused, if somewhat verbose, case study of the portrayal of massacres. Sifting through the words provides some good analysis and figures.

Perhaps the best and most unbiased study of the media’s involvement in pre-intervention Kosovo is The CNN Effect in Action: How the News Media Pushed the West toward War in Kosovo by Dr. Babak Bahador. The book examines the CNN effect, defined as the effect instant news has on diplomacy and public opinion, and argues that examining the period from February 1998 to March 1999 one can see evidence of how CNN’s reporting of events in Kosovo swayed US and NATO policy toward intervention.⁵ The monograph includes a number of relevant tables and graphs breaking down the

numbers and percentages of the television news media's coverage of the Kosovo Crisis. However, Bahador's study limits itself to only television news and does not delve into print media. This does not limit its effectiveness or value as a piece of academic work, but the dearth of print media sources leaves a few holes in the examination of the Kosovo Crisis.

An examination of three of the major media, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and CNN, reveals three major themes which developed as the Kosovo Crisis unfolded. The three themes: descriptions of ethnic violence, references to the massacres in Bosnia, and negative views about Milosevic, permeated throughout the year-long build-up to intervention. These three themes helped framed the Kosovo crisis in a manner which caused military intervention in Kosovo to appear as a just and necessary action.
Chapter 1: Massacres & Atrocities

The Yugoslav army and police helped the media to prepare the American public for intervention, albeit unintentionally. The Serbian campaign in Kosovo contained numerous instances of atrocities and ethnic violence. The Western media was quick to grab onto these horror stories and present them to the American public. The violence committed against the Kosovars bolstered the human rights situation as a justification for military intervention in Kosovo. Whereas intermittent reports concerning human rights abuses were written throughout the crisis, there are three clear spikes where multiple stories were filed in consecutive days. The beginning of March 1998 saw a large number of stories about the massacre at Drenica. The beginning of October 1998 saw a second spike with the Gornje Obrinje Massacre. The final series of stories came in mid-January 1999 concerning the infamous Racak Massacre. Among all the reported stories two distinct patterns emerge: the first are descriptions of the horrors taking place in Kosovo and the second pattern was the use of key buzzwords that would set off internal alarms among U.S. citizens. The media used these two methods created a sense of necessity concerning intervention and helped increase support for the eventual NATO action.

Descriptions of destruction

During the year and a half leading up to NATO intervention, newspapers and television stations, through use of words and images, framed the devastation in Kosovo for the American public, particularly the killing of Kosovars by Serbians. As the crisis unfolded and the material and human cost of inaction mounted, the descriptions of damage were key in preparing the American mindset that intervention in the crisis was necessary.

The belief of dire conditions in Kosovo was revealed from the initial reports. The opening paragraph of the first story filed in *The New York Times* about the crisis gave the
reader a window into the terror facing the Kosovars, as the Serbian police fired “mortar rounds at villages, setting fire to homes and appearing to shoot at men indiscriminately, according to those who fled the zone.”6 From the outset then, the reader sympathized with the Kosovars who are framed as the victims of Serbian aggression, in spite of the title which referred to the Kosovars as separatists. Further, the quotation framed the Serbian aggression as seemingly wanton, with the description of the destruction of homes, use of mortar rounds, and uncontrolled firing.

In one of the great ironies of the Kosovo conflicts, the initial television images of Serbian atrocities were picked up from Serbian television. The Serbs broadcasted images of devastated villages and dead bodies in combination with a bulldozer destroying the home of the Jashari clan, the focus of the Serbian attack; these images were then picked up by the Western networks, including CNN, and rebroadcasted to Western audiences.7 The footage of a bulldozer destroying a family’s home was shocking and the burned-out village provided an early window into how the Serbs executed their offensive. The most dramatic, violent, and gruesome images of the Drenica Massacre, however, were captured by Albanian photographers on the scene who posted them on the internet, where they were then picked up and broadcasted by the Western media.8 As with the destruction of the Jashari home, which aired on CNN, the early images from Drenica created a shock factor with their depiction of the violence in the early stages of the crisis. While the initial call for intervention did not surface until later, the images built a foundation of though which would be followed nearly a year later when NATO officially became involved.

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7 Bahador, 80.
8 Bahador, 81.
Another Times article written five days later expounded upon the description of Serbian atrocities. The number of dead expanded to 74 along with an unknown quantity, described as “scores,” believed missing. This particular quotation subscribes to the theory of addition by subtraction; in that the impact lies in the lack of explicit detail. Without an exact number placed to those missing, the reader’s mind is fills in the missing information with the faces of countless individuals separated from grieving families.

On March 10, 1998 The Wall Street Journal printed, “The crisis began after Albanian separatists attacked and killed four Serbian policeman, unleashing terror from Serbian special-police units. At least 85 ethnic Albanians, including women and children, have been killed.” The quotation addressed not the material cost of the crisis, but the human cost. While mentioning the violence was started by Albanians, the human cost of the engagement heavily favored the Albanians. The juxtaposition of the four Serbian policemen killed with the “85 ethnic Albanians, including women and children,” pushed the reader’s sympathies toward the Albanians. The numerical difference in the death toll, combined with the stunning fact that the Serbians killed women and children, gave the impression that the Kosovars were bearing the lion’s share of the death and destruction.

A Journal article about the violence around Drenica reported that “witnesses described indiscriminate shelling and machine-gun fire; at least 30 of the villagers known to have died so far were women, children, or old men. Many showed signs of torture or

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11 Ibid.
execution." The key word in the quotation is indiscriminate because the adjective puts the Serbians in an atrocious light because, it connotes they ignore the rules of war by including non-combatants in the offensive undertaken. Also, the word indiscriminate combined with naming women, children, and the elderly among the victims of the Serbian offensive further emphasizes the human cost borne by the Kosovars.

Following their aggressive strike at Drenica, Serbian forces buried 53 Kosovars outside of Prekaz in a mass grave which they paved over using a bulldozer at night, and did so over familial protestations; the following morning Kosovars exhumed the graves to re-bury the victims according to Islamic rites. The most startling revelation in the article was the sobering fact that 14 of the coffins lifted out of the mass grave contained children. Coupled with the children’s coffins was the opinion of both Chris Hedges, the article’s author, and a Kosovar at the site that the Serbs attempted the speedy mass burial to cover up the killing of noncombatants. More than anything, the fact that 14 children were unearthed from a mass grave signaled to a reader the brutal nature of the conflict unfolding in Kosovo. Scenes such as the one greatly aided in fostering support for intervention.

Following the Drenica massacre, CNN broadcasted images from the site of the killing. On March 10, 1998, Americans watching the network saw Nic Robertson report the death of 29 men, 8 women, and 9 children around Drenica. As Robertson gave his report, viewers saw the relatives of the slain peeking under sterile white tarps while others asked the human rights workers at the site exactly what happened to their loved ones. Like the reports filed in print media outlets like The Times and The Journal, early reports from Kosovo

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14 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
established the nature of what was occurring. However, unlike the print reports, the real-time images of families looking for their dead relatives added a much greater emotional impact than merely reading a second-hand description from a reporter.

On August 5, 1998, CNN aired images of refugees in Kosovo. A camera crew travelled with a group of international aid workers. In the wilds of the Balkans, a group of ragged men climbed up a steep and rock-strewn hill to meet the aid workers, where the men told the workers they had neither food nor water.\textsuperscript{17} The men then led the workers down the hill into the trees at the bottom of the hill where the camera found desperate and dirty women and children wild-eyed with fright.\textsuperscript{18} Through a translator, the hidden refugees explained they were afraid of being killed by grenades, rockets, or sniper fire; that they were too afraid to go home.\textsuperscript{19} While Americans discussed the refugee problem created by the Kosovo Crisis, the report from CNN made the human cost far more vivid. When women and children, clearly civilians and refugees, said they were afraid to go home for fear of being killed, the conflict’s human cost vividly came to life for American viewers.

As with other media outlets, CNN’s portrayal of the massacre at Gornje Obrinje provided images that helped stir the American public’s sentiment toward intervention. On September 30, 1998, CNN prefaced their report with a warning of graphic images, something they had not done in the nearly seven months they had reported on the crisis. Immediately following the warning, an image of two men carried a small body, presumably a child, wrapped in white linen on a pallet for burial.\textsuperscript{20} Meserve, the correspondent who filed the story, said six children and pregnant young woman were among the dead, while the screen showed the image of a dead child lying in the dirt and covered in the deep red of dried

\textsuperscript{17} Brent Sadler, CNN, August 5, 1998.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Jeanne Meserve, CNN, September 30, 1998.
blood. The image of the dead child lying alone in the street and shot in the back was horrifying and likely galvanized a great number of viewers. With more video evidence of the death of civilians, a humanitarian reason for intervention crystallized even more.

As the crisis unfolded and the human and material cost mounted, criticism of the Serbian action rained down from the highest levels. In October 1998, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan was quoted saying the presence of the KLA "can never justify the pattern of terror, including the burning of houses, looting, killing of livestock, and wanton killing that have been reported in these last few days." The word of the Secretary General carried great weight, and Mr. Annan's quotation further illuminated the cost of the Kosovo Crisis. Not only did the words come from Annan, but what he described were very serious crimes. The destruction of livestock and homes in October, with winter just around the bend, constituted both material and human destruction. Annan's description of the violence reinforced the dire situation in Kosovo in the readers' minds. In one quotation, Kofi Annan summed up the cost of inaction.

On October 25, 1998, CNN reported another gut-wrenching story from Kosovo. Gene Randall reported that a family in Kosovo buried one of their sons quickly under small arms fire. Those Kosovars asked about the incident said they believed the boy was killed by Serbs. Whether or not Serbs actually killed the boy, the reports filed from Kosovo made the story credulous. With another report of a slain child, it is easy to see how anti-Serbian sentiment, eventually leading toward intervention, was building in the West.

On January 17, 1999, reports of bodies of 45 people, including a child and a few women, found in a gully outside the village of Racak in Kosovo appeared on news outlets.

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21 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
An article in *The New York Times* reported some of the bodies were mutilated with gouged eyes, smashed heads, and, horrifyingly, a single decapitation. On the front page of the same issue was a photo of a young boy sobbing in indescribable pain after recognizing one of his relatives among the dead. This article in the *Times* provided not only a description of the human loss at Racak but also provided the heart-wrenching photograph. The photograph of the grief stricken child drove home the cost more than the mere words later in the article; that people, even children, were suffering immensely as NATO sat passively on the sideline.

A photograph on page A6 of the January 17, 1999 issue of *The Times* showed the dead bodies of the Racak victims lying in a muddy ditch while the living attempted to identify their loved ones. Two days later the front page of *The Times* had a picture of the victims of the Racak massacre laid out in a mosque while a cleric moved along the rows of dead. These two photographs, printed within two days of one another, further solidified the dire situation in Kosovo. The first photograph pulled at the heart of a viewer; displaying the gut-wrenching process of identifying the victims of the Rack Massacre. The second photograph was no less impactful. It is commonly accepted that the images of flag-draped coffins arriving from Vietnam helped stir public opinion against the war. Photographs of Kosovo massacre victims, especially women and children, likely had a similar effect in stirring the U.S. public to push for intervention. The mournful sight of a mass funeral likely reminded many Americans of the horrible images seen in Rwanda and Bosnia years earlier.

On January 19, 1999, the editorial board of *The Wall Street Journal* wrote about the Racak Massacre, which had been mentioned in the World Wide section the day before as “a massacre of at least 45,” the article the following day expanded on it saying,

26 Ibid.
“Serb forces conducted a huge “mopping up”[sic] operation ...(a)mong the ethnic Albanian “terrorists” they killed were a baby, a 12-year-old boy, three women and a few grandfathers. The grossly mutilated bodies, along with around 40 others, were left to rot in a ravine.” As with the other quotations, this one from The Journal brings the human toll of inaction in Kosovo to the forefront. The added information that among the dead were children, women, and elderly helped increase anti-Serbian sentiment in the West as atrocities were reported with words and images.

In mid-January 1999, CNN aired a couple of reports following up on the Racak Massacre. On January 16, 1999, CNN broke the story of the massacre, and the central image of the story displayed bodies in civilian clothes laying strewn about in a gully and piled on top of one another with bullet wounds to the face and neck. The wounds’ location was important because the accuracy of the killing blows indicated close-range executions as opposed to a mid-range firefight. On January 19, 1999, CNN ran a follow-up story which showed the victims of the Racak Massacre laid out in a mosque while their family members grieved over the corpses; the grieving widows of the dead men were particularly prominent in the frames shown on screen. On February 10, 1999, CNN revisited the massacre. The reported showed wailing women dressed in mourning in procession while Nic Robertson, the correspondent, said the family needed OSCE observers to get the bodies back from Serbian authorities. Later in the story, the screen again showed the scene from the initial report nearly a month earlier, but this time OSCE observer said, “It looks like they were shot

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trying to escape."\textsuperscript{33} The Racak Massacre was arguably the major flashpoint in the Kosovo Crisis which spurred NATO to finally act on its threats. And the images from Racak, like the ones above, were instrumental in forcing NATO's hand.

\textbf{Crisis Buzzwords}

In addition to images of death and destruction the media used certain loaded words while describing the Kosovo Crisis. These buzzwords elicited a strong emotional response due to their importance in the Western mindset. These loaded words included "killing spree," "ethnic cleansing," and the most emotionally charged word in the Western mindset, "genocide." Among these were references to the Bosnian Crisis, however due to the important implications of such references, they will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter. This section focuses on other key words and phrases used by the media during the year-long build-up toward intervention.

On March 8, 1998, CNN aired footage from a protest in Pristina, the provincial capital of Kosovo. The camera crew interviewed one Kosovar, who said in English, "We want you, we want NATO. Where is NATO?"\textsuperscript{34} While not precisely a loaded word, the direct appeal from a Kosovar to the Western world was profound nonetheless. As the situation in Kosovo deteriorated, it was never forgotten that an appeal to NATO was made very early on.

\textit{The New York Times} ran a statement from British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook on October 1, 1998 which said, "This (The Gornje Obrinje Massacre) was not an act of war. This was plain, cold murder."\textsuperscript{35} The importance of this quotation is the distinction Cook made between war and the events in Kosovo. The Serbian government insisted their

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Nic Robertson, CNN, March 8, 1998.
offensive was part of a larger military action against Albanian terrorists. As the true nature of
the Serbian offensive became apparent, many doubted the veracity of Belgrade’s claims. In
his statement, Cook flat-out disputed it. Further, Cook accused the Serbians of murder. This
accusation aided the belief that the Serbian action was unjustified. The fact that the
accusation came from one of the most respected statesmen in the world added even greater
weight to the accusation.

An article about the violence around Drenica from The Wall Street Journal said,
“witnesses described indiscriminate shelling and machine-gun fire; at least 30 of the
villagers known to have died so far were women, children, or old men. Many showed
signs of torture or execution.”36 This quotation mentioned the acts of violence and deaths
caused by the Serb offensive, but the loaded words came at the end of the sentence. As
demonstrated by the Abu Graha scandal in 2005, the use of torture on combatants, much
less civilians, produced a strong reaction against those who practiced it. Further, the word
execution, when used in conjunction with the description of the death of civilians,
provides a powerful emotional pull. The combination conjures images of innocents being
killed in horrendous manners.

An article published in The New York Times on March 7, 1998 referred to the actions
of the Serbs at Drenica a “killing spree that left 24 people dead, including 10 members of one
family.”37 An editorial in the Wall Street Journal about the Drenica Massacre also
referred to the violence as “a four-day killing spree.”38 While any loss of life would draw
sympathy from a reader, the idea of nearly half the losses in a single day from a single family
is staggering. Further, the use of the phrase “killing spree” connotes a lack of restraint on the

36 Neil King Jr., “War-Crimes Inquiry Could Prove Big Weapon Against Serb Leader,” The Wall Street
part of the aggressors, in this case the Serbs, and no discretion on who was being shot at. It also established the killings as closer to home, as a killing spree seems something easier to imagine than other buzzwords, such as ethnic cleansing or genocide.

On March 16, 1998 The Journal quoted State Department spokesman James Rubin, who called the situation in Kosovo “ethnic cleansing.” Exactly three months later, another article would again use the phrase “ethnic cleansing,” but this time the word was used by George Melloamn, the author of the article, and not a framed within a quotation when the article stated, “As president of Serbia...(he) gave us that charming expression, “ethnic cleansing.” Ethnic cleansing is what “Slobo” is currently about in Kosovo.” The most significant part of this quotation is, as stated above, a non-administration member levied the accusation of ethnic cleansing. Thus, it can be concluded that more people were beginning to believe that the situation in Kosovo was, in fact, a case of ethnic cleansing and, perhaps, be more willing to intervene. Further, the term “ethnic cleaning” indicates how the situation in Kosovo had worsened. Descriptions of events graduate from “killings” or “killing spree” to the far more serious “ethnic cleaning,” meaning people believed the situation in Kosovo was not about terrorism, as the Serbs claimed, but was an assault on a single ethnic group.

Ethnic cleansing was again used to describe the events in Kosovo on March 6. Ibrahim Rugova, leader of the Albanian separatists in Kosovo, referred to the killings around Drenica as ethnic cleansing in the article. It is very likely Rugova knew the emotional link the phrase created in the West. President Clinton referred to the situation in Kosovo as ethnic

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cleansing while invoking the ghost of Bosnia in the same breath.\textsuperscript{42} Such an admission from the President was a testament to the seriousness of the crisis. It also served as an indictment against American inaction and made intervention more palatable to the American public.

General George Joulwan, the former supreme NATO commander, accused the Serbians of ethnic cleansing during an interview on CNN on September 18, 1998, decrying the Serbs actions as atrocities.\textsuperscript{43} He further said it was past due that NATO deliver on its threats to use force against the Serbs.\textsuperscript{44} Here another high-ranking official decried the situation in Kosovo as ethnic cleansing. Not only did Joulwan comment on the deteriorating situation in Kosovo, he criticized the Western leadership for failing to act promptly on the threats used to force Milosevic to back down.

CNN aired a story on June 6, 1998 which contained two separate loaded words. A camera crew interviewed James Hooper, and Hooper said “The only thing that will stop ethnic cleansing now is the credible threat of force by the President of the United States and the willingness to use that force.”\textsuperscript{45} In the quotation, Hooper again referenced the crisis as ethnic cleansing. However, he went a step further and made the use of force, or at least the credible threat of force, a necessary component in resolving the crisis. As the events in Kosovo spiraled further out of control, this sentiment became more and more common.

Following his trip to the site of the Racak Massacre, William Walker, head of the Kosovo Verification mission and an American, described the scene as, “(a)n unspeakable atrocity...a crime very much against humanity...It looks like it was done by people who have

\textsuperscript{43} Josh McIntyre, CNN, September 18, 1998.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{45} Wolf Blitzer, CNN, June 6, 1998.
no value for human life."46 One of the most powerful quotations from an American official, Walker uses two major buzzwords. First, he refers to the events at Racak as an atrocity. Soon after, he uses the more evocative “crime very much against humanity.” Walker’s firsthand experience at Racak added credibility to his view, and his criticism would later spur Milosevic to insist on his expulsion from Kosovo.

The very first article about the Kosovo Crisis printed in The Wall Street Journal contained the most emotionally charged buzzword of all. Quoting Jim Hooper, The Journal printed, “We either sit on the sidelines and watch another genocide take place or we take action, even military action.”47 Another reference was made to genocide when CNN aired footage from a protest in Pristina where the camera focused in on a sign which said, “Stop Genocide” on March 16, 1999.48 While the U.N. did not officially declared genocide in Kosovo, the mention of the two together created an association between Kosovo and genocide in the minds of those paying attention to the situation. Kosovo became a Rwanda-type situation, a genocide that governments would not officially acknowledge. Further, Hooper’s call for military intervention gained a greater sense of urgency with its association with the word genocide. Though it would take nearly a year for the major of individuals to come around to Hooper’s way of thinking, the fact that some considered the Kosovo Crisis genocide from the outset means those views were spread during the intervening year.

The Racak Massacre produced stronger condemnation. Paul Williams, a professor at American University in DC, said on CNN, “The NATO Alliance is simply incapable of
issuing a threat and carrying through on that threat to protect citizens from genocide."  

Here Williams dealt a double blow. William’s first blow was the accusation of genocide, which was the most serious accusation leveled during the crisis. The second poke at NATO was the declaration that the NATO Alliance was incapable of backing up its word. One of the major issues during the Kosovo Crisis was that the killings occurred in NATO’s backyard on the eve of NATO’s 50th anniversary. NATO had threatened intervention for months, but had done nothing. NATO’s inaction was what Williams criticized.

The backlash against the Racak Massacre reverberated from the highest levels. Following the release of the story President Clinton released a statement in which he said, “I condemn in the strongest possible terms the massacre of civilians by Serb security forces that took place last night in the village of Racak in Kosovo. This was a deliberate and indiscriminate act of murder designed to sow fear among the people of Kosovo.”

While Clinton’s chastisement of the Racak Massacre was not as linguistically aggressive as some others, it is important to remember that as a head of state his language was more tempered by necessity. Thus it is exactly because the President of the United States referred to the Racak Massacre as a massacre and as something “a deliberate and indiscriminate act of murder” the seemingly mild phrases carry such weight as buzzwords. President Clinton publically called neither Drenica nor Gornje Obrinje a massacre. Clearly then, the mild-seeming accusation leveled by President Clinton carried far more weight than the language initially indicated and likely had a greater impact on public perceptions of the crisis.

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50 Juliette Terzieff, CNN, January 16, 1999
On February 6, 1999 NATO negotiators met with representatives of the Kosovars and representatives of the Yugoslav government. However, talks stalled as the Kosovars and the Yugoslavs were unable to come to an agreement. As the negotiations at Rambouillet fell apart, criticism of the Kosovo Crisis mounted. On CNN on March 18, 1999, a mere week before the bombing campaign commenced, Senator Joe Biden said, “Massacring has taken place. Genocide has taken place. It has been selective, it’s been real, it’s been genuine and nobody has acted. The longer we wait to act the more this will fester.”51 Biden became the highest ranking U.S. official to accuse the Serbs of genocide. Though never officially declared genocide by either the UN or NATO, an accusation so close to official intervention solidified the Kosovo Crisis as genocide in the minds of many.

For some reason, human beings tend to be fascinated by violence. With this in mind, it is easy to understand why there was a great deal of coverage about the material destruction and the killings occurring in Kosovo. The descriptions of the destruction of property and livelihood combined with the descriptions of the hardships and abuses suffered by the survivors in Kosovo pushed the public’s opinion toward intervention. Public opinion was also moved by the use of certain buzzwords like “ethnic cleansing” or “genocide.” Journalists, experts, and public officials knew the effect these words had. So, as research into media reports shows, descriptions of the killings and situation in Kosovo were used to help sway public opinion toward intervention.

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Chapter 2: Bosnia & Srebrenica

Throughout the build-up to intervention U.S. media outlets made comparisons between the Bosnian War and the Kosovo Crisis. The roots of the Bosnian War can be traced to December 1991, when the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia began to dissolve as the European Community (EC), now incorporated into the European Union, extended formal recognition to Croatia and Slovenia. From February 28 to March 1, 1992 Bosnia held a referendum ending with a two-thirds majority favoring independence from Belgrade, which was declared on March 3, 1992. After the United States and members of the EC recognized Bosnia’s independence on April 3, Bosnian Serb separatists and units of the Yugoslav army invaded Bosnia and began to attack Bosnian Muslim and Croat paramilitary units and civilians. Between 1992 and 1994, the two sides engaged in brutal war in the former Yugoslavia while the United Nations refused to intervene militarily, though it did deploy peacekeepers to deliver humanitarian aid. Also in 1994, the United Nations set up a number of “safe zones” where civilians could seek refuge from the fighting. In spite of the international presence, Serb units engaged in ethnic cleansing against Bosnian Muslims, taking 200,000 lives over the course of the war.\(^{52}\)

The defining moment of the Bosnian War came on July 11, 1995. On that day, a force of the Serbian army overran a 600 man Dutch garrison in the U.N. safe zone at Srebrenica. Once in control, the Serb forces separated the girls and women from the boys and men. Many of the males were executed and many women who fled toward the nearby hills were hunted down, raped, and killed.\(^{53}\) The Serbs killed 7,000 Bosnian Muslims, making Srebrenica the scene of the largest killing in Europe since World War II.\(^{54}\) The horror stories and the


\(^{53}\) Powers, 392.

\(^{54}\) Ibid.
terrifying images brought out of Srebrenica were key in galvanizing members of Congress to pressure the Clinton administration into action. When asked about her decision to support taking action in the Bosnia crisis, Senator Dianne Feinstein, a Democrat from California, said, "For me the turning point was the attack on Srebrenica, that weekend with all the missing people. One imaged punched through to me: that young woman hanging from a tree. That to me said it all." On August 30, 1995, NATO began a massive air and missile bombing campaign against Serbian forces and positions in Bosnia. The campaign lasted three weeks and in November the Clinton administration succeeded in brokering a peace deal in Dayton, Ohio.

These events were on the mind of the American public and media as the Kosovo crisis began in 1998, after all it had been a mere two years and four months since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords. References to both Bosnia and Srebrenica occurred throughout the year and a half build-up to intervention.

Memories of Bosnia

The article “Albright Warns Serbs on Kosovo Violence,” published on March 7, only five days after The New York Times began reporting on events in Kosovo, contained two references to the events of Bosnia. Former Secretary of State Madeline Albright said, “We are not going to stand by and watch Serbian authorities do in Kosovo what they can no longer get away with in Bosnia.” Albright directly connected the early killings in Kosovo with the ethnic cleansing which occurred in Bosnia. Later in the same article, an unnamed American official said, “There may be some governments that need some reminding of what happened last time. It’s important to have a firm response now.” Steven Erlanger, the author, specified his unnamed source was specifically referred to the Bosnian War. From the outset, then, at

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55 Power, 429.
least some individuals in the government felt compelled by the failure to act in Bosnia and wanted to remind the public about it, since both Albright and the unnamed official chose to comment on Bosnia’s relation to Kosovo to a reporter from a national newspaper. It is also important to note how quickly the reaction came from government officials. In Bosnia, the United States was slow to react, and the cost of inaction was human lives. The strong response from Washington followed the deaths of less than 100 individuals from five days of the Serbian military action in Kosovo.57 Clearly then, the memory of Bosnia was with at least some members of the U.S. government from the very outset of the Kosovo crisis. Not only did U.S. officials remember Bosnia, they were quoted linking Bosnia with Kosovo.

Both the media and the Republican opposition used the memory of Bosnia to blast the Clinton administration for inaction in Kosovo. Peter Maass criticized Secretary Albright’s actions in the first week and a half of the crisis by commenting, sarcastically, that the lesson from Bosnia was to tell the truth rather than say the right thing at the beginning of a crisis.58 Maass went on to say that because Clinton talked tough on Bosnia during the presidential campaign in 1992 but did not deliver on any of his promises until 1995, Clinton’s inaction allowed thousands of needless deaths.59 Here then, a mere eight days after the violence in Kosovo began, verbal volleys lashed out against the administration’s inaction. America’s inaction earlier in the decade was already being used as a ‘lesson of history’ to try and influence events in the present.

Politicians as well as journalists used the ‘lesson of Bosnia’ to criticize the Clinton Administration’s inaction. Bob Dole, retired from the Senate but still influential within the Republican Party, said during a speech to the Republic Institute, “As in Bosnia, instead of

59 Ibid.
firing up the engines, NATO is firing up excuses." In one simple sentence, the former presidential candidate delivered a stinging rebuke to the administration's inaction. The rebuke also provided another example to the American public of the need for intervention. In an editorial written in October 1998, Dole wrote, "I would only remind them of the 250,000 dead in Bosnia, the 1.3 million Bosnia refugees," while criticizing the agreement the Clinton Administration made with Milosevic. Here, Dole used the memory of Bosnia to criticize Clinton and highlighted the poor conditions of the deal to the American public. Clearly, the memory of Bosnia was used not just to provoke shame and highlight concern, but also was used to create a sense of repetition in the perceived poor handling of the crisis.

The criticism of the Clinton administration did not die down as Richard Holebrooke and Albright continued their diplomatic efforts. The administration's opponents continued to reference Bosnia when criticizing the government's handling of the Kosovo crisis, arguing that Milosevic only agreed to negotiate at Dayton after NATO began to bomb Serb positions. This reference clearly shows how intervention was presented as an important and viable option. Critics used Bosnia as an example of the futility of negotiating with Milosevic, the administrations then-current course, and urged the use of force by way of intervention. In an letter to the editor, Harry Ashton expressed this sentiment when he wrote, "In Kosovo the West finally seems to have learned an important lesson from Bosnia: the viable threat of force in Kosovo is necessary to bring Slobodan Milosevic, the Yugoslav President, to the

negotiating table." Here then, a citizen expressly called for the use of force in Kosovo while simultaneously referencing Bosnia as a reason for his belief.

An article from March 6 in The Wall Street Journal, written in response to the Drenica Massacre, contained a very strong reference to Bosnia, particularly for being written so early in the crisis. In the article, Jim Hooper, then-director for the Balkan Institute and a former diplomat in Southeastern Europe, said, “We are looking at another Bosnia in the making.” From the very outset, then, The Wall Street Journal printed a comparison of Kosovo to Bosnia. It is imperative not to underestimate the impact a quotation like this would have. The images of the Bosnian massacres were deeply set in the minds of the Western populace, and such a grim prognostication would surely hold great weight.

Seven months later, another article brought forth the memory of Bosnia, “After threatening to use force to prevent Serbia from repeating the aggression it carried out in Bosnia, we have stood on the sidelines.” This quotation holds two important points. As with Mr. Hooper’s statement, the quotation directly connected the Kosovo crisis with the memory of Bosnia. However, Khalizad, the author, went one step further by reminding the reader that the U.S. already threatened to use force to stop Serbia. This reminder compelled the reader to remember the military force used to stop the Serbs in Bosnia. Khalizad threw a final jab by mentioning the U.S had “stood on the sidelines” in the present crisis, which likely evoked memories of dead Bosnians and ethnic cleansing due to U.S. inaction between 1992 and 1995.

An interesting pattern emerges from three *Wall Street Journal* articles written on March 10, 1998, March 26, 1998, and April 30, 1998. These three articles reminded readers a bombing campaign was used to force the Serbs into submission in Bosnia. The first said Serbian, “only agreed to peace in Bosnia after North Atlantic Treaty Organization bombs attacked Bosnian Serb capital of Pale.”66 The second article mentioned the same result, “Indeed, Mr. Milosevic didn’t agree to peace in neighboring Bosnia until after Western bombers attacked Serbs there.”67 The most direct reminder of force in Bosnia came from the third article, which said, “There are serious questions whether any economic or diplomatic pressures would persuade the Yugoslav leader to loosen his grip on the province that he stripped of autonomy in 1989. Mr. Milosevic only agreed to peace talks in Bosnia after North Atlantic Treaty Organization bombers attacked the Bosnian Serb capital, Pale.”68 From the very beginning of the coverage of the crisis, then, *Journal* reporters reminded readers about the legacy of Bosnia. The fact that force had been used before, and might be needed again, was at the forefront of Kosovo coverage.

On March 6, 1998 CNN’s Judy Woodruff interviewed Richard Holbrooke, a top U.S. diplomat and the man who instrumented the Dayton Peace Accords to end the Bosnian War. Even in the early stages of the Kosovo Crisis, comparisons between Kosovo and Bosnia arose. Woodruff asked what was to prevent the violence in Kosovo from turning into another Bosnia, and Holbrooke replied that Secretary of State Madeline

Albright and the State Department had learned their lesson from 1991-1992 and would not sit passively back as the violence developed.69 Woodruff then asked about possible military intervention and if the president was willing to take decisive action and Holbrooke reminded her, “(the U.S.) only ended war in Bosnia when willing to confront need to use force.”70 The reference further demonstrates the connection between Kosovo and Bosnia that existed in the minds of many Americans was present from the outset of the crisis.

Early references to Bosnia were not all supportive of U.S. actions however. Fred Abrams of Human Rights Watch said, “We must learn from the past mistakes. In 1991 the West watched as Bosnia burned.”71 Bill Richardson, then working as the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., echoed Abrams’s sentiment when he said, “We must avoid the mistakes of the past. When the international community waited too long before taking decisive actions, we fully recognized that the security of the region directly affects broader international interests and the situation in Kosovo represents a threat to broader peace and security.”72 These two quotations are typical of how the media used references to Bosnia. Both Abrams and Richardson reference the West’s inaction. Abrams attempted to spur the West to action via criticism of the administration’s actions while Richardson provided a far more restrained rationale for beginning intervention.

Another comparison between Bosnia and Kosovo came from Balkans expert. Ivo Daaler, a professor at the University of Maryland. Daaler said that units of the Yugoslav

69 Judy Woodruff, CNN, March 6, 1998
70 Ibid.
Army executed ethnic cleansing "in a manner reminiscent of Bosnia." Daaler's quotation provided a double reference. First, it established that the killings in Kosovo were ethnic cleansing, still a debated topic in June 1998. The quotation goes beyond that, however, and compares the early-stage killing in Kosovo with the horrific killings in Bosnia years earlier.

Daaler was not the only expert who saw links between the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and the early reports from Kosovo. James Hooper said, "What we are seeing now, for me, is very similar to what I saw in the early days of the fighting in Croatia and Bosnia. Ethnic cleansing, the use of ethnic cleansing by Mr. Milosevic as a policy tool." Hooper, a critic of Serbian atrocities and NATO inaction from the early days of the Kosovo Crisis, established a clear link between Bosnia and Kosovo. Hooper's quotation, like Daaler's, came before the Gornje Obrinje Massacre and during a period when the Serbian actions were still in question. By comparing Bosnia to Kosovo, Hooper raised awareness of Serbian atrocities and thus added incentive to intervene.

In the same story which produced Hooper's quotation, Andrea Koppel opened the story with an attention-grabbing quotation: "Almost 10 years after Serbian police and soldiers began a cold blooded campaign to ethnically cleanse Bosnia it's happening again only this time it's Kosovo." The ethnic cleansing in Bosnia which occurred as a result of inactivity on the part of NATO remained a huge scar upon the alliance's conscious. The comment that the same situation was occurring again and strong opposition to Serbian actions remained a dream likely elicited strong reactions among viewers and aided in creating pro-intervention sentiments in the West.

73 John King, CNN, June 6, 1998
There were also quotations which framed the conflict as a fatalistic repetition of the events in Bosnia. A CNN story from September 7, 1998 illustrates this belief. David Ensor said, “Scenes like these from Bosnia five years ago will be repeated,” while archived footage of women, children, and the elderly fleeing Bosnia in anything with wheels in deep snow and ice played across the scene.76 The same story also featured a quotation from President Clinton who said, “I am determined to do all that I can to stop a repeat of the human carnage in Bosnia and the ethnic cleansing.”77 Part of the impact of the quotation is that it comes from President Clinton, as commander-in-chief. Clinton declared his intention to prevent a repeat of Bosnia, which equated the Kosovo Crisis with the Bosnian War. Further, he referred to the situation in Kosovo as ethnic cleansing, which strengthened the link between the two Balkan conflicts.

CNN also created a visual link between the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. In the introduction to a story which aired on October 1, 1998, shortly after the Gornje Obrinje Massacre. David Ensor, CNN’s correspondent, said “In Bosnia it was pictures of civilian massacres that galvanized Washington to action. Now there are the same tragic pictures of Kosovo.”78 Importantly, footage of civilian corpses piled on top of one another from Bosnia were immediately followed by new footage from Gornje Obrinje. Here, CNN again reinforced the link between Bosnia and Kosovo. Further, by showing the images which forced Washington to act in Bosnia, CNN added credibility to the belief that strong action, possibly military intervention, lay on the horizon because history appeared to be repeating itself.

77 Ibid.
78 David Ensor, CNN, October 1, 1998.
Former NATO Supreme Commander George Joulwan expressed similar sentiments concerning the link between Bosnia and Kosovo. CNN quoted General Joulwan, who said, "The conduct by Slobodan Milosevic and the Serb army is unacceptable. Kosovo is in the center of Europe. We've seen this conduct before in Bosnia and it seems like history is repeating itself." On the eve of intervention by NATO, Joulwan expressed the sentiment that many likely felt by March 1999; that the tragedy of Bosnia was replaying in Kosovo and that Milosevic needed to be stopped, by force if necessary.

As the possibility of military intervention mounted, the memory of Bosnia was held up as an example of why a military campaign against Milosevic would be successful. Former Senator John Warner (R-Virginia), a key member of the Armed Services Committee, said on January 17, 1999, "We've got to tell Milosevic you've got to stop this killing otherwise we're going to stop it. And it will deter in the same manner it deterred in Bosnia." Warner's quote indicated that by the time of the Racak Massacre in mid-January 1999, many Americans accepted that the killings in Kosovo were indeed ethnic cleansing. Warner's quote also revealed that more individuals in positions of power considered intervention a plausible option to end the Kosovo Crisis should Milosevic force NATO's hand, as had happened in 1995 in Bosnia.

Comparisons between Kosovo and Bosnia came from outside of journalists, U.S. officials, NATO officials, and activists as well. On June 5, 1998, CNN quoted U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, who said, "(Serb forces) must not be allowed to repeat the campaign of ethnic cleansing and indiscriminate attacks on civilians that characterized

the war in Bosnia.”\(^{81}\) Here Annan not only acknowledged the killing in Bosnia as ethnic cleansing, but also used the memory of those killings as a warning to the Serbs. Further, Annan’s quotation served as evidence to those who did not believe the situation in Kosovo was worsening that things were indeed going downhill.

**Shame of Srebrenica**

Journalists also called on the powerful memory of the Srebrenica massacre to advocate U.S. intervention. Zymer Bardheci, a Kosovar, said, when interviewed about the deployment of 2,000 peacekeepers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), “In Bosnia there were armed United Nations people yet the Serbs massacred people in front of their eyes.”\(^ {82}\) Commenting on the same deployment, Russell Scheidelman wrote in a letter to the editor that, “these observers will then become potential hostages to be used as bargaining chips to avoid full compliance and guarantee success for the Serbs’ genocidal campaign.”\(^ {83}\) At Srebrenica Bosnian Serbs used U.N peacekeepers as human shields to prevent any retaliation by aircraft or missiles. The same pattern had been used twice earlier by the Serbs in the Bosnian War. So, both a Kosovar and a U.S. citizen brought up the memory of Srebrenica to criticize U.S. diplomacy toward Milosevic. Following the Racak Massacre, Srebrenica was held up as a comparison; Racak came to symbolize Serbian atrocities in Kosovo in the same capacity Srebrenica did for Bosnia.\(^ {84}\) The powerful analogy, combined with grizzly images, jolted public opinion. The Racak Massacre is seen as the catalyst that spurred U.S. and NATO intervention and the horror was driven home by comparing it with Srebrenica.

\(^{81}\) CNN, June 5, 1998.
In an editorial published in *The Wall Street Journal* on October 23, 1998, Bob Dole wrote, "He (Milosevic) has secured monitors to preserve the new status quo and a de facto "human shield" against NATO air power." During the Bosnia War, NATO planes had difficulty attacking Serb targets because the Serbian units would come in so close to the UN peacekeepers the planes could not deploy their munitions. This scenario played out at Srebrenica, and Dole felt it would again in Kosovo. It is likely the memory of the events of Srebrenica still held a strong presence in the collective memory of the West.

An editorial written three months later in *The Journal* again reiterated Dole's point, saying, "As Milosevic knew all too well, their (OSCE peacekeepers) presence effectively precludes any Western military response lest it risk a repeat of the scenes from the Bosnian war, when peacekeepers were used by the Serbs as human shields." As with Mr. Dole's editorial three months earlier, the editorial board of *The Wall Street Journal* reminded the reader Western peacekeepers were used as human shields in Bosnia, specifically at Srebrenica. Again similar to Mr. Dole's editorial, the editorial board of *The Journal* criticized Clinton's agreement with Milosevic by invoking Bosnia and Srebrenica.

An article written about the failure of the Rambouillet talks made the most direct and though-provoking reference to Srebrenica. Alan Kuperman, the author, wrote, "What will peacekeepers do when large-scale killing resumes? Withdrawing or doing nothing

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86 Powers, 392.
would conjure shameful images of Rwanda and Srebrenica.\textsuperscript{88} The quotation from \textit{The Journal}, in addition to reminding the public of the tragedy in Rwanda, reminds readers of a potential problem with peacekeepers like one faced at Srebrenica. Kuperman’s point was that peacekeepers would be ineffective once the Serbs resumed ethnic cleansing. By using Srebrenica as an example, he implied the peacekeepers would be an obstacle to any military action taken to dislodge Serbian troops.

On a CNN storied which aired on October 1, 1998, Former NATO Supreme Commander George Joulwan referenced the Srebrenica Massacre. During the story he said, “We’ve gone through it once in Bosnia and the same pattern is repeating itself again. I said some time ago do we need to have another Srebrenica to act. And here we now have atrocities.”\textsuperscript{89} Here CNN use the the memory of Srebrenica in a recriminating fashion. Joulwan was an early advocate of intervention, but the U.S. and NATO largely drug their feet. Thus, Joulwan uses his prediction of catastrophic violence, embodied by Srebrenica, as a way to criticize how NATO handled the Kosovo Crisis.

The Kosovo Crisis drew comparisons to the Bosnia War and the Srebrenica Massacre. The comparisons created a number of connections. Perhaps the most prominent was to equate the Kosovo killings with the recognized ethnic cleansing which occurred in Bosnia. As people accepted ethnic cleansing occurred in Kosovo, officials and journalists used Bosnia and Srebrenica comparisons to push for at least stronger action with Milosevic if not outright military intervention. The prevalence of Bosnian references throughout the Kosovo Crisis signified the power of the relationship and its impact with audiences.


\textsuperscript{89} David Ensor, CNN, October 1, 1998.
Chapter 3: Portrait of Milosevic

Throughout the Kosovo Conflict, media outlets used negative portrayals of Milosevic to create a clear-cut instigator for the Serbian violence in Kosovo. Milosevic’s actions and words provided plenty of fodder for media outlets to frame in the negative. Further, some stories contained substitution words, like Belgrade or Serbia, which many Americans would associate with Milosevic. It also helped that Milosevic was not an unknown quantity to the American populace. He had, of course, been in the news during the Bosnia War and had been framed as a villain during that crisis. This history made it easier to frame Milosevic as a ruthless dictator and a reason for intervention.

Combative

The media demonstrated Milosevic’s combative nature from very early in the crisis. In the first New York Times article on the renewed Kosovo violence, the author described Milosevic as issuing “a defiant message to the West not to interfere,” after the author commented the United States and European nations were trying to “mediate the crisis.”90 From the outset, then, Milosevic was portrayed as being confrontational and an obstruction to any kind of constructive dialogue. He would do little over the year to counter this presentation from American media outlets.

As the media began to take notice of the Kosovo Crisis, CNN reached back a year and quoted Milosevic in a report. On June 25, 1997, Milosevic gave a speech in Kosovo in which he said, “Under no pressure will we ever give up even an inch of Kosovo…there has never been, nor will there ever be any talk of that subject.”91 This quotation, taken in concert with Milosevic’s obstinacy during the Bosnian War, provided an indication that

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he would be stubborn. CNN aired the quotation during their second story about the crisis, so Milosevic’s attitude toward losing Kosovo was apparent from the beginning.

As the Kosovo Crisis developed and Milosevic fell into the pattern of stubbornness, some felt early on that military intervention was the best course of action. One of these men was former presidential candidate Bob Dole. During a press conference, Dole said, “I think it’s time to do something militarily. I think Milosevic, the President of Serbia, I don’t believe any political pressure, economic pressure, or any other kind of pressure will work.”92 After the Cold War, the U.S. resolved most issues by using political and economic sanctions before they applied military pressure. Thus, Dole’s support for military action indicated his belief that Milosevic would not cooperate with conventional diplomatic methods. Dole’s standing amid the public likely swayed portions of the American populace toward intervention.

Following the Gornje Obrinje Massacre, American public opinion turned even further against the Serbs as reports from Kosovo became more common knowledge. In spite of the poor press his nation received because of the massacre, Milosevic appeared neither contrite nor apologetic. In fact, The New York Times reported that Milosevic “appears so defiant of world opinion that he might be willing to withstand an air strike in order to crush the Albanians.”93 In the midst of the worst atrocities to date in the crisis, Milosevic continued to flout world opinion and defy the pressure put on him by diplomats and the media. The unwillingness Milosevic showed to converse, much less negotiate, made him appear unreasonable. Thus, the continuation of the conflict lay on Milosevic’s shoulders.

After Richard Holbrooke brokered a ceasefire agreement in mid-October 1998, an editorial in *The New York Times* displayed just how low Milosevic’s reputation was in the U.S. The editorial used the qualifying phrase, “if honored by Serbian forces” to describe the potential benefits of Holbrooke’s deal.\(^{94}\) The Times editorial board, then, was not sanguine about the prospects of the deal if they felt the need to qualify the potential benefits. Kosovars also doubted Milosevic’s commitment to the deal and said so to *The Times*. Mike O’Connor, *The Times* reporter who filed the story, wrote any of the Kosovars he talked to, “doubted the deal will hold. They faulted the deal, saying that Mr. Milosevic will find a way to renege.”\(^{95}\) Kosovars had become jaded to Milosevic and were not afraid to voice their doubts of his honesty. Americans had come to share their views, as demonstrated above.

Tensions between NATO and Milosevic had not lessened by early 1999. CNN aired a story during on January 18, 1999 which said, “Yugoslavia: it’s leader, Slobodan Milosevic, intensifying the attack on the province of Kosovo and daring the U.S-led NATO alliance to do something about it”\(^{96}\) The quotation, from CNN anchor Judy Woodruff, was largely opinion, but it indicated the frustration many felt about the ineffective inaction the U.S. and NATO had taken to that point. The quotation further framed Milosevic as the source of the frustrations of Western diplomatic efforts because of his desire to force a confrontation. A day later State Department James Rubin reinforced the perception that Milosevic forced a confrontation. Aired on CNN, Rubin called Belgrade’s response confrontational and destructive.\(^{97}\) While the words appeared mild, in diplomatic language words used are sharp criticisms in diplomatic speak.

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Rubin's words demonstrated the frustration the U.S. government felt about Milosevic's combative nature during the year-long crisis.

During the Rambouillet negotiations, the media again reminded the American public of Milosevic's combative and problematic nature in diplomatic negotiations. Christiane Amanpour, who reported live from the chateau, said, "All eyes are on Yugoslavia, on Slobodan Milosevic, because the entire deal hinges on him. He is well known for brinksmanship, but right now with little flexibility or none at all being shown from Belgrade. The signs according to diplomats here are not encouraging at all."98 Rambouillet was Milosevic's second chance to negotiate, after the Holbrooke brokered ceasefire fell apart in October 1998, and the fact that negotiations did not move was blamed on Milosevic. As Amanpour said, Milosevic was the cornerstone of the negotiations and the lack of flexibility from Belgrade was seen as Milosevic's doing. This inflexibility, combined with the increase in ineffective saber rattling from NATO, heightened the perception that Milosevic was driving the crisis toward military confrontation.

Contrariness

Milosevic developed a reputation as a student of the diplomatic philosophy of brinksmanship. During NATO's dealings with Milosevic during the Bosnian War, though, Milosevic also developed a reputation for making promises and then not fulfilling them. The media reminded viewers and readers about this quality in him, and as the crisis developed Milosevic's duplicitous nature became a reminder of the futility of dealing with Belgrade.

As the violence in Kosovo mounted, the media noted U.S. officials told Milosevic not to commit the acts of violence while simultaneously giving Milosevic concessions for his

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cooperation. Milosevic carried out his plans to the frustration of the U.S. government. The same article revealed that during a meeting with U.S. officials in 1997 Milosevic accused the U.S. of being pro-Kosovar because Albanian drug lords in the province bribed the State Department. This outrageous and deeply insulting accusation no doubt angered Americans and served only to alienate Milosevic. In that one article, The New York Times portrayed Milosevic as both contrary, rejecting the carrot of economic concessions, and simultaneously levying a grievous insult to both a key government department and to American pride.

By the end of May 1998, the U.S. felt they had achieved an accommodation with Milosevic, thanks to the efforts of Richard Holbrooke, and softened the official American stance on Kosovo. However, some key diplomats felt that Milosevic might be deceiving the U.S. One diplomat, who wanted to remain anonymous, said he feared that Milosevic was deceiving Washington because Milosevic had succeeded in getting economic sanctions lifted with only the promise to meet with Kosovar leaders and without making any actual accommodations. A Times article from January 19, 1999 stated, “Mr. Milosevic’s latest ultimatums were a reprise of past behavior. During and after the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, he consistently broke promises and cease-fires.” Two articles published nearly nine months apart expressed similar sentiments. Perlez and Erlanger, the authors, reminded their readers of Milosevic’s already established a reputation as a schemer. Further, the selection of quotations indicated some diplomats and media outlets very early on felt he should be dealt with carefully. Milosevic’s past behavior gave no promising signs for the Kosovo crisis.

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100 Ibid.
As if to further reinforce the perception that Milosevic was untrustworthy, CNN aired a quotation from a source not within the American government. Paddy Ashdown, the leader of the Liberal Democrats in 1998-1999, said Milosevic had told him the massacres had stopped, and Ashdown replied that he knew Milosevic was lying because he was in villages as they burned a single day before Serbian authorities claimed military operations in Kosovo had ended.\(^{103}\) Ashdown’s accusation furthered the belief that Milosevic was duplicitous. Because Ashdown was one of the most prominent British politicians during the crisis, his claim held additional veracity. Ashdown’s claim showed many Americans others believed in Milosevic’s untrustworthiness and thus further impugned his credibility in the public’s eye.

The strongest accusation of Milosevic’s duplicitous nature came from President Clinton himself. Quoted in an article from October 13, 1998, Clinton said, “Balkan graveyards are filled with President Milosevic’s broken promises.”\(^{104}\) This statement by the president combined the memory of Bosnia with the constant stories of death and atrocity streaming out of Kosovo. When Clinton used his quotation to lay the blame for all the death and destruction at Milosevic’s feet, he effectively used a powerful tool which further galvanized the American public against Milosevic and the Serbs.

One of the ways media outlets represented Milosevic as being dishonest was by invoking the memory of his past duplicity. On December 13, 1998, *The Wall Street Journal* editorial board commented that, “Milosevic has in the past proved to be a master at engineering crises to suit his own ends.”\(^{105}\) In this example, all of the grief that had existed in the Balkans since the dissolution of Yugoslavia is implied to belong to

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\(^{103}\) Jeanne Meserve, CNN, September 30, 1998.


Milosevic. The Balkan War had only ended five years prior, so the results of Milosevic’s broken promises were still relevant in the minds of many Americans.

Milosevic was all but called a liar when a Journal article said, “NATO officials still have doubts about whether Mr. Milosevic genuinely intends to keep his promises.”\textsuperscript{106} NATO officials expressed this sentiment in the midst of a ceasefire brokered by Richard Holbrooke. Before Holbrooke succeeded, NATO came very close to using airstrikes. Thus, while some NATO officials doubted the ceasefire would hold, the public was made aware that airstrikes might again be necessary. Further, NATO officials felt the airstrikes might be called because of Milosevic’s reputation for violating treaties.

Milosevic’s untrustworthy nature is brought out into the open in another article from March 24, 1999, the day the bombings began. The article said, “American negotiators have persistently relied on Mr. Milosevic’s word even after he has repeatedly broken it.”\textsuperscript{107} Here again, the media reminded readers about Milosevic’s contrariness when dealing with the Western powers. Since the assertion came as the airstrikes were beginning, Milosevic’s actions of breaking the ceasefire Clinton brokered in October and of consistently blocking U.S. and NATO efforts to monitor the Kosovo situation were at the forefront of the public mind.

\textbf{Balkan Tyrant}

Arguably the most powerful, and common, portrayal of Milosevic was as a tyrannical oppressor. As the fighting in Kosovo dragged on through the summer of 1998, the Serbian government reneged on its promises that “it would not attack civilians, promised to allow

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foreign monitors, relief workers and journalists full access to observe combat areas. This quotation, coupled with a photograph of beleaguered and worn refugees travelling with as many possessions as they could carry drove home the ruthlessness of Serb forces. While the international world was trying to mediate the crisis and put people on the ground to help, the Serbs continued to attack civilians and remained obstinate in allowing entry of aid. And as the head of state, Milosevic bore the blame, and the responsibility, for the Serbian policies.

In June 1998, Serbian forces deployed minefields along Kosovo’s border with Albania. The Serbian government said the mines were designed to create a buffer zone between Kosovo and Albania. This startling move by the Serbian government elicited a strong response from Americans and the West. In a letter to the editor, Mary Wareham asserted, “Yugoslavia’s mine-laying in Kosovo shows its true colors: A blatant disregard for the worldwide revulsion and stigmatization of this inhumane weapon.” Ms. Wareham, as an average citizen, served as an example of how some Americans felt about the action. Landmines, in the eyes of Americans, had become a cowardly weapon that hurt innocents more than combatants in spite of the fact they were used by the U.S. during the Korean War. Because the Serbs used them, Milosevic was seen as responsible for the use of landmines and thus increased his reputation as a brutal leader willing to use any means necessary, even inhuman weapons.

An editorial in The Times from September 20, 1998 uses buzzwords like “terrorizing,” “repression,” and “ethnic cleansing.” These words show the contempt that the American media had developed for Milosevic. The same editorial asserted, “International relief agencies are trying to help. But they cannot do so until Mr. Milosevic calls off his

110 Ibid.
thugs.” This statement reveals two important sentiments prevalent in the American mindset. By referring to the Yugoslav army as “thugs,” The Times revealed their contempt for the military actions taken in Kosovo. In Serbia, the action in Kosovo was seen as a military exercise against guerillas; in the U.S. it was seen as something akin to gang violence, evidenced from the use of the word “thugs.” It also revealed American frustration with Milosevic. Aid agencies attempted to gain access to Kosovo, but the Yugoslav government denied them entrance into Kosovo. This worsened the humanitarian crisis and served to vilify Milosevic even more in American eyes.

The belief in Milosevic’s status as a tyrant was confirmed when, on two separate occasions nearly eight months apart, The Wall Street Journal twice referred to Milosevic as a “Serbian thug,” once on June 5, 1998 and again on March 23, 1999. Milosevic was referred to as “the Belgrade thug” and “the Serbian merchant of death and deception” in an article published on June 16, 1998. These three phrases were charged to portray Milosevic in a negative light and to ruin any positive reputation he may have had with the American public. By calling Milosevic a thug, the three articles removed any respect Milosevic might have commanded as a head of state. Without that respect, Milosevic was reduced to the level of a petty tyrant or the head of a gang.

Perhaps the most damming phrase described Milosevic as “the most murderous European politician since the era of Hitler and Stalin.” By classifying Milosevic with Hitler and Stalin, Americans associated the Yugoslav president with two of the most repressive and brutal dictators in modern European history, which transformed Milosevic

114 Ibid.
into a figure that needed to be stopped. It further reinforced the Milosevic was a tyrant and dictator rather than a rational head of state who could be negotiated with.

All of these phrases and adjectives combined to paint a picture of a man who flaunted authority and relied on brutality. The media painted Milosevic as dictator on the level of Saddam Hussein, as a brute and a madman terrorizing Southeastern Europe. Indeed, a report from CNN quoted an unnamed U.S. official who claimed Milosevic was taking a page from Saddam Hussein's policy book.\textsuperscript{115} Further, \textit{The Wall Street Journal} described the Kosovo crisis this way: "Mr. Milosevic has spent the summer ordering his Serbian troops to sweep through Kosovo, sacking villages and killing ethnic Albanians who seek autonomy for their province."\textsuperscript{116} In this quotation, Milosevic is directly associated with the killing in Kosovo. The Serbian forces are described as "his," and thus the "sacking...and killing" are associated directly with Milosevic. State Department spokesman James Rubin expressed this exact sentiment five months earlier when he said, "Clearly, these acts (the Drenica Massacre) were taken by the Serbian police; clearly the Serbian police ultimately operate under the authority of the president of the country."\textsuperscript{117} With such a definite villain in place, with a place for Americans to focus their anger, intervention seemed less open ended and more plausible.

Throughout the Kosovo Crisis, Milosevic was painted as the source of the troubles in Southeastern Europe. Indeed, there were moments during the crisis when individuals identified Milosevic as the root of the violence in Kosovo. During an interview on CNN aired on July 7, 1998, Bernard Shaw asked Richard Holbrooke, "Is Milosevic an

\textsuperscript{115} Nic Robertson, CNN, January 18, 1999.
impediment to peace?" and Holbrooke, "'He's the cause of the problem Bernie. Over the last decade he and his government took the rights of the Albanians in Kosovo away and thereby create explosive anger that is now manifesting itself in armed violence.'"\textsuperscript{118} After the Rambouillet negotiations fell apart, French President Jacques Chirac said that President Milosevic is solely responsible for the situation and its consequences.\textsuperscript{119} These two quotations, separated by more than nine months, indicated the idea of Milosevic's responsibility for the Kosovo Crisis did not wane. The media represented Milosevic in a negative light and framed him as responsible for the destruction. Thus, as intervention became a likely scenario, it appeared the best way to stop the killing was to intervene and force Milosevic to sue for peace as had been done four years prior.

\textsuperscript{118} Bernard Shaw, CNN, July 7, 1998.  
\textsuperscript{119} CNN, March, 19, 1999.
Conclusion

This study examined media coverage of the Kosovo Crisis from *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and CNN. It further demonstrated that these three media outlets framed the Kosovo Crisis in a manner which supported NATO intervention. The outlets achieved apparent support by writing about atrocities and massacres committed by Serbian forces, by reminding readers about failures in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995, and by portraying Slobodan Milosevic as a Machiavellian dictator who needed to be stopped. These three themes, present throughout 1998 and up to March 24, 1999, the day bombing began, were likely factors in stirring support for military intervention.

I further hypothesize that public opinion, influenced by many of the media reports discussed, helped push the Clinton administration to undertake military airstrikes. However, the study needed corroboration from Clinton Administration documents, either from the Oval Office or the State Department. I was unable to make a Freedom of Information Act request to the William J. Clinton Presidential Library due to limited time and funds. This study is well supported with examples from the news outlets of record demonstrating how coverage influenced the decision to intervene. Should another study hoping to demonstrate a more direct connection be conducted it would do well to ensure it has the funding and time to secure government records.

The Kosovo Conflict was the final military action of the 20th Century. It was also an illogical choice for military intervention by the US based on the *Realpolitik* philosophy. Scholarship immediately following the conflict held an intense bias; claiming either NATO wanted to enact a bombing campaign from the outset or that the media manipulated the facts to make a bombing campaign seem the most propitious course of
action. Indeed, only Bahador's study of the CNN effect in Kosovo, published in 2007, took a neutral tone. This study hopes to add to the more unbiased scholarship recently published.

This study expanded on Bahador's theory by examining the CNN-effect beyond television news. A full sampling of newspapers across the country would be impractical for this study. This impracticality fostered the decision to focus on *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, considered the papers of record for policy-makers and influential figures in American politics. CNN's importance to American news media in 1998-1999 cannot be ignored, so it too was included in the study.

Ultimately, in spite of the lack of corroboration from government sources, the study shows the three media outlets *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and CNN broadcasts helped pushed public opinion toward intervention, whether knowingly or unknowingly. When the three media outlets published stories about massacres in Kosovo, reminded the American public of the cost of inaction in Bosnia from 1992 to 1995, and portrayed Milosevic as a tyrannical dictator who needed to be stopped, these three media outlets shaped the Kosovo Crisis as an international situation which needed military intervention.
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