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# Misinformed but Well Meaning: "Ethnic Cleansing" and United States Newspaper Coverage of the Bosnian War From 1992-1995

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Misinformed but Well Meaning: “Ethnic Cleansing” and United States Newspaper Coverage of  
the Bosnian War From 1992-1995

By

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History 499, Senior Seminar  
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Extensively reported on, but long since lost from popular memory in the United States, the Bosnian War headlined newspapers across Europe and the U.S. from 1992 to 1995. The Bosnian War was one of several distinct, but interrelated wars, which led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia<sup>1</sup> in the 1990s. The Bosnian War was the most heavily covered conflict of the Yugoslav Civil War. Misinformed and historically inaccurate, many journalists during the conflict relied upon the memoirs and accounts of travel writers and other journalists who had visited the region. These memoirs were used by journalists to explain, and understand themselves, what was happening in Bosnia. United States newspapers relied on key terms like “ethnic cleansing” to explain the history, genocide and forced migrations happening within Bosnia. American journalists used the term “ethnic cleansing” to influence the public’s opinion on the United States role in the Bosnian War.

With the death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980, and the declining global power of the Soviet Union and Communism, Yugoslavia’s government became a place for Ultra-nationalist leaders to thrive in the subsequent power vacuum. Without Tito’s leadership, which focused on “Brotherhood and Unity” in an effort to unite the various ethnic groups within the country, divisions began to grow. The Socialist Republic continued to take more loans from Western Countries to sustain their heavily altered Communist state. They had come to enjoy Western lifestyles with socialist guarantees of jobs and other services, and wanted to maintain that despite massive political changes in the country that happened after Tito’s death.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Officially called the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Yugo meaning south, and Yugoslavia being the land of Southern Slavs), the country consisted of six republics: Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. There were an additional two autonomous provinces within Serbia: Vojvodina and Kosovo.

<sup>2</sup> Mihailo Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.) 81-130 ; This source is used solely for background information and to provide the reader with context to the situation leading up to the Bosnian War.

As debts rose and people were laid off, losing access to enjoy comfortable lifestyles, political leaders like Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian Ultra nationalist leader, and Franjo Tudjman, the Croatian nationalist leader, fueled the desire for division and autonomy among the ethnic groups in the Socialist Republic. Bosnia was the only republic within Yugoslavia that did not have any single majority of Serbs, Croats, or Muslims, but instead was a complex intertwining of all the groups throughout the country. Due to its long history as a frontier between the Christian and Muslim world, Bosnia was home to a large population of Muslims who did not identify, or were not identified as by their aggressors, as Serbian, Croatian, or any other ethnic group. Instead, these Muslims were identified by their belief system alone. The Republic's lack of an ethnic majority, and the presence of large populations of Croats in the North and Serbs in the South, created a lethal situation as Yugoslavia dismembered in 1991.<sup>3</sup>

In 1991, Slovenia and Croatia officially declared their independence<sup>4</sup> from the Socialist Republic. Bosnia did not receive recognition of their independence from the Western World at large, unlike Slovenia and Croatia, until the United States recognized their claim in 1992. It was short lived though, as Serbia's nationalist leadership sought to violently claim Serb-dominated areas within Bosnia. This issue caused Serbians and Bosnian Muslims to enter a war for territory and survival, and drew in the Croats, who ended up following the Serbian path of fighting for territory despite having initially been allies to the Bosnian Muslims. Croatia quickly became an aggressor and, in late 1992, forced the Muslims in the country to fight for their territory on two sides.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Crnobrajica, *The Yugoslav Drama*, 81-130.

<sup>4</sup> Slovenia was first to claim their independence, followed by Croatia, and then Bosnia.

<sup>5</sup> Crnobrajica, *The Yugoslav Drama*, 81-130.

Also in 1992, American journalists focused their attention on the rapidly developing conflict, as it raged in the former Socialist Republic. Yugoslavia was not a commonly covered subject in American media, and news reports or writing about the country before 1992 were few and far between. The only widespread news articles that appeared in U.S. media were about significant changes, like Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia's claims to independence. Not only were the general population and the press lacking knowledge in this area, but the academic community was also not prepared to explain the events unfolding in the country. With such a lack of understanding, journalists and writers who travelled to Yugoslavia and covered the events unfolding there were often relied upon to inform everyone from the general American populace to the United States' President at the time, Bill Clinton, on what was happening.

These articles portrayed only the experiences of individuals who visited Bosnia and surrounding republics, and for usually less than a year. Such a short amount of time, often accompanied by a lack of historical knowledge, meant that these journalists were creating works that offered only a sliver of the whole conflict and understanding the reason behind it. However, with few other resources and little external knowledge of the history of the area, policymakers in the United States relied on the publications to provide them with the most accurate and up-to-date media account of the war. United States journalists early in the conflict tended to report information that was not always accurate, but that would eventually lead them to push the Clinton administration towards conflict intervention.

Scholarship that examines the role of media during the Bosnian War is split into personal memoirs and the study of changes in journalism throughout the conflict. The personal memoirs from journalists who traveled to Bosnia provided a base for understanding the trends in reporting throughout the conflict. One example of this is the consistent use of the term "ethnic cleansing,"

and its development from an observational explanation, to a self-proclaimed fact by journalists who used it. Following these unique forms of writing, scholars explored the impact of such publications, the use of the term “ethnic cleansing” in journalism, and why journalists used the term the way they did. A few of the sources selected for this research explore and connect the role of media in swaying the U.S. populace and Clinton Administration into intervening in the conflict. In situating this research within this field of study, these sources will be utilized to further show the influence of media and the use of “ethnic cleansing” in progressing American interventionist politics.

The memoirs that cover the Bosnian War start with the book, *Balkan Ghosts*, by Robert Kaplan.<sup>6</sup> Kaplan created a reputation for himself as an expert travel writer, publishing multiple books on areas of the world that the public had little knowledge about. *Balkan Ghosts* covers the entirety of the Balkan region, which includes Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, and Yugoslavia. Published during the second year of the Bosnian War in 1993, Kaplan’s book provided many readers with information and history on the country, but was highly criticized by the academic community. Without acknowledging the larger political and economic issues bearing down on the diminishing Republic, Kaplan explained that the current outbreak of war in Bosnia was due to ethnic tensions, hatred towards other ethnic groups, and the history of the Southern Slavs. For Kaplan, the issue was “ancient ethnic hatred”<sup>7</sup> and its association with inner conflicts between the ethnic groups living in Bosnia.

Kaplan’s “ancient ethnic hatred” claim correlated with the stockpile of nationalist propaganda from Milosevic and the Serbian nationalists asserting their proclaimed dominance over the Croats and Muslims living in Bosnia. Ethnic hatred was also part of Kaplan’s

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<sup>6</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1993.)

<sup>7</sup> Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts*, 13-15.

explanation that, historically, the groups within the Republic had always fought each other over differences in ethnicity and that it was only subdued by Tito when he was alive. The travel writers' assertions were not accurate though, as scholars have argued that the Bosnian War was not just a bloodletting because of the region's ethnic differences. This argument did not develop into anything of influence until later in the war when Kaplan's work impacted both the populace and journalists alike. Kaplan's experience was not unique though, as journalists traveled to Bosnia and the surrounding republics throughout the conflict, all with the goal of offering insight and information on the situation unfolding within. Frequently, these quickly released stories, like Kaplan's, were based more in emotional appeals and were not able to provide a holistic perspective on the situation to inform readers of what was really happening or why.

However, there was one journalist during the course of the war, Misha Glenny, who produced a book capable of providing an in-depth explanation of the crumbling Socialist Republic without a significant dependence on emotional appeal or inaccurate historical claims. Glenny, a British journalist, offered an objective and all-encompassing look at the situation in Yugoslavia from 1990-1993 in his book *The Fall of Yugoslavia*.<sup>8</sup> One similarity that Glenny shares with Kaplan and other authors writing on the Bosnian War at the time, is the emphasis on ethnic hatred, differences, and tension to explain the issues within the dividing country. For Glenny, however, the issue of ethnic differences connects to politics, the differences between urban and rural communities, and the location of minorities based on their ethnic background and their country of origin. Glenny utilized these factors in his explanation of the violence, such as acts of "ethnic cleansing" that broke out in Bosnia as each ethnic group sought autonomy, or connection to their ethnic homeland. The British journalist's focus on politics shows how

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<sup>8</sup> Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War*, 3rd ed, (New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Penguin Books, 1996.)

Serbian and Croatian leaders used their political influence to hasten the dissemination of the country, particularly through propaganda that emphasized ethnic differences.

Before and during the time of the conflict, many Serbs in Bosnia lived in urban environments, where they had coexisted and mixed with Croats and Muslims for many generations. Serbs in rural communities were often relegated to small ethnic enclaves that lacked a sense of safety or security due to Milosevic promoting fear that the newly independent Bosnian government would not treat them fairly or be a safe place for them to live.

This information is important in understanding the Bosnian conflict, as much of the Croat and Serb minorities living in rural communities had limited interaction with the Muslim and intermixed population. The Bosnian population did not feature any clear majority between the Muslims, Croats, and Serbs living there, which was unique due to the other republics having clear majorities associated with their state name. Many authors writing on the Bosnian War blame the Serbs for the conflict and the resulting atrocities, citing ethnic hatred as the reason why actions associated with “ethnic cleansing” occurred. Glenny used these issues of ethnicity in his explanation for the events, but he also tied it into the larger picture of politics, gaining independence from the Socialist Republic, and the passive role of the United Nations and the Western World during the first few years of the Bosnian conflict. The inactivity of the Western World was clear in their inability to properly respond to the reports of human rights violations performed through “ethnic cleansing,” or to act accordingly. Western leaders often suggested solutions, but no actual action was agreed upon or acted upon by the U.N. or the United States. *The Fall of Yugoslavia* might have relied on the trending idea of ethnic differences being the root cause of the conflict within Bosnia during the conflict, but it did offer a holistic view of the



political trickiness that plagued the situation, both within the crumbling Socialist Republic and outside of it.

Another key writer on the conflict, although he released his book 1998, a few years after the conflict, is Chuck Sudetic. Sudetic was a journalist for *The New York Times* during the Bosnian War and a scholar in Slavic languages with subsequent knowledge of the area, people, and language he reported on. In his book *Blood and Vengeance*, the author provides in-depth and extensive explanations of the history of Yugoslavia from 1389 to the end of the Bosnian War.<sup>9</sup> Sudetic focused on the trials and hardships of the Celiks Family, who were living in the designated “safe zone” of Srebrenica in Bosnia. In Srebrenica, the family were victims and witnesses to the tragedies that happened within due to actions associated with “ethnic cleansing”. The attention to detail, extensive bibliography, and ability to adapt contemporary lives makes *Blood and Vengeance* an essential in studying United States newspapers writing on the war. Sudetic’s book offered an account accessible and understandable to both the public and academics alike. *Blood and Vengeance* release in 1998 was too late to directly affect journalism during the Bosnian War. However, it is evident that Sudetic’s articles written during the conflict, offer a more accurate explanation to what was happening in the Republic and why. Unlike Sudetic, Glenny and Kaplan released their books during the Bosnian War and in turn were referred to as “instant histories.”

In 1996, a journal article from the *Slavic Review*, titled “Instant History: Understanding the Wars of Yugoslav Succession,” was published.<sup>10</sup> The article was written by Gale Stokes, John Lampe, Dennison Rusinow, and Julie Mostov, with expertise in history and political

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<sup>9</sup>Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*. First ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998.)

<sup>10</sup>Gale Stokes, John Lampe, Dennison Rusinow and Julie Mostov, “Instant History: Understanding the Wars of Yugoslav Succession,” *Slavic Review*, 1996, 55(1): 136-160.

science. “Instant History” sought to debunk and dissect much of the literature released during the conflict from the outpouring of journalist’s memoirs that were published between 1993-1995. The authors explore journalists’ interest in the crumbling Socialist Republic before headlining news broke out. Stokes acknowledged that the heavy stream of publications following the beginning of the Bosnian War included a large amount of contemporary, albeit often inaccurate, information, as well as historical information. Books that were released on the subject were often not all encompassing of the many issues and situations unfolding in the country. However, they began to form a better picture of the situation. Instant history books, such as Kaplan’s, Glenny’s, and later Sudetic’s, provided:

emphasis on varying issues and differ in their interpretations of specific events, but in general [readers and journalists] now have a reasonably clear idea of the difficulties that Yugoslavia faced, the impact of institutions and individuals on the disintegration process, the structural weaknesses of the western reaction and many other aspects of the collapse.<sup>11</sup>

The academic community and the authors of the articles generally agreed that Glenny’s piece was less based in emotional appeal, and that he sought the answers to broader questions about what caused the Bosnian War. Stokes analyzed the contributions of many of the publications that came out during the Bosnian War, emphasizing their role in promoting a better understanding of the conflict, both for scholarly purposes and for the public. “Instant History” helps justify the use of journalist memoirs in researching the correlation between the journalists and the books in terminology, especially the use of “ethnic cleansing.” Scholarship published in the latter half of the 1990s offers a unique view of the conflict only a few years after it ended, after ample time to collect data on the influence of public newspapers on the conflict.

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<sup>11</sup> Stokes, Lampe, Rusinow, and Mostov, "Instant History: Understanding the Wars of Yugoslav Succession."160.

One of the most commonly referenced publications on the study of media coverage and its effects on the Bosnian War is an anthology: *The Media of Conflict*.<sup>12</sup> Edited by Tim Allen and Jean Seaton, *The Media of Conflict* covers the Gulf war, Bosnian War, and other major wars that happened in the 1990s and saw significant Western media coverage. The chapter on the Bosnian War used for this research was written by Marcus Banks and Monica Wolfe Murray. It provides an explanation of journalist's use of the term "ethnic cleansing" to describe the events happening during the Bosnian War. The practices of the Nazis during the Holocaust as the Third Reich sought to fulfill the "Final Solution" was also referred to as "ethnic cleansing." Often the media would accompany the use of the term with the history of the puppet state of Croatia during Nazi occupation of the Balkans in World War II. The Ustashe, a fascists party that ruled Croatia for the extent of the Nazi occupation, built their own concentration and death camps, where they not only murdered Jews, but also Serbs and the other ethnic groups throughout what would become known as Yugoslavia as it was formed in 1945 under Tito.

Banks and Murray explain how "ethnic cleansing" was used as shocking term associated with violence at first and then evolved into an apparent fact for some journalists.<sup>13</sup> This evolution into a fact was the switch from using the term to simply explain multiple forms of atrocities, to using it in order to point out the inaction of the U.S. and Western Powers as Bosnian Muslims continued to be subjected to "ethnic cleansing." The scholar's chapter highlights the use of ethnicity as a go-to medium for journalists writing on the war, from reporting on the atrocities of "ethnic cleansing" to the need for intervention from the U.S. and the Western world in stopping the bloodshed in Bosnia.

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<sup>12</sup>Marcus Banks and Monica Wolfe Murray, *The Media of Conflict: War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence*, edited by Tim Allen and Jean Seaton, (London; New York: Zed Books, 1999.) 147-162.

<sup>13</sup>Banks and Murray, *The Media of Conflict*, 156.

With such a massive and consistent coverage of the Bosnian War by the United States and other Western countries, especially Britain, a rise in attention and knowledge of the situation increased among all members of these societies. This very growth is acknowledged and studied in the article “Gaps in Americans’ Knowledge about the Bosnian Civil War,” published in the *American Politics Research Journal* in 2001.<sup>14</sup> Written by political scientists, Staci Rhine, Stephen Earl Bennett, and Richard Flickinger, this article offers insight about U.S. society’s knowledge of the Bosnian War over the course of four years. While the results of the study were unsurprising, finding that individuals with college degrees gathered more knowledge about the subject over the four years of the war than individuals classified as working class, it also showed a dramatic increase in knowledge across the all classes regardless of education or economic status. This increase in knowledge became a problem for the United States’ government as they attempted to find their place within the world through foreign policy; the Cold War rhetoric of “Capitalism versus Communism” could no longer be used, as the U.S. had been victorious. The public questioned the United States’ role as the country tried to sort out its foreign policy as the new, yet unclaimed, world leader. Reports of “ethnic cleansing” and the atrocities associated with it filled parts of newspapers in 1992 and began to stir the hearts and minds of the American public.

Rhine, Bennett, and Flickinger promote the idea that media sources and their abundant production of articles about the Bosnian War helped inform the public, while also steering foreign policy for the United States government. While the results of media polls gauging public influence on government action were not significant enough to draw any conclusive statements, there were noticeably high spikes in interest and requests for action from the public when United

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<sup>14</sup> Staci L, Rhine, Stephen Earl Bennett, and Richard S Flickinger, "Gaps in Americans' Knowledge About the Bosnian Civil War." *American Politics Research* 29, no. 6 (2001): 592-607.

States citizens reacted to the “ethnic cleansing” results that resulted from the conflict. Released in 2001, Rhine, Bennett, and Flickinger’s article introduces the question of public influence on government actions, and media's influence on the public. These issues would continue to be raised by other scholars in the years that follow.

In 2007, Yaeli Bloch-Elkon, a communications and political science scholar, published an article in *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* which focused on the study of media, public opinion, and foreign policy in international crises. The particular focus of this article, “Studying the Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy in International Crises: The United States and the Bosnian Crisis, 1992—1995”<sup>15</sup> was the role that the United States fulfilled in attempting to either help or stay out of the Bosnian War. Bloch-Elkon looked at the editorials and commentary of *The Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal*, alongside public opinion polls and headlines from *USA Today* and *Washington Times*, to test out her thesis. As with the authors of “Gaps in Americans’ Knowledge about the Bosnian Civil War,” Bloch-Elkon was searching for a correlation between the media’s steering of the public opinion, and effects on U.S. foreign policy.

Bloch-Elkon suggested that a government without a strong opinion on foreign issues can often be influenced by the public to act in a certain way. This fit with the United States’ post-Cold War problem, when they could no longer claim that their interference was an act of defense for Democracy or Capitalism. Another key characteristic of this article was Bloch-Elkon’s emphasis on society’s changing opinion and level of approval for government intervention over different periods of the Bosnian War. This correlation can attributed in part to the use of “ethnic

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<sup>15</sup> Yaeli Bloch-Elkon. "Studying the Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy in International Crises: The United States and the Bosnian Crisis, 1992—1995." *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 12, no. 4 (2007): 20-51.

cleansing” throughout the conflict. In the first two years of the War, 1992 and 1993, public knowledge was still relatively low, but interest and knowledge of the subject was rising as constant reports appeared across a variety of media sources. For the remainder of the war, the media pushed for a military intervention approach in order to prevent further bloodshed in the country. Bloch-Elkon only suggested that the media might have steered the public opinion and in turn helped push United States intervention in Bosnia. This article furthers the research and study of the role of media in its reporting of conflicts and the effects it has on the public and in the turn the government.

Maria Touri, a scholar of media and communications at the University of Leicester, expands research on the role of media in shaping public opinion and the decision of the government to act. In the anthology, *Violence and War in Culture and the Media*, Touri’s chapter focuses on her theory that the media played a pivotal, if not absolutely deciding factor, to the government’s decision to intervene in the Bosnian War.<sup>16</sup> Following the scholars of the aforementioned articles addressing a similar thesis, Touri reaffirms that the role of the media is not easily pinned down at any point, nor is their level of influence. Often, the reason for President Clinton’s inactive stance during the course of the conflict was the perceived lack of impact it would have on United States’ interests, and it was a “far away place, for which the [United States] bore no ethical responsibility.”<sup>17</sup> Due to the United States’ inactive stance, journalists resorted to headlines that would encourage public support for action, and utilized the term “ethnic cleansing” to highlight the atrocities and violations of human rights in the War.

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<sup>16</sup> Maria Touri, *Violence and War in Culture and the Media : Five Disciplinary Lenses*, edited by Athina Karatzogianni, (London ; New York: Routledge, 2012.)

<sup>17</sup> Touri, *Violence and War in Culture and the Media*, 196.

One of the main concerns with claiming that the media could have influenced the government's decision to intervene in 1995 is that media sources, according to Touri, only provided coverage that “although dramatic, remained distanced and confused.”<sup>18</sup> Touri highlights the issue of journalists not usually being knowledgeable about the country they were reporting on, and also often limiting themselves only to specific places for small amounts of time, damaging their credibility. She also addressed the issue of news sources continuing to use the “history of ethnic unrest through simplified terms,”<sup>19</sup> which created a distance between the consumer and those suffering in Bosnia. Clinton’s administration and their decision to act were eventually justified by deeming the United States a global leader in restoring peace and stopping “ethnic cleansing.” Touri’s chapter encompasses many of the theses and results of prior scholars’ articles, emphasizing the complex and dynamic role of media in influencing not only the government but also public knowledge and accuracy on the subject.

These secondary sources point to the role of the media during the Bosnian conflict as miscommunicated, historically incorrect, and analytically inaccurate, but able to reach the general public and influence the decision of the United States to end the atrocity-driven war in Bosnia. To highlight the influence of the newspapers during the war, newspaper articles will be analyzed for each individual year of the war, focusing on the use of “ethnic cleansing” and its role in the journalists writing.

The primary sources used for this research will be United States newspaper editorials and news articles. A mixture of the various articles will be used to explore different approaches to reporting from 1992-1995 on the Bosnian War. This research will utilize *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, two national papers accessible throughout the United States. The

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<sup>18</sup> Touri, *Violence and War in Culture and the Media*, 196.

<sup>19</sup> Touri, *Violence and War in Culture and the Media*, 196.

articles selected were written by foreign affairs and Eastern Europe correspondents, and focus on the Bosnian War or on Yugoslavia in a larger context. The term “ethnic cleansing” is used extensively throughout the conflict by journalists from the two major newspapers, but the difference in how often and in what context it was used. This is an important distinction between the authors of different sources. Difference in expertise in Yugoslavia, Bosnia, and the country’s history is also an important factor in looking at the two newspapers and the variances in expertise between the lead journalists for the subject. The newspapers’ journalists’ differences also help trace the evolution and fading use of the term that gradually happened over the four year period. The United Nations’ definition of *ethnic cleansing* will also be used to help understand what the term actually covered and meant.

Before Kaplan’s *Balkan Ghosts* was published in 1993, journalists began to develop a similar terminology in how they described the events unfolding in 1992, the beginning of the conflict. Kaplan’s use of the word “ethnic”, in relation to its correlation with “ancient hate” among the different ethnic groups that made up Yugoslavia, influenced journalists who had little knowledge about the history of the country into using similar terms. However, in 1992, journalists were not yet exposed to the many memoirs that would be published in the next three years of the war and after. Their development and use of the term “ethnic cleansing” began when knowledge of atrocities and war crimes became available. In order to understand what they mean by “ethnic cleansing,” two definitions from the U.N. will be used. The definitions are " rendering an area ethnically homogeneous by using force or intimidation to remove persons of given groups from the area," and “a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or



religious group from certain geographic areas.”<sup>20</sup> There is no clear indication as to whether journalists and authors used definitions similar to the United Nations considering their various uses of the term. The *New York Times* and *The Washington Post* difference in political influence offers a view of the difference in how each newspaper uses the term and its influence on their understanding of the Bosnian War.

### 1992-1993

John Burns and Chuck Sudetic were both Foreign correspondents for *The New York Times* and heavily covered the Bosnian War from 1992-1994. Burns was a British journalist who covered international issues for the newspaper, while Sudetic was a scholar of the Slavic languages and had spent two years as a Fulbright scholar in Yugoslavia in 1984 and 1985. Sudetic’s knowledge of the Slavic language and personal time in the country that he was writing on contributed to his accurate and in-depth analysis of the conflict.

One of the first examples of the use of “ethnic cleansing” from *The New York Times* comes from Burns news article from August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1992, four months after the outbreak of war. Burns article “Serbs' Campaign for Ethnic Purity Divides Up a Busload of Orphans” covers the story of a bus of orphans being transported to Germany for refugee that is attacked by Serbian Nationalist and then halted to sort out Serbian children from the other ethnic groups.<sup>21</sup> It is after a brief explanation of the attack and situation that Burns states “ [s]ince early April, Serbian nationalists have used a policy they call ethnic cleansing to drive Muslims and Croats from wide areas of this newly independent country.”<sup>22</sup> Burns utilizes the term “ethnic cleansing” to explain

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<sup>20</sup> *Ethnic Cleansing*, United Nations, <http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/ethnic-cleansing.html>

<sup>21</sup> John F. Burns, "Serbs' Campaign for Ethnic Purity Divides Up a Busload of Orphans." *The New York Times*, August, 3, 1992.

<sup>22</sup> Burns, "Serbs' Campaign for Ethnic Purity Divides Up a Busload of Orphans"

the Serbian Nationalists shooting at the bus of orphans and then stopping it to sort out Serbian children over other ethnic groups. This form of ethnic cleansing can be interpreted as forced migration, and violent acts leading to death. However, Burns does not clearly identify which form it could be, leaving the reader confused to how the term applies.

Only a few lines later, Burns states that the history of the multi-ethnic country has lived in harmony, a key point of disagreement with Kaplan and other journalists in the early years of the war. Burns wrote that the people there “said they saw the incident as proof of the extremes to which Serbian nationalists will go to destroy a society in which Serbs, Muslims and Croats have lived side-by-side for generations, mostly in relative harmony.”<sup>23</sup> This article is a precursor to what Kaplan suggested in his book that the diverse country was prone to violence due to “ancient ethnic hatred.”<sup>24</sup> However, Burns in the first year of the war argues the exact opposite in reporting that Serbian nationalists had disrupted communities that were not inherently violent, thus debunking Kaplan’s argument. Sudetic and Glenny would confirm, in the latter’s later release and former’s later editions, that Burns claim of the people in Bosnia living in peace within the multi-ethnic state throughout most of its history was correct.<sup>2526</sup> This first example represents the issue of journalists misconceiving the complexity of the country and the reasons behind the Bosnian War. Before their reliance on memoirs that would be released in 1993 and after, those who had knowledge of the region were the most likely to report accurately. Although, it is likely that their reports were not given the most attention as other journalists relied on shock factors, controversies, and generally attention-grabbing news to bring in readers. Individuals like Sudetic

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<sup>23</sup> Burns, “Serbs’ Campaign for Ethnic Purity Divides Up a Busload of Orphans.”

<sup>24</sup> Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts*, 13-15.

<sup>25</sup> Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*.

<sup>26</sup> Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*.

had a deeper understanding of the situation and offered an in-depth explanation of the events in correlation with the popular term “ethnic cleansing.”

Sudetic’s article from September 27, 1992; titled “Envoys Offer New Report of Serbian ‘Ethnic Cleansing’ in Bosnia,” reports on the expulsion of 3,000 to 4,000 Muslims from the Bosnian town of Travnik.<sup>27</sup> With forced migration of Muslims starting in the summer of 1992, from Serbian Nationalist violently forcing them out, Croatia and surrounding countries were receiving refugees by the masses. In response to this, the Croatian government denied new refugees, as they were being overwhelmed by the sheer amount of people.<sup>28</sup> This is an important point in understanding the increase in violence that would gradually build throughout the course of the war as refugees from Bosnia found less and less opportunity to escape the Serbian, and later Croatian, aggressors. Sudetic reported that “the leaders of the Serbian forces say that reports of Serbian ‘ethnic cleansing’ are ‘empty allegations’ and that the Muslims who have made the trek through the Travnik war zone have done so voluntarily.”<sup>29</sup> Serbian military and political leaders denied multiple accusations of atrocities performed by their forces in pursuing their policy of “ethnic cleansing”.

Sudetic’s *Blood and Vengeance* gives insight into the building aggression between Muslims and Serb’s in 1991 when local men began to invest heavily into firearms and places once occupied by multi-ethnic groups were abandoned.<sup>30</sup> Glenny also provides insight in the first few chapters of his book discussing the change in politics from 1990 to the beginning of the Bosnian War.<sup>31</sup> The correlation between Sudetic’s writing from his memoir from 1998 and his

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<sup>27</sup> Chuck Sudetic, "Envoys Offer New Report of Serbian 'Ethnic Cleansing' in Bosnia." *The New York Times*, September, 27, 1992.

<sup>28</sup> Sudetic, "Envoys Offer New Report of Serbian 'Ethnic Cleansing' in Bosnia."

<sup>29</sup> Sudetic, "Envoys Offer New Report of Serbian 'Ethnic Cleansing' in Bosnia."

<sup>30</sup> Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance*, 89.

<sup>31</sup> Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, 1-137.

article is the fact that tensions were building before the outbreak and had been fueled by Milosevic and Tudjman and their Nationalist propaganda campaigns. “Ethnic cleansing” in Sudetic’s article is quoted in use by Serbian leaders, not as a catchall term utilized by the author to describe the atrocities being carried out. While Sudetic provides accurate and extensive information, he doesn’t explain the Serbian leader’s use of the term so widely popularized by journalists. An explanation of why Serbian Nationalist leaders used the term would have provided a better understanding of the situation, in turn making it clear when other journalists created misconceptions of the conflict. Burns and Sudetic offer a unique writing contrast, as the former tended to use “ethnic cleansing” to explain complex situations while also attempting to understand the complex history of the multi-ethnic country, and Sudetic utilized popular terminology only when others referred to it. He provided knowledge about the country in context to the situation he was reporting on. Neither journalist avoided the use of the term “ethnic cleansing,” but the way they utilized it was important in its role later, when journalists tried to persuade their audiences to support the Clinton Administration’s intervention in Bosnia

The leading journalist for *The Washington Post* who covered the Bosnian War was John Pomfret. While the paper did not publish and cover the story in Bosnia as heavily as its counterpart<sup>32</sup>, it is interesting to compare the stories and news they report on. While both newspapers’ journalists employed similar terms, those from *The Washington Post* seem to align with Kaplan’s explanation for the conflict, even prior to his book being released.

The first *Washington Post* article for this research was published August 5, 1992 and does not come from Pomfret but Fred Ikle, a former official in the Department of Defense for the Reagan Administration. The article, “Ethnic Cleansing: ‘Cunning Strategy,’” compares the events

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<sup>32</sup> Bloch-Elkon. "Studying the Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy in International Crises: The United States and the Bosnian Crisis, 1992—1995." 31.

happening in Bosnia to that of Hitler and the Nazi Party's "Final Solution."<sup>33</sup> Possibly, Ikle is using the theme of World War II and the Nazis to draw comparisons to the Croatian Ustashe and their genocidal practices against Serbs, Muslims, and other ethnic groups within Yugoslavia. During the Ustashe's short time in power, they implemented a policy of "cleansing" which involved similar atrocities to that of the Bosnian War.<sup>34</sup> Ikle implies that because the goal of the Serbian "ethnic cleansing" campaign was local, that is was the "circumscribed aims of the ethnic cleansers [made] it easy for the world community to look the other way."<sup>35</sup> The author infers that the Bosnian War and the "ethnic cleansing" happening was domestic and was not a concern for the world surrounding it. This is comparable to Kaplan's "ancient ethnic hatred" explanation for not intervening in a country that was prone to internal fighting.<sup>36</sup> In a decisive tone, the author claims that the "strategy of ethnic cleansing will not repeat this mistake. It will achieve the truly final solution."<sup>37</sup> Ikle's article serves as a predecessor to a dark outlook on the Bosnian War and the "ethnic cleansing" campaign that would continue to headline and guide articles for the next three years.

On February 12, 1993, Burns article "Bigger U.S. Peace Role Leaves Bosnians Split" reports on the Clinton Administration's denying the United Nations Vance-Owen plan and the need for the reversal of the Serbian "ethnic cleansing" campaign that was happening in Bosnia.<sup>38</sup> The United States was taking on a new position of trying to mediate the situation from home, disappointing Bosnian Muslims and European leaders who sought direct intervention to stop

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<sup>33</sup> Fred C. Ikle, "Ethnic Cleansing': Cunning Strategy." *The Washington Post*, August, 5, 1992.

<sup>34</sup> Banks and Murray, *The Media of Conflict : War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence*, 152.

<sup>35</sup> Ikle, "Ethnic Cleansing': Cunning Strategy."

<sup>36</sup> Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts*, 13-15.

<sup>37</sup> Ikle, "Ethnic Cleansing': Cunning Strategy."

<sup>38</sup> John F. Burns, "Bigger U.S. Peace Role Leaves Bosnians Split." *The New York Times*, February, 12, 1993.

Serbian aggression.<sup>39</sup> Burns reported that [a]lthough the Clinton Administration had decided against using military power in an effort to halt the fighting in Bosnia for now,[...] Washington had pledged to use American troops to help enforce any agreement the three sides reach.”<sup>40</sup> This quote from the article provides an idea of the ongoing push for American intervention from around the world and how it was being reported on. This is important to note as this article showed early signs of disagreement with the Clinton administration’s plans for the war and a call for more United States involvement. The United States government’s plan at this point was to support U.N.’s decisions and let Western Europe try to figure out the situation, taking a back seat in the process of solving the conflict.

As of 1993, “ethnic cleansing” was still used as a catchall term to describe the atrocities being performed by the Serbian forces in Bosnia. This is important in understanding that the term would continue to primarily be associated with Serbs, ignoring that Croats and Muslims were committing similar acts, but to a far lesser degree. It was interpreted by Murray and Banks that “ethnic cleansing” by Serbians was interpreted by journalists as a way of creating “ethnic purity” in areas with Serb majorities.<sup>41</sup> This idea of ethnic purity matches the U.N. definition for “ethnic cleansing.” It is at this point that journalism covering the topic used “ethnic cleansing” as more of a term for the general populace to imagine what was really happening, with the occasional detail of what forms of atrocities were happening. This contributed to the confusion and misconception of what was happening, as the term was used to explain what Croats and Muslims were doing. Additionally, in a general survey of the American public’s knowledge about the conflict, it was found that, as of September of 1993, close to 30% “knew” it was Serbian forces

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<sup>39</sup> Burns, "Bigger U.S. Peace Role Leaves Bosnians Split."

<sup>40</sup> Burns, "Bigger U.S. Peace Role Leaves Bosnians Split."

<sup>41</sup>Banks and Murray, *The Media of Conflict : War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence*, 152.

who were the aggressors.<sup>42</sup> Burns reporting represents a minimum explanation onto what was happening in a wider context. In Burns article, he uses “ethnic cleansing” to describe violence towards Bosnian Muslims stuck in Sarajevo by Serbian forces, being mortared and shot at. Burn’s focused largely on violent episodes committed by the Serbian forces, usually highlighting the Bosnian Muslims as the main recipients of the violence.

This focus on violence from Burn’s served as a contrast to Sudetic’s piece that would follow up a month later explaining a plan to help transport thousands of Bosnian Muslim refugees out of the country. In Sudetic’s article from March 5<sup>th</sup> of 1993, he reports on the “unconfirmed” accounts of lack of food, shelter, and medical supplies from a Muslim refugee enclave that was in contact with United Nation forces in the process of helping them escape from Serbian encirclement.<sup>43</sup> From the besieged town of Sarajevo, Bosnian Muslim leaders disagreed with the opportunity to receive assistance from the U.N. as it would help further the Serbs “ethnic cleansing” campaign.<sup>44</sup> However, there is a counter argument from the refugees in the enclave that the United Nations was only going to “create a safe passage for desperate people.”<sup>45</sup> Sudetic portrays an image of how a simple plan to help those in need escape from violence and death was stopped by political leaders in order prevent Serbian “ethnic cleansing.” This article informs the readers that the battle against the Serbs “ethnic cleansing” was much more than violence but a destruction of Muslims existence in places they had lived for generations. In this case, Glenny’s focus on the political atmosphere and background<sup>46</sup> in context to the campaign of “ethnic cleansing” by Serbian forces compliments Sudetic’s article and book.<sup>47</sup> Sudetic and

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<sup>42</sup> Rhine, Bennett, and Flickinger, "Gaps in Americans' Knowledge About the Bosnian Civil War.", 597.

<sup>43</sup> Chuck Sudetic, "More Reports of Suffering." *The New York Times*, March, 5, 1993.

<sup>44</sup> Sudetic, "More Reports of Suffering."

<sup>45</sup> Sudetic, "More Reports of Suffering."

<sup>46</sup> Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*.

<sup>47</sup> Sudetic, "More Reports of Suffering."

Burns avoided relying heavily on the term “ethnic cleansing” to explain the events taking place in Bosnia, although Burns teeters on the edge of skewing the term for his audience. By not helping Muslim refugees escape from Bosnia, the United Nations provided a greater opportunity for Serbian aggression due to a misconception of the term “ethnic cleansing.” By keeping the Muslims in Bosnia, the U.N. and other Western Powers only helped further genocidal practices, as people began to be cornered into small enclaves. Offering the Muslim refugees an opportunity to escape would have ensured their safety. Displacement of non-Serbs was a part of their “ethnic cleansing” campaign, but Serbian forces were willing to kill for territory if it was not left before they decided to take it over. In this way, outside powers failed in understanding the term “ethnic cleansing” for its depth of meanings and qualifying behaviors. This is also an example of how journalists skewed the term and possibly caused some confusion as to what was “ethnic cleansing” and what was not.

In Pomfret’s article from August 21, 1993, “Complex Bosnian Alliances Sow Tragedy as They Twist and Turn”, the author begins to confuse the newspapers readership of the complex situation developing at the time it was published.<sup>48</sup> Croat, Muslim, and Serbian forces were locked in a three-way battle in 1993, all trying to maintain or gain ground against one another.<sup>49</sup> Pomfret stated that, as of the spring of that year, “Croats reportedly slaughtered Muslims and ‘ethnically cleansed’ dozens of villages; Muslims did the same.”<sup>50</sup> This is misleading in that it uses “ethnic cleansing” without properly explaining what was really happening. Up to this point, the term had been mainly applied to Serbian forces actions. From a *Times Mirror* poll taken in January of 1993, only 2 out of 5 Americans could correctly state what “ethnic cleansing” meant

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<sup>48</sup> John Pomfret, "Complex Bosnian Alliances Sow Tragedy as They Twist and Turn." *The Washington Post*, August, 21, 1993

<sup>49</sup> Pomfret, "Complex Bosnian Alliances Sow Tragedy as They Twist and Turn."

<sup>50</sup> Pomfret, "Complex Bosnian Alliances Sow Tragedy as They Twist and Turn."



when asked to define it.<sup>51</sup> No clarification is given as to who's definition is being utilized though, as it is evident that many definitions can be applied in relation to the fluidity of its use among journalists. In comparison to *The New York Times* articles, Pomfret's doesn't focus on any deep explanation of what is happening and why these different groups were now caught in a three-front conflict. The article provides locations, statistics, and dates for events but does not report directly about Serbs current activity at the time. It was evident that the author was trying to dissuade attention from the group that was responsible for much of the violence and "ethnic cleansing" that would continue up to 1995. This change in attention appeared to be a move to make understanding the situation more complex for readers by reporting on Muslim and Croat acts of violence.

With the conflict drawing on for two years and newspaper coverage producing hundreds of articles, a drop in interest was bound to happen and eventually did in 1994. Coincidentally, the decline in interest by journalists could be attributed to the lack of attention on a stagnant and confusing war that the public had been heavily exposed to for two years Touri describes the journalism on the conflict up to this point the best in saying that it was "dramatic, [but] remained distanced and confused."<sup>52</sup> Sudetic would be an exception to this as he continued to provide a more detailed account of events and used "ethnic cleansing" in an appropriate manner in accordance to the specific actions associated with the loosely defined term.

With the influence of so-called instant history books for journalists in 1993, audiences saw the introduction of a call for United States intervention by both newspapers beginning in 1994. *The Washington Post* still struggled with creating misconceptions of the war and used "ethnic cleansing" as a catchall term. However, "ethnic cleansing" at this point was no longer

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<sup>51</sup> Rhine, Bennett, and Flickinger, "Gaps in Americans' Knowledge About the Bosnian Civil War." ,597.

<sup>52</sup> Touri, *Violence and War in Culture and the Media : Five Disciplinary Lenses*, 197.

associated with understanding the atrocities happening within conflict but to explain the failure of the United States and the Western World in creating peace in the country.<sup>53</sup> The formerly utilized term was then used sparingly by *The New York Times* as it switched to reporting a more accurate image of the situation in Bosnia as well as a call to U.S. intervention.

### 1994-1995

In early 1994, Sudetic wrote an article that expressed the inactivity of the United Nations, NATO, and United States in helping Muslims and Croats attempting to escape Serbian aggression.<sup>54</sup> Serbian forces were completely unopposed as Western Powers refused to help refugees escape in fear that they would help further the “ethnic cleansing” campaign.<sup>55</sup> Instead of the term meaning the actions being used by the Serbs to take over territory, Sudetic highlights the U.N., NATO, and the United States willingness to use “ethnic cleansing” as a scapegoat to avoid direct involvement in the conflict. Sudetic reports that Western Powers were criticized on waiting too long to give permission for air strikes against Serbian forces that were threatening civilians.<sup>56</sup>

A trend of criticizing the U.N. and NATO slowness to react became more prominent in 1994 as the Western World became impatient with lack of action from the United States and their own countries’ ineptness to solve the war in Bosnia. Due to Sudetic’s previously mentioned article focusing specifically on news, he didn’t directly share his opinion. However, it seems that he, and others working for *The New York Times*, supported military intervention by the United

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<sup>53</sup> Banks and Murray, *The Media of Conflict : War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence*, 158.

<sup>54</sup> Chuck Sudetic, "U.N. Says Bosnian Serbs Press 'Ethnic Cleansing'." *The New York Times*, March, 19, 1994.

<sup>55</sup>Sudetic, "U.N. Says Bosnian Serbs Press 'Ethnic Cleansing'."

<sup>56</sup>Sudetic, "U.N. Says Bosnian Serbs Press 'Ethnic Cleansing'."

States at the end of 1995. Surprisingly, a non-intervention stance was not unanimous among those writing for *The New York Times*. This is evident in the opinion piece by former executive editor of the newspaper, Abraham Michael Rosenthal, who compared the Bosnian War to the Holocaust.<sup>57</sup>

Rosenthal made the argument at the end of his article that the Holocaust was a “methodical effort to annihilate every Jew in every land. Peace was never possible because there were no sides.”<sup>58</sup> The author’s argument was that the Bosnian War was actually a “civil-ethnic-religious war” that was only able to continue because of the support provided by Western Powers to Muslims and the Serbian states supportive of their side.<sup>59</sup> Claiming himself to be opposed to United States military intervention, he claims to be haunted by the question of whether those who are slow to help the Muslims in Bosnia are as guilty as those who were hesitant to help Jews during the Holocaust.<sup>60</sup> This is a unique example of opposing United States intervention on the same premise as that behind “ethnic cleansing” and seeing the Bosnian War as powered by “ancient ethnic hatred.” In simpler terms, a tribal affair that was better left to those within the warring country and not outside influence. Such a conclusion might be found in an article from *The Washington Post* due to their past misconception and portrayal of the conflict as an historically violent and divided country. This particular opinion piece stands out as an anomaly among later articles written for the same paper that call for an active role by the U.S. in Bosnia. Though, it seems that in 1994 both newspapers had an instance of leaning more towards the center or to the opposite side politically in some select articles.

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<sup>57</sup> A.M. Rosenthal, "On My Mind; Bosnia And the Holocaust." *The New York Times*, April, 26, 1994.

<sup>58</sup> Rosenthal, "On My Mind; Bosnia And the Holocaust."

<sup>59</sup> Rosenthal, "On My Mind; Bosnia And the Holocaust."

<sup>60</sup> Rosenthal, "On My Mind; Bosnia And the Holocaust."

Warren Zimmerman, former U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia from 1989-1992, wrote an article for *The Washington Post* that debunked the understanding of the conflict through “historical ethnic hatred” such as his predecessors did.<sup>61</sup> In the article, he explains that the United States can no longer avoid direct involvement in the Bosnian War as it pushed a heavy bombing campaign against Serbian forces through a NATO military plan.<sup>62</sup> Zimmerman saw this point as pivotal for the Clinton administration and the U.S. in establishing a world leader position that would prevent unstable countries from falling into civil war like Bosnia.<sup>63</sup> According to Zimmerman, the United States, as a multi-ethnic federation of states, should sympathize and help a small country that shared such diversity. Unlike the articles preceding his own, Zimmerman clarifies that the parties involved in the conflict do not have an inherently violent past in comparison to Europe’s periods of war and conquest.<sup>64</sup> However, the author concludes that Bosnia would no longer be able to continue as a multi-ethnic state and that heavy U.S. bombing against Serbian forces will create a new opportunity for Muslim residents to start over.<sup>65</sup> This call for direct action by the U.S. would not carry over into 1995 with other journalists at *The Washington Post*. Although, it stands as a testament to a better understanding of the complexity of the situation in the war-torn country by both newspapers and their audiences. As the conflict entered its fourth year and saw the last major offense by Serbian forces that summer, editorial pieces and heavily opinionated news articles began to replace regular news articles. These

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<sup>61</sup> Warren Zimmerman, "The Balkan Imperative; Why It's up to America to save a Besieged Multi-ethnic Society." *The Washington Post*, April, 24, 1994.

<sup>62</sup> Zimmerman, "The Balkan Imperative; Why It's up to America to save a Besieged Multi-ethnic Society."

<sup>63</sup> Zimmerman, "The Balkan Imperative; Why It's up to America to save a Besieged Multi-ethnic Society."

<sup>64</sup> Zimmerman, "The Balkan Imperative; Why It's up to America to save a Besieged Multi-ethnic Society."

<sup>65</sup> Zimmerman, "The Balkan Imperative; Why It's up to America to save a Besieged Multi-ethnic Society."

opinion pieces “tend[ed] to be more critical of government policy, presenting the newspaper’s opinion in a clear and unequivocal voice.”<sup>66</sup>

In November and December of 1995, during the finalization of the Dayton Agreement, journalists from *The New York Times* utilized their editorial section to its fullest as well as their regular news periodicals. In these articles, the journalists called for U.S. military troops to be deployed in Bosnia to help maintain peace as those affected could rebuild and restart their lives. There is a general agreement and repetition among journalists for the U.S. to take on a world leadership role, to maintain peace in Bosnia, and the need for United States military forces to be present to make sure the prior two goals are achieved. In the editorial article “No Troops, No Peace,” Warren Christopher, a foreign news journalist, stated that, “[w]ithout American leadership, there would have been no agreement. Without our troops, an agreement that serves our interests will not be carried out.”<sup>67</sup> Another article “Keep It Simple on Bosnia” highlights that the presence of American troops was necessary to maintaining peace that was formerly unobtainable due to minimal action or prolonged inaction.<sup>68</sup> Thomas Friedman, a periodical journalist, added to this push for action with his opinion article that claimed that U.S. military intervention “[was] worth doing because to not go in will lead to more killing in Bosnia, a spreading of the war and a debasing of American leadership.”<sup>69</sup> With the goal of giving Bosnians a chance to rebuild their former home and way of life as it was before, these opinion articles all state that the U.S. role was to establish itself as a world leader while maintaining peace in Bosnia.<sup>70</sup> These journalists pushed for an active presence of U.S. military in Bosnia, but only to

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<sup>66</sup> Bloch-Elkon. "Studying the Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy in International Crises: The United States and the Bosnian Crisis, 1992—1995.", 29.

<sup>67</sup> Warren Christopher, "No Troops, No Peace." *The New York Times*, November, 27, 1995.

<sup>68</sup> "Keep It Simple on Bosnia." *The New York Times*, November, 15, 1995.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, "Foreign Affairs; Keep It Simple.(Editorial Desk)." *The New York Times*, 1995.

<sup>70</sup>Christopher, "No Troops, No Peace."; "Keep It Simple on Bosnia."; Friedman, "Foreign Affairs; Keep It Simple."

ensure that further infighting would not occur. This highlights the newspapers goal of “emphasiz[ing] the moral-humanitarian dimension to push or justify actions, as opposed to the recent past (end of cold war) when foreign policy topics were mainly framed as security issues.”<sup>71</sup> There was not a push to help rebuild the governments of or help create a new democratic system for the Bosnian people. Surprisingly, a more opinionated piece then the previously mentioned editorials comes from Roger Cohen, a foreign correspondent for the regular and international version of *The New York Times*, and his article “Why the Yanks Are Going. Yet Again.”<sup>72</sup>

Cohen starts by stating that it was believed that “in the aftermath of the cold war, that America’s commitment to European security would diminish.”<sup>73</sup> This sets the mood for the rest of the article as Cohen sees U.S. intervention as being the last resort for the lack of results produced by European countries, NATO, and the United Nations in helping end the Bosnian War. Not hiding any criticism of the Clinton administration, the author claims the U.S. government had “long flirted with [the] disaster,” and that their policy up to the summer of 1994 was to “look the other way.”<sup>74</sup> Cohen stated that U.S. realization of their need to be politically and militarily a leader in the conflict came to late to help all those that had perished before their direct involvement.<sup>75</sup> While Cohen takes a stronger direct approach then the three prior editorial pieces, they all emphasize a message of a need for U.S. military presence and leadership in order to maintain the peace that made rebuilding Bosnia a possibility. This idea of direct U.S.

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<sup>71</sup> Bloch-Elkon. "Studying the Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy in International Crises: The United States and the Bosnian Crisis, 1992—1995." 37

<sup>72</sup> Roger Cohen, "Why the Yanks Are Going. Yet Again." *The New York Times*, November, 26, 1995.

<sup>73</sup>Cohen, "Why the Yanks Are Going. Yet Again."

<sup>74</sup>Cohen, "Why the Yanks Are Going. Yet Again."

<sup>75</sup>Cohen, "Why the Yanks Are Going. Yet Again."

intervention was not shared by those at *The Washington Post*, who sought a more hands-off approach that would not put American soldiers in harm's way.

In John Pomfret's article "Plan Legitimizes Years of 'Ethnic Cleansing,'" the journalist addresses the broad statements as to what American and NATO forces were going to do while stationed in Bosnia.<sup>76</sup> As the title implies, Pomfret sees the agreed upon method of the U.S. sending in troops to maintain peace but not take action as supporting the Serbian aggressors "ethnic cleansing" campaign. This was supported by his questioning that said

[A]nd for how long will NATO troops be involved in protecting Gorazde, the sole remaining enclave of Muslims in eastern Bosnia? Serb troops overran the nearby U.N.-designated "safe areas" of Srebrenica and Zepa in July and, under the plan, are allowed to keep those gains.<sup>77</sup>

Pomfret's statement is pointed at the failed attempts by European powers, the U.N. and NATO to produce results in the past years without large military intervention by the United States. His aim was to deter the government from committing American troops to be a part of another failure. Also, past instances had proven that the Dayton Agreement would be no different. Pomfret's articles were based on the view that "American national interests were not under threat nor did American lives face any serious danger."<sup>78</sup> This feed back into Pomfret's questions that he asked and how the U.S. intervention would be any different then past attempts and why they should risk American lives in the process. Unfortunately, *The Washington Post* did not produce as many articles and editorial pieces on the conflict as *The New York Times* did in 1995. However, as can be observed in

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<sup>76</sup> John Pomfret, "Plan Legitimizes Years of 'ethnic Cleansing.'" *The Washington Post*, November, 22, 1995.

<sup>77</sup> Pomfret, "Plan Legitimizes Years of 'ethnic Cleansing.'"

<sup>78</sup> Bloch-Elkon. "Studying the Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy in International Crises: The United States and the Bosnian Crisis, 1992—1995." 38.

Pomfret's prior articles, it is not surprising that his opinion on keeping American troops out of Bosnia was based on prior Western Powers failures.

The initial use of the terms "ethnic cleansing" and "ancient ethnic hatred" to explain events happening in the Bosnian War affected both newspapers discussed in this research as well as many others in the United States. Their length and terminological accuracy directly affected their understanding, and in turn their audiences', as to what was the right action in term of U.S. intervention. With *The New York Times* supporting the route that would be agreed upon in the Dayton Agreement, their case had an advantage; their liberal stance paired well with a Democratic administration at the time. However, it was not until 1994 that journalists began to report about the conflict more accurately and with a critical, if not suggestive, tone.

The Clinton Administration was perceived as being not as active as they should have been in the beginning of conflict. However, articles and reports about the war in 1992 and 1993 often led its readership astray with misconceptions about those involved, the reasons behind the conflict, and many other factors that created a complex war to understand to outsiders. The reliance on "instant history" memoirs from individuals like Kaplan and Glenny also created an issue of trusting those that had limited exposure, but more experience than most foreign news correspondents and writers. Sudetic's late release might have been to reevaluate and assure that his account was accurate, although he had experience with the history, language, and general knowledge of the country beforehand. Though he did use similar terminology to Pomfret, Burns, and others who abused and warped the term "ethnic cleansing" in context to events, Sudetic offered an appropriate adaption to a term widely used but heavily misconceived. It is through



accurate reporting like Sudetic's, and later the majority of other journalists from both newspapers, that led to a push for U.S. intervention in Bosnia.

It is evident that the Clinton Administration took into consideration the outpouring of information produced by both newspapers as they slowly became more involved over time instead of immediately. This could explain the hesitation to directly involve the United States, as there were no clear assets threatened by the conflict and a mix of opinions between the two newspapers. This analysis indicates that the U.S. became pressured into acting because they had proven to be the super power in the world due to its victory in the Cold War, and in turn the protector of those who could not protect themselves. *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* did not see intervention as optional. The former saw it as a need to lead and protect, while the former saw it as an opportunity to support from afar but not directly involve oneself. The Bosnian War can be viewed as a test to American foreign policy in the post-Cold War period and an example to the conflicts that the United States would deal with as the world entered a new era of leadership. Newspapers and media continue to play an important, but sometimes harmful, role in the public and governments understanding of the events happening worldwide. Differences in terminology use, knowledgeable personnel, and many more factors contribute to the impactful role that media plays in the lives of United States citizens and those abroad.

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