SOURCES OF INFLUENCE: COVERAGE OF UNITED STATES TROOP INVOLVEMENT IN BOSNIA BY THE NEW YORK TIMES AND ASSOCIATED PRESS

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PREFACE

Critical studies of journalism practices can provide the basis for conscious evaluation of how well these practices serve the democratic ideal of a free press. The issues analyzed in this study provide a limited example of the impact of the current system of international news coverage by major United States news organizations. Such analysis can be used to strengthen journalism training and the professional practice of journalism.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

It has been well established that the news media in the United States look often to government as the source of much of the news they report each day.[1] Reliance on government sources is even more the case in the coverage of foreign news.[2] Whether this dependency is good for the news media or the nation is still a matter for debate.

When a news story is complex, and develops over a long period of time, some media critics claim that the tendency to rely on government sources increases.[3] The civil war and its aftermath in the former Yugoslavia is one example of such a story. The complexity of the issues that caused the war and has prompted United Nations and United States intervention defies easy description.[4] The context of such events is difficult to explain in relatively short news stories that must also reveal the latest occurrences. When the possibility of government influence on news stories is added, U.S. media coverage of the Bosnian conflict and eventual involvement bears a

closer look.

There are, in general, three schools of thought regarding the influences that shape the coverage of news by the media in the United States. One view of media influence regards the economic interests that are brought to bear on the decisions made by journalists. Lippmann pointed out early in the 20th century that the content of newspapers is the result of an economic necessity to interest readers in stories quickly without offending them.[5] Bagdikian, Manoff and others have advanced the economic argument, claiming that the media are operating under the assumption that Americans have short attention spans, a limited interest in foreign news and are unable to understand in-depth analysis.[6] Bagdikian's economic argument states that the mass media tend to protect "the business climate in which media conglomerates operate," by offering stories in a form that appeals to the most people, builds up ratings, and does not offend sponsors.[7]

A second view of media influence concerns the responsibility of the news media in a democratic society. The idea that the media have a social responsibility was first outlined in the Hutchins Commission report of 1947, when the United States' news media were taken to task for not providing citizens with the information Commission members felt was needed to be a responsible member of the community.[8] By 1956, the term "social responsibility" had come to symbolize the ideal of a democratic press, as

Seibert, Peterson and Schramm developed their Four Theories of the Press.[9]

Lichter, Rothman and Lichter state that news media acting in a democratic tradition should favor the views of public officials, since they are the representatives of the people, rather than featuring the liberal biases of most journalists and their "anti-establishment" sources.[10] Their claims were based on a survey that led to a profile of journalists as "politically liberal and alienated from traditional norms and institutions."[11]

The third explanation of influence on the media assumes a kind of partnership between journalists and government sources. Altschull, Epstein, Gans and Tuchman claim that there develops a "symbiotic" relationship between journalists and government officials that precludes any kind of in-depth analysis or challenge of the status quo, because reporters and sources are too interdependent to risk offending each other.[12]

When the story involves international events, and plays out over a long period of time, Dickson says the influence of government sources is magnified, since journalists begin to depend even more heavily on official government sources, and the audience then receives the official government "line" about the issues involved in those stories.[13] Journalists, Dickson states, end up reporting what officials in the government are telling them, rather than independently investigating events and

writing about their own findings.

Arguing that government influence is even more insidious than Dickson claims, some media critics claim that the underlying reason journalists fail to fully explain complicated issues is their almost total dependence on government officials as their main source of information. Bennett, Fishman and Entman all suggest that the media not only receive limited information from government sources, but those same sources can determine which issues are covered and which are ignored by controlling the flow of information to journalists, thereby limiting the diversity of ideas placed before the public.[14]

Building on previous research, Bennett states that coverage of news events is "indexed" to the public debate about an issue among certain power elites that influence government policy. Sources outside the official debate are heard only if they call unusual attention to themselves.[15]

The first and third explanations of media influence do not really appear to be at odds with each other. Reporters making professional decisions, operating within the constraints of budgets and deadlines, can fulfill the need to produce the news economically by depending on government sources for their information. Those official voices are normally easily accessible, highly quotable and have at least the veneer of expertise and credibility that

comes with access to important information.

The second explanation of news influence - the alleged liberal bias of members of the news media - is often counteracted by the media's tendency to give prominent play to government sources, as shown in the statistics of the Lichter, Rothman and Lichter report that tagged reporters as "liberal."[16] They suggest that the media should rely more often on government sources as a way to counterbalance this "liberalism" among reporters, and so open up the same possibility of government influence pointed out by the other studies.

If media in the United States were forced to report the government "line" on foreign or domestic news events, most journalists would be outraged. Yet it appears the possibility exists that the media can be willingly led to reflect the government position on certain issues, particularly with regard to foreign news events. Beyond that, it appears the media could be manipulated by policy-makers who control the flow of information to reporters.

It is likely no one school of thought about media influence can provide a completely accurate method to observe how much influence economic pressures, individual biases or established news production practices have on the day-to-day reporting of the news. However, a synthesis of these theories may provide a useful way to gauge such influence, if it exists.

Other media critics claim that public opinion polls

drive what the media report and what the government does.[17] If a correlation can be found between these polls, government debate on the same issue and the ebb and flow of media reports, an explanation of the way stories are chosen by reporters and how stories develop over time might be advanced.

Before any discussion of government's influence on the media can begin, it is necessary to set up some sort of guideline about how the news media in the United States should do its job. Should there be some kind of a balance between official and other sources in the news? Is it the business of the news media to criticize the government, or simply to provide a sort of stenographer's service? When is criticism of the government necessary?

If the government is not responsive to the public, or not responsible, should the media be bound to point out the problem? Or should the voters decide at the polls when they are not represented or if government misbehaves? This question of media responsibility in regard to government actions is often debated by journalists, but not resolved.[18] Should reporters simply "...hold a mirror up to society and try to report it as faithfully as possible," as former CBS president Frank Stanton put it?[19] Or, perhaps journalists should strive to show the motivations and manipulations behind government policy, as well as the potential impact of those policies in the U.S. and abroad.

Bennett suggests this guideline, which he bases on long-standing tradition in U.S. political culture:

> ...it is generally good for journalists to grant government officials a privileged voice in the news, unless the range of official debate on a given topic excludes or 'marginalizes' stable majority opinion in society, and unless official actions raise doubts about political propriety. In these 'exceptional' circumstances it is reasonable for the press to foreground other social voices...as checks against unrepresentative or otherwise irresponsible governments.[20]

There is always an ideological tension between allowing too much and too little of government sourcing in news accounts. This proposed guideline, while not perfect, seems to strike a balance between the two and is therefore useful for this study.

The news media itself has had a large role in creating the idea of an adversarial, "watchdog" press in the United States. The war in Vietnam is often cited as an example of adversarial reporting by the American media, and journalists' self-described aversion to political influence in the U.S. dates back to the 19th century.[21] Public officials, on the other hand, frequently criticize the media as "too aggressive," and complain about journalists' unjust criticisms. This debate goes back Bennett writes, "...at least to the bitter foreign policy debates between the Federalists and the Jeffersonians in the early years of the Republic."[22] Jefferson was the champion of an unfettered and critical press regarding foreign policy, until he became president, when he

condemned the intrusiveness of the press. A similar caution might be in order when listening to the complaints of 20th century politicians.

An analysis of the conflict in Bosnia, particularly the debate over sending U.S. troops, provides an opportunity to examine how two mainstream U.S. media outlets cover a major international story over a period of time. The issues in Bosnia are complex and not easily understood by outsiders. Cviic writes that most Western observers failed to decode the series of disputes since 1945 that led to the break-up of Yugoslavia, not only the obvious arguments over borders, politics and economics, but also problems about "...the adoption of a common orthography in schools and offices, the nature of incriptions (sic) over military barracks, and the language of command in the Yugoslav People's Army."[23] To Western readers and audiences, the Yugoslavian war seemed to erupt suddenly in 1991 with no warning and little context.

In fact, for decades the region has been boiling with internal conflicts which only occasionally bubbled over onto the international stage. When Yugoslavia was formed from the southern Slav states after World War I, Serbia was granted military control over the newly formed union, since the Serbs had supported the Allies in the war.[24] Serb domination of the military was established at the birth of Yugoslavia.

When World War II began, Germany and Italy first

secured the Yugoslav government's signature to the Axis Tripartite Pact, then two weeks later invaded and quickly defeated Yugoslavia's poorly equipped army.[25] The German-backed Ustase, made up of Croats, allegedly visited mass atrocities on Serbs during the war, and when Germany surrendered and the Serb-dominated military was once again in command, thousands of Croats were killed in retribution.[26]

For the 35 years after the end of World War II, Tito performed a delicate balancing act, playing Serbs, Croats and Muslims against each other and the Soviet Union to hold together his federation of six republics.[27] After Tito's death, conflicts between leaders of the republics became more obvious and frequent, leading to the open warfare of the 1990s.[28]

The political uprising that shook Yugoslavia in 1991 came as a surprise to most observers, even those knowledgeable in international affairs, and the brutal warfare that followed was a complete shock.[29] The Western news media were faced with the daunting task of explaining the political and ethnic upheaval in Yugoslavia while trying to provide background to help audiences understand why the violence was taking place. The convoluted political, religious and ethnic history of Yugoslavia made explanations difficult, and the U.S. news media eventually came to dwell more on the question of whether U.S. troops should be sent to restore order than

on the underlying causes of the war and the roadblocks to peace. Once the news convention of proximity was satisfied by the involvement of Americans in Bosnia, the easy explanations revolved around the arguments about committing U.S. troops to the conflict.This study examined the course of coverage about the U.S. troop issue in two of the nation's most influential news outlets.

Statement of the Problem

If a balance of voices in the news is desirable, from government and non-government sources and from all sides of an issue, then how can it be determined if the news media in the United States is achieving a fair representation of legitimate opinion regarding a news event? One aspect of this study looked at whether polls, the press, or politicians lead the debate on a single issue, such as committing U.S. troops to Bosnia. The results may begin to shed light on whether media reports influence government debate, or follow that debate on a given issue.

Entman found that journalists tend to marginalize opinion polls in their stories as an issue develops over time.[30] This may be due to journalists' tendency to doubt the legitimacy of "uninformed" public opinion, or to rely heavily on "informed" government sources, in spite of repeated polls showing public opinion contradicting the

official "line" on an issue even after the story has been in the news long enough for citizens to have refined their opinions.[31]

Out of the theories outlined above, two methods of measurement are suggested as ways to examine how close news organizations come to the ideal. Entman hypothesizes that news stories will become more alike, or homogeneous, as an event increases in prominence and as coverage continues over a period of time.[32] Bennett's hypothesis parallels Entman's, stating that journalists "...tend to 'index' the range of voices and viewpoints in both news and editorials according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about a given topic."[33]

If stories do become more similar over time, as Entman believes, "indexing" becomes a critical test of whether government sources can influence the direction of the coverage. If government positions on an issue change without regard to public opinion polls, and media reports seem to be indexed to government debate on that issue, then it would appear the news media do not have the influence over public opinion some researchers claim, but rather are a conduit of government policy by default.

If this prediction is true, when combined with the tendency of journalists to rely on government sources to the exclusion of others, then an analysis of possible government influence and manipulation of news reports becomes even more necessary. Tuchman, Gitlin, and Graber,

using Goffman's ideas about framing, predict that journalists' "news frames", combined with reliance on elite (official) sources, could lead them to reject information that doesn't fit their preconceived notions about a story, making it less likely that alternate opinions will be heard.[34] The "official" version of events would prevail.

This study tests Entman's and Bennett's theories by examining the content of news stories in an attempt to determine the positive or negative direction of the story in regard to the issue of U.S. troops being sent to Bosnia, if news stories and editorials appear to be "indexed" to government debate, and whether the same types of sources are used frequently by more than one media outlet over a two-year time period.

Purpose of the Study

The focus of this study will be on news media coverage of the debate and eventual decision by the U.S. government to send U.S. troops to Bosnia at the end of 1995, and to extend the commitment of U.S. troops for another year at the end of 1996. The time period for the study will be the years 1995 and 1996.

News reports will be analyzed from the New York Times (NYT) and the Associated Press (AP) news wire service. These two news outlets have been shown to be the predominant sources of much international news for most

newspapers, radio and television newsrooms across the U.S., despite the proliferation of other news outlets.[35] The results of public opinion polls on the issue during that time will also be examined, and an attempt will be made to determine if reporters appear to have indexed their coverage to official debate or public opinion on the issue.

The study is designed to answer these research questions:

1) Does the direction of official sources quoted in New York Times news stories as for or against sending U.S. troops to Bosnia in 1995 or keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia in 1996, correlate with the direction of New York Times editorials during the same time period?

2) Is there a relationship between the types of sources used in these stories and the news outlet (AP or New York Times) publishing these stories?

3) Did the New York Times or Associated Press rely more heavily on government than non-government sources in the stories under study during 1995 and 1996?

Public opinion polls during 1995 and 1996 will be studied to determine if debate by government officials about placing U.S. troops in Bosnia appears to lead or follow changes in the polls, or if there is any relationship between the statements of official sources and the polls. The direction of news stories on the issue will also be compared to public opinion poll results.

This three-way comparison will provide an indication whether public opinion polls, government debate or news stories appear to lead the way when changes in policy are made, or if there is no apparent connection between the three at all.

Value of the Study

The information obtained through this study will allow journalists and news managers to examine their policies and practices in covering international news stories, particularly over long periods of time, based on accepted research methodology. All news stories, on the issue of committing U.S. troops to Bosnia, published by the New York Times and the Associated Press available on the Nexis database for the years 1995 and 1996 will be analyzed for this study. Complex chi square and correlation analyses will be used to determine if there are significant differences between the categories under study or in the intervals between government debate and news stories on the issue along a time-line of the two year time period. The issues addressed and analyzed in this study will provide a limited illustration of the impact of the prevailing system of international news coverage by major news organizations in the United States.

Such an analysis and discussion of news coverage of a major international event may bring about more conscious debate of current news practices among professionals and

in journalism schools, and how those practices do or do not effectively serve the democratic ideal of a free press. Further research on the hypotheses tested and theories developed in this study could strengthen the training of journalism students and the professional practice of journalism.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the news stories published by the Associated Press (AP) and the New York Times, with regard to the use of United States troops in Bosnia, during the calendar years of 1995 and 1996, and to public opinion polls on this issue during the same time period.

The news stories and polls analyzed will be those contained in the New York Times Index, and the Lexis/Nexis news database for the years 1995 and 1996, on the topic of whether U.S. troops should be sent to Bosnia.

Plan for the Study

This study is planned to meet the need for a valid study of the sources, direction and indexing of stories from these news organizations on the issue of committing U.S. troops to Bosnia during the two-year period under study. A review of the literature suggests that such a study has not been done on this issue. Other research regarding how news sources are chosen, how stories may become more "alike" over time, and how coverage of an

issue may be indexed to official debate on the topic are all discussed in the next chapter. The research discussed includes theories not examined in this study, but which were building blocks for the hypotheses that will be tested in this study.

Chapter III outlines the methodology used to analyze the news stories and the public opinion polls, and the comparison of those two factors.

Chapter IV will detail the findings from the content analysis and the polls and contain a statistical analysis of those findings.

Chapter V will contain a summary of the study along with conclusions reached from the data collected, recommendations about how the findings can be applied to journalism training and professional practice, and suggestions for further research.

ENDNOTES

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[4] Peter Maass, Love Thy Neighbor: A Story of War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1996), 69-70.

[5] Walter Lippman, Public Opinion (New York: Free Press, 1965).

[6] Ben H. Bagdikian, The Media Monopoly, 4th ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992); R.K. Manoff, "Writing the News," in Reading the News, ed. R.K. Manoff and M. Schudson (New York: Pantheon, 1987); Erik Barnouw, The Sponsor: Notes on a Modern Potentate (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Edward S. Herman, "Diversity of News: 'Marginalizing the Opposition,'" Journal of Communication 35(3), (Summer 1985): 135-146.

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[8] Commission on Freedom of the Press, A Free and Responsible Press (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1947).

[9] Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm, Four Theories of the Press (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963).

[10] Robert S. Lichter, Stanley Rothman and Linda S. Lichter, The Media Elite: America's New Powerbrokers (Bethesda, MD: Adler & Adler, 1986), 4-5.

[11] Lichter, Rothman and Lichter, The Media Elite, 294.

[12]J. Herbert Altschull, Agents of Power: The Media and Public Policy (White Plains N.Y.: Longman, 1995), 159-165; Epstein, News from Nowhere; Tuchman, Making News; Gans, Deciding What's News.

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[14]See W. Lance Bennett, "Toward a Theory of Press State Relations in the United States." Journal of Communication 40(2) (1990): 103-125; Mark Fishman, Manufacturing the News. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1980); Entman, Democracy Without Citizens, 179.

[15]Bennett, "Toward a Theory of Press State Relations," 103-125.

[16]Lichter, Rothman and Lichter, The Media Elite, 54.

[17]James R. Beniger and Robert J. Giuffra, Jr., "Public Opinion Polling: Command and Control in Presidential Campaigns," in Alexander Heard and Michael Nelson, eds., Presidential Selection (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), 200-201. See also, George H. Gallup and Saul Rae, The Pulse of Democracy (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1940).

[18]Don Fry, ed., Believing the News (St. Petersburg, Florida: Poynter Institute for Media Studies, 1985).

[19]Epstein, News from Nowhere, 14-15.

[20]Bennett, "Toward a Theory of Press State Relations," 108.

[21]Daniel C. Hallin, The Uncensored War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 6-7.

[22]W. Lance Bennett, "The News About Foreign Policy," in Taken by Storm, ed. W. Lance Bennett and David L. Paletz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 16-17.

[23]Christopher Cviic, "Perceptions of Former Yugoslavia: An Interpretative Reflection, " International Affairs 71(4) (October, 1995): 823.

[24]Wayne S. Vucinich, "Interwar Yugoslavia, " in Wayne S. Vucinich, ed., Contemporary Yugoslavia: Twenty Years of Socialist Experiment (Berkley: University of California Press, 1969), 37-47.

[25]Francine Friedman, The Bosnian Muslims: Denial of a Nation (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996), 118-120.

[26]Robert Kaplan, Balkan Ghosts (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 12.

[27]Friedman, The Bosnian Muslims, 144-178.

[28]Sharon Zukin, "Self-management and Socialization," in Pedro Ramet, ed., Yugoslavia in the 1980s (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1985), 76.

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[30]Entman, Democracy Without Citizens, 67.

[31]Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang, The Battle for Public Opinion: The President, the Press and the Polls During Watergate (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

[32]Bennett, "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations," 117-118.

[33]Bennett, "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations," 106.

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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The issue to be examined in this study involves the decision by President Clinton to put United States troops in Bosnia at the end of 1995, and the extension of U.S. troop commitment into 1997. The study will look at how closely media coverage paralleled government debate and how both the government and media reacted to or reflected changes in public opinion polls about the issue. An event such as the war in the former Yugoslavia provides an opportunity to study coverage of a major story by the news media over time, and to determine if the coverage is indexed to government debate on a single issue. The story itself requires some background explanation, since American media reports have often failed to fully explain the forces at work in the former Yugoslavia.[1]

The Balkan conflict defies simple explanations. News stories based on simple analogies, catch phrases and a "good vs. evil" paradigm cannot convey the context of the war. If, as Entman hypothesizes, news coverage tends to become more alike, with reporters from different news

outlets increasingly using the same imagery and phraseology to explain what is happening in the former Yugoslavia, then the public is not well served.[2]

President Clinton has characterized the Balkan region as "vital" to U.S. security interests.[3] In December, 1995, explaining why U.S. troops would be sent to Bosnia, Mr. Clinton concluded that "Europe's freedom, and Europe's security is vital to our own national security."[4] Since American negotiators and military forces became involved, the American public needs to be aware of the nature of the conflict, roadblocks to settlement, and the possibility of escalation and loss of American lives.

A great deal has been written about the American media's lack of attention to international news, or when attention is given, to its adherence to the "official line."[5] Some critics such as Chomsky go so far as to label the U.S. media part of a "state propaganda system," that does not seek opinion outside certain accepted areas.[6] If reporters are overly dependent on government sources, there is a chance they could become little more than a pipeline for propaganda from the government.

Since the outbreak of fighting in the former Yugoslavia most U.S. news agencies have provided what could be termed fairly extensive coverage of events in the Balkans.[7] The interest of this study is whether that coverage tends to become more homogeneous over time, and if it can be found that reporters' sources of information and

explanations of the causes of those events tend to become more alike the longer the story is pursued and if coverage is indexed to debate about the issue by political elites.

A Brief Balkan History

Explaining the fighting in the former Yugoslavia is not easy and does not lend itself to the common media reporting patterns of simplification, "good guys vs. bad guys," or familiar contexts. Attempts by the media to make the story more palatable to a mass audience in the United States has frequently led to an oversimplified examination of issues.[8] Lack of information about the underlying causes of events in the Balkans does not lead to intelligent decision-making by voters or their elected officials.

Reporters hoping to simplify their stories should not attempt covering the conflict among the Balkan republics in any meaningful way. The Balkan states along the Adriatic Sea have been at the center of European and worldwide conflicts throughout recorded history, and the issues are complex and often hard to explain.[9]

Not until the twentieth century, however, have the southern Slavs been so consistently at war with each other.[10] What the news media conveniently labelled "ethnic cleansings" came into fashion only during this century, with earlier conflicts limited to struggles over territory

and resources.[11]

Some writers and policy analysts attribute the fighting among Serbs, Croats, Bosnians and other groups to the nearly inevitable ethnic conflict that has always typified Balkan internal relations.[12] But these accounts offer little in the way of explanation to justify why a people who spring from essentially the same ethnic roots began battling each other, supposedly over "ethnic differences."[13] Bell-Fialkoff notes that "Yugoslavia's ethnic war is waged among three communities possessing no distinct physical characteristics or separate...racial origins. They are the same people."[14]

Differing ethnic and religious groups have long lived side-by-side in the former Yugoslavia, and for the most part did so peacefully. Friedman's 1996 book about Bosnia and Herzegovina, says the history of the region,

> ...reflects its pluralistic and tolerant nature, long inhabited as it was by members of many religions and later of various national groups. For many Bosnians, in such a mixed area neither national nor religious identification was important, particularly during the secularizing years of post-World War II Yugoslavia.[15]

Certainly, ethnic and religious differences were obvious in the country. Writing before World War II, West pointed out that while true ethnic differences may not exist in Yugoslavia, the cultural and religious divisions among the people were deep and long-lasting.[16]

Huntington characterizes the conflict in Bosnia as a

battle between religious groups, between Orthodox Serbs and Muslim Bosnians, but also a collision of civilizations.[17] Differences among civilizations, which include differences of culture and other variants have, according to Huntington, brought about the longest and most violent conflicts in history.[18]

Since 1389, when Serbia was the Hapsburg dynasty's last line of defense against the Muslim Ottoman empire, and the area marked the division between Catholic and Orthodox Christian faiths, the religious identities of people in this part of the world have become strongly ingrained.[19]

These religious distinctions remain today, and in fact are still the divisions most readily acknowledged among the people in what was Yugoslavia. In an analysis of politics in Yugoslavia during Tito's regime, Beloff notes that patriotism is identified with religion among Serbs and Croats, and to a lesser extent among Muslims. Asked why the religious groups could not unite against their Communist oppressors during Tito's time,

> ...an Orthodox Serb replied that, whereas Communism was no more than a transitional phenomenon, the struggle between churches was for souls, it is a struggle that started long before the Communists...[20]

and, Beloff writes, it is a struggle that will continue long after the Communists are gone. A collision of civilizations, along with a battle between religions, what Weigel calls "the unsecularization of the world," are both taking place in the former Yugoslavia.[21]

The political struggles started when Yugoslavia was formed out of left-over puzzle pieces after World War I. From the late Hapsburg empire, Macedonia, parts of Hungary and some Ottoman territories, the new nation of Yugoslavia was created in 1918.[22] Serbia's government reluctantly agreed to the unification, considering Yugoslavia but an extension of old Serbia.[23]

The first examples of "ethnic cleansing" in Yugoslavia came not in the 1990s but during and after World War II. Appealing to the religious differences within the country, the Nazis created a puppet state with Croatian nationalists in control. More than 300,000 Serbs are estimated to have been killed by the Croatian Ustache, after their Nazi-supported dictator declared that they would kill or deport any Serbs who would not convert to the Roman Catholic religion.[24]

After World War II ended, and the Croatian army surrendered, more than 100,000 Croatian prisoners were promptly killed by the Serbians.[25] This first "ethnic cleansing," occurred within the memory of many of today's residents in Bosnia, Croatia and the other divided states.[26]

Over the last 10 years, Yugoslavia's factional leaders have followed the Nazis' example and appealed to ethnic and religious divisions across the former Yugoslavia. Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic and others in his party used Serbian nationalistic feelings to incite riots in Kosovo

and Croatia that were then used as an excuse to call in the Serb-controlled Yugoslav army.[27]

Residents of many areas point out that Muslims, Catholics, Orthodox and Jews lived together peacefully for many years in the communities that are at war with each other. Bosnian journalist Zlatko Dizdarevic blamed the hatred of former neighbors partly on propaganda by state-run media in Serbia and Croatia:

> ...the media produce every day, every minute, hate between the different nationalities. We all know Goebbel's idea about propaganda from the second World War. He said that every lie, if you repeat it 10 times becomes true. Some journalists, especially from Belgrade and Zagreb, are bigger criminals (than Goebbels)...[28]

The Serbs consider the territory they conquered through the end of 1995 as rightfully part of Serbia, what Djilas calls "the new Serbian state," and have been waiting more than 600 years to win parts of it back from the Ottoman Turks, represented today by the Muslims.[29] Ethnic and religious differences have provided the path to a twentieth century realization of the nineteenth century Serb dream of a "greater Serbia."

One bias that may afflict the American media in reporting on the Balkans is a secular bias. Western reporters may have trouble coming to grips with a war that is being fought between governments that identify themselves with ethnic and religious factions. Olasky believes that reporters from the United States, in particular, cannot envision a system that does not mandate

the separation of church and state.[30] The editors of the New Republic noted in February, 1995, that "in the West, we're not used to attributing political differences to religious conflict...(but) when the armies of Franjo Tudjman are marshalled against the armies of Milosevic we will be hearing the still-resonant echos of the millenial struggles between Rome and Constantinople."[31]

If this secular bias exists, it is combined with the gatekeeping function of the Western news services, which filter international news through their own particular lenses, as Weaver and Wilhoit discovered.[32] The news media in the United States also tend to trivialize or ignore any event that doesn't fit into a preconceived notion about how certain people should behave, which Sussman and Lent believe influences both the amount and type of international news disseminated in the U.S.[33]

Without considering the complex aspects of religious and cultural context, the war in the former Yugoslavia can be summed up by reporters in just two words for the American audience: ethnic cleansing. However, the situation in Bosnia is not as simple as tales of atrocities between ethnic groups.

American news media prefer stories that are simplified, which Entman includes in his model of "reality slant," where he hypothesizes about homogeneity among media increasing as a story grows in importance and continues to be reported by journalists.[34] Even if the

audience chooses from several news sources, they may have the same information reinforced by other news media.

The Media's Place in America

The idea of a news business that provides a limited, almost plagiarized version of international events is a far cry from the activist news media as envisioned at the creation of the United States. The role of the news media in the United States has evolved over the last 200 years from that of a partisan press primarily focused on politics and religion to that of an entertainment empire designed to amuse, sell goods and only incidentally inform the public.[35] The moral justification for a free press system can be traced back to John Milton and other seventeenth century writers who used news pamphlets to spread their argument for free expression. Milton believed in the ability of truth to win out: "Let her and falsehood grapple; who ever knew truth to be put to the worse in a free and open encounter?"[36]

The framers of the U.S. Constitution looked to Milton for guidance but were also influenced by two Englishmen writing under the name of Cato, John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, whose essays extolled the virtues of "the free flow of information."[37]

The well-known concept of a "free marketplace of ideas" came not from the eighteenth century Age of Enlightenment, but from a dissenting opinion written Oliver

Wendell Holmes, Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Holmes never wrote that precise phrase, but in a 1919 opinion stated that "the ultimate good" is best reached by the "free trade in ideas," and ..."the best test of truth is the power of a thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market, ...that at any rate is the concept of our Constitution."[38]

The idea of a market-place in the press for competing ideas fit the rapidly evolving emphasis on capitalism in the U.S. during the 19th and early 20th centuries, and pointed out the change in focus of mass communication from a partisan instrument to an arm of commerce. People should have choices, in goods and services and in what they read as well, according to popular American thought. At mid-twentieth century, U.S. Judge Learned Hand, expressing the idea that no one entity has a monopoly on truth, wrote:

> That [newspaper] industry serves one of the most vital of all general interests: the dissemination of news from as many different sources and with as many different facets as is possible....It presupposes that right conclusions are more likely to be gathered out of a multitude of tongues than through any kind of authoritarian selection. To many this is, and always will be, folly; but we have staked upon it our all.[39]

The traditional linkage between democracy and a free press in the United States was stated in the populist philosophy of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, among others. Regarding the role of the press as a watchdog of government, Jefferson wrote: "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate

a moment to prefer the latter."[40]

The tradition of a strong, adversarial press or media (the words press and media are used interchangeably here) has become part and parcel of the American ideal of a democratic government that is watched by a free and unbiased press. Altschull states that "...it is difficult to find a person prepared to argue against a 'free press,' (in the capitalist nations). The assumption about the centrality of the press in a democratic society is believed almost universally...."[41]

However, an absolute right to free speech and thus an unfettered press usually collides with the reality of individual goals and beliefs. In one of the earliest cases involving freedom of expression on the American continent, the attorney for John Peter Zenger, Andrew Hamilton, argued that American printers should have freedom to report tyrannical acts. But in the same case, Hamilton agreed that the right "of exposing and opposing arbitrary Power...by speaking and writing Truth" should be denied if the author were speaking falsehood.[42]

The tension between a free press which holds the government accountable, and government's right or responsibility to decide what is in the public's interest, is part of the political tradition of the United States. The Bill of Rights provided legal precedent for a free press, but the perceived abuses of the press led to congressional approval of the Sedition Act just seven years

later. James Madison, acknowledging the shortcomings of the press, said, "...it is better to leave a few of its noxious branches to their luxuriant growth, than by pruning them away, to injure the vigour of those yielding the proper fruits."[43] Madison argued that while the press may abuse its privileges, a free press is the only way to ensure the survival of America's free society.

But even a staunch supporter of a free press could find the barbs of unfriendly papers difficult to bear. Thomas Jefferson, so frequently cited by defenders of the media today, found himself under attack by the Federalist publishers and wrote as president in 1803, "...nothing in a newspaper is to be believed....A few prosecutions of the most prominent offenders would have a wholesome effect in restoring the integrity of the presses."[44] The press that is free, operating as a watchdog of government, can also unleash what those in government often believe is unfair and even untrue criticism.

For the first 100 years or less of its existence, the American press served primarily political and religious goals. Olasky states that the early American editors had as their primary desire promoting the cause of Puritan religious values, and this outweighed any concern they had about the welfare of the "common man."[45] Religious values found common ground with the ideals of democracy borrowed from the Enlightenment as colonists waged war for liberty.

With the decline of religious influence in the U.S. and the country's growth as an industrial nation, the focus of newspapers turned from religion and ideology to pure politics and commerce.[46] Advertising became the primary method of financing the daily newspaper, and with it the need for more circulation. Sociologist Alfred McClung Lee charted the growing dependence of newspapers on advertising, noting that by 1919, 65 percent of most newspapers' income came from advertising, observing that while advertising "...enabled newspapers to become stable business ventures...(it) changed drastically the nature of editorial content.[47] Newspapers dependent on advertisers had to increase circulation, and news that appealed to the reader became all-important.

Earlier in the century, Alexis de Tocqueville commented that the New York newspapers, while containing mostly advertising, gave over the rest of their space to "political intelligence or trivial anecdotes." The aristocratic de Tocqueville wondered about the "tyranny of the majority," a fault easily noted in news media driven by circulation numbers or ratings.[48]

The 20th Century - Objectivity and Social Responsibility

As technology has increased the influence of the news media in the 20th century, so have attempts by the government to control the media, or at least persuade media to side with the government's policies on controversial

issues. Governments in all countries, authoritarian as well as democratic, believe the media to be powerful and behave accordingly.[49] McQuail asserted in 1979 that "...in general mass media are very cost-effective as a means of communication in society; they are also fast, flexible and relatively easy to plan and control."[50]

The media has also become a social institution, with a culture and value system and hierarchy the same as other occupations. Breed was the first to discuss the pressures for conformity in the newsroom, in 1955.[51] Tuchman found that one of the values ingrained in the American journalism institution of the twentieth century is that of objectivity.[52] She finds four "strategic procedures" that are exercised whenever journalists feel they must separate facts from feelings: (1) presenting both sides of a dispute, thus identifying the truth claims of the antagonists in conflictual situations; (2) presenting corroborating statements on behalf of these truth claims; (3) using direct quotations to indicate it is the source speaking and not the journalist; and (4) organizing stories to present the most material facts first.[53] Epstein and Gans found similar pressures regarding objectivity at television networks.[54]

Objectivity has value as a code of operation for the media. It is part of the culture and the way news people judge other's work; does it pass the test of objectivity? The test, though, may be flawed since it allows the media

to be pushed this way and that by events, opinion of government elites, and sources.

There is financial value to the code of objectivity, as well. The wire services, including the Associated Press, compete for customers. An "objective" product is easier to sell than one that is obviously partisan. However, in order to be objective equal weight is given to claims of truth by all sides in a debate, sometimes without regard to information that could be ferreted out by some investigative initiative on the reporter's part. Tuchman notes in her study about newsroom conventions that wire service stories often provide the basis for local news coverage, which simply offers a local "spin" on the facts already provided.[55]

However, not just anyone can become a source to be quoted in an "objective" news story. Wolff uses the "plateau" example of how people get to be heard in the media. His plateau has steep sides, and only those able to be recognized as legitimate interest groups with authoritative voices to speak for them, are on top; "the most important battle waged by any group in American politics is the struggle to climb onto the plateau."[56] People in government often have automatic access to the plateau. They are authoritative by nature of their position and access to information, and they represent the accepted system. This guarantees access to media and acceptance of what they say, unless an authoritative source

speaks up in opposition.[57]

Detroit Free Press executive editor Derek Daniels bemoaned the cult of objectivity during the Watergate investigation, pointing out that in his opinion, the news media in the United States were "...born out of advocacy and protest...opinion and activism were the cornerstones which the Constitution was designed to protect."[57] Objectivity requires that authoritative voices speak out on both sides of an issue. If no "legitimate" sources can be found, the story often dies. Bennett likens this to a peculiar "media logic" regarding sources:

> The more 'official' the position, the more likely it is to be reported, the more credibility it gains; and the more credibility it gains, the more 'official' it becomes. It is obvious why common sense fares poorly in direct competition with media logic. Like any successful logic, media logic is functional; it enables both news and politics to operate on a routine, symbiotic basis.[59]

This kind of logic gives those who would manipulate the news, the government and the politically and economically powerful, a means to use the media to get out their message.

The idea that the news media is instrumental in setting the national political agenda has been discussed in earlier studies, including those done by McCombs, Shaw and Graber.[60] McCombs and Shaw write that "...the idea of agenda-setting asserts that the priorities of the press to some degree become the priorities of the public. What the press emphasizes is in turn emphasized privately and

publicly by the audiences of the press."[61] Graber believes that "...because the media are the main sources of political information in American society, they influence what people learn about society."[62] While the media may serve a certain agenda-setting function in the United States, this idea is not at odds with the concept of indexing. The question simply becomes whose agenda is being set in the media, and the notion of indexing theorizes that reliance on government sources and debate result in the government's agenda being relayed to the audience by a largely passive press.

Conservative groups claim the news media have a liberal bias, that they distort coverage to promote liberal causes.[63] At the same time, liberals say conservative and corporate interests influence the news to suit their own purposes.[64] In fact, the media is often more at the mercy of those with information, usually government sources who can offer a "scoop" that journalists need to beat the competition. In the competitive world of the media, reporters know they have to take what they can get as fast as they can get it, because another reporter will beat them to the information and get it on the air or in print first.

Ironically, both conservative and liberal critics agree on one thing, the mass media have enormous power to influence the public and that this power is often used to someone else's political or economic advantage. Hachten

brings up the principles of social responsibility to argue that the news media have a burden to serve the public that "transcends moneymaking."

> ...there must be a diversity of views and news sources available--a "marketplace of ideas" from which the public can choose what it wishes to read and believe. ...(P)ublic service implies professional standards for journalists as well as for reliable and objective reporting. The media are obligated...to ensure that all voices in the community are heard...[65]

Such a conclusion ignores the fact that the news media are profit-making enterprises that cannot bear such a responsibility in their current configuration. The profit motive is too powerful, easy access to information too essential, for journalists to stray far from reliable sources.

Media Ideals Versus Media Reality

A number of studies have been done examining the relationship between journalists and the government and whether news coverage tends to support the dominant government position. Some of the studies suggest that journalists depend almost entirely on government sources for daily stories. The sources, in turn, depend on journalists to give the public their "spin" on events, to float trial balloons on policy decisions, to support officials or their plans, or perhaps to attack opponents.

Cater, writing on the subject of relationships between reporters and the government in the 1950s, noted that "...the reporter is the recorder of government but he is

also a participant. He...helps to shape the course of government. He is the indispensable broker and middleman among the subgovernments of Washington."[66] In 1996 Fallows wrote that the nation's top journalists are more dependent than ever on handouts from government, as their star status erodes their ability to investigate, "...the more prominent today's star journalists become, the more they are forced to give up the essence of real journalism, which is the search for information of use to the public."[67]

Government officials exploit this dependency, Cohen believes, because these officials see themselves as the best judges of the national interest and the public and media as obstacles to be overcome or managed.[68] In his classic 1973 study of the relationship of government and reporters, Sigal wrote that nearly three-fourths of the front page stories in the Washington Post and New York Times depended entirely on official sources.[69] This study quantified the media's dependence on official views, and showed that policymakers favor knowledgeable reporters because they can often furnish officials with useful information about other government agencies.

Robinson's study of how the media covered Congress between 1969 and 1981 also showed this symbiotic relationship between reporters and members of Congress.[70] The dependency was strongest between local media and Congress but was also prevalent among national media. Grossman and Kumar's study of how the media

portrayed President Carter found reporters relied heavily on their government sources to interpret Carter's actions, "...because reporters were influenced by their friends (sources) on the Hill, they tended to emphasize Carter's words and deeds that showed him...ill at ease in Washington..." and unable to gather support for his programs.[71]

In addition to journalists' reliance on government sources, Entman hypothesizes that as a story grows in importance, homogeneity among media in the reporting of that event increases.[72] Entman believes this is especially true of complex issues that are difficult to explain in the mass media, since journalists tend to favor simple explanations, familiar contexts and catchy phrases. These tendencies are fed by what Entman calls production values.[73]

These values require that stories be produced as inexpensively as possible and be reported in a way that will appeal to a mass audience. As Entman points out, "The least expensive way to satisfy mass audience demands is to rely upon legitimate political elites for most information."[74]

If Entman's hypothesis holds true, what happens to the "marketplace of ideas" the news media ideally represents for the American people? Rather than a panoramic view of events provided by many competing news agencies, Americans would get a narrowly focused view of

the world.

Bennett sees this narrow viewpoint as an extension of something he has labelled "indexing."[75] His hypothesis: "Mass media professionals, from the boardroom to the beat, tend to 'index' the range of voices and viewpoints in both news and editorials according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about a given topic."[76] Bennett uses this hypothesis as a test to determine whether a balance of voices is represented in the news. If Bennett and others who criticize dependence on government sources are correct, the public receives news heavily influenced, if not controlled, by those sources upon which reporters are so dependent.

The existence of bias in news reporting has been well established. Past research, building on Merrill's study of the way U.S presidents are portrayed, has established that journalists inject bias into their coverage.[77] Merrill contends that different reporters can provide widely differing descriptions of the same events, based on their experiences, the sources they use and the information they choose to include in the story. If reporters behave in this way, then it would follow that one reporter's account of an event should be quite different than that of another.

Entman's hypothesis of homogeneity in news coverage does not preclude the existence of bias in reporting. But no matter what a reporter's ideology or background, on a story as complex as the civil war in Yugoslavia if only a

few government sources provide the bulk of the information, it would seem logical that reporters' accounts would tend to become more and more alike as time passed.

News consumers may believe that because their news comes from different sources, they are getting more diverse reportage and, at least, different biases. But if Entman's hypothesis is correct, the longer an event is featured in the news media, the more alike coverage may become, as reporters begin to call again and again on the same political elites for their information. If there is a bias, it might be an inclination to favor government's viewpoint, since that is where most information originates. This bias then results in a tilt toward sameness in the reportage of an event.

If journalists are engaged in a symbiotic relationship with government officials and depend on those same sources for most of their information, particularly about foreign affairs, it would not be surprising to find that at least certain elements of their stories on the same subject are alike. If Bennett, Fishman and Entman are correct, when an event is played out over a long period of time an even more striking resemblance should be apparent when comparing stories on the same subject from different news organizations.

Indexing takes this idea a step further by suggesting that the news media, by default, gives government the power to manipulate and evaluate its own actions.[78] This puts

the media in the position of becoming only a "keeper of the official record," rather than a sounding board for all voices in the community.[79] None of these theories provides a full explanation of the influences that prompt media coverage of an issue. This study will use a synthesis of these theories to examine one facet of a major news story that has been covered extensively over the last seven years. The story is the civil war in Bosnia and the issue is the commitment of U.S. troops as part of the peacekeeping force in Bosnia.

The Role of U.S. Media - Vietnam to Bosnia

A look at news reports on past U.S. involvement in military actions overseas may provide some clues about the influences of government, political elites and public opinion on the course of news coverage. Since the Vietnam war, the relationship between the American media and the military has also undergone a perceived change, although close examination may show that the media behaved in an entirely expected way.

Vietnam

The war in Vietnam is often cited by both the media and the military as a watershed event in news coverage of Americans at war. Vietnam is remembered as "the TV war," and Jacqueline Sharkey writes, "some journalists remember Vietnam as a war in which they were given free rein...

forgetting the restricted access...and extensive PR campaign by the government."[80]

Even in areas and at times when access was free, reporters in Vietnam still followed the pattern of dependence on official sources. In his book, The Uncensored War, Hallin said that in spite of relatively free access, and the inconsistencies reporters saw between official briefings and events in the field,

> "...two powerful forces...kept newspaper coverage from straying very far from the official line in Vietnam: the routines of objective journalism, which tied the news closely to official sources and the Washington agenda, and the ideology of the Cold War, which locked events in a framework of understanding that made fundamental questioning of American policy essentially unthinkable.[81]

Hallin also asserts that television reporters were even more dependent than newspapers on official sources during the Vietnam war, and had to develop a closer relationship with the military, since TV crews depended exclusively on military transportation to move their somewhat bulky equipment to the front.[82]

The Tet offensive in 1968 is often cited as the event that turned the media and the public against the war in Vietnam. Referring to Walter Cronkite's famous broadcast of February 27, 1968, Halberstram writes that, "It was the first time in history that a war had been declared over by an anchorman."[83] However, Cronkite's reporting reflected growing debate in Washington over the war. The administration and Republican politicians were exchanging

barbs about President Johnson's credibility, while within the administration, heated debate raged about whether to escalate the war or negotiate a peace.[84]

Far from dictating the political agenda at home, Cronkite and other reporters were reflecting the growing debate among political elites about the wisdom of continued fighting. The direction of their coverage was tied, or indexed, to the official debate in Washington.

Grenada

On October 25, 1983, United States troops invaded the island nation of Grenada, after the government of prime minister Maurice Bishop was overthrown by his finance minister, Bernard Coard. U.S. troops were sent in to protect American medical students on the island, according to the Reagan administration.[85]

Journalists were barred from the island for 48 hours, although some enterprising reporters tried to get ashore by renting fishing boats. They were turned back by U.S. destroyers.[86]

A system of press pools set up on Barbados fed the official government line about the victory of American troops over Communists who had taken over the island; apparently a reference to the 40 or so Cuban construction workers found on Grenada.[87] When reporters finally arrived on Grenada, days after the fighting ended, their stories followed the administration line that U.S. military

intervention had saved American civilians and improved conditions on the island.[88]

Criticism of U.S. action in Grenada was limited to the mild voices of the "loyal opposition" in government which never seriously questioned the invasion. Concerns of allies in Europe and elsewhere, Bennett writes, "...that American military policies were unwarranted, dangerous and an affront to international law..." were never put in context.[89]

Through 1988, the elite media covered Grenada as an "anniversary story," focusing on the U.S. victory and supposed restoration of democracy. By 1993, the 10 year anniversary of the invasion, the New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times and Wall Street Journal carried no stories.[90] The Boston Globe investigated conditions on the island and found the island nation's government and economy near collapse.[91] The news media once again tied their interpretation of the events to official sources.

Panama

Government control of the media had worked so well in Grenada that when the U.S. invaded Panama on December 20, 1989, a press pool was used, in spite of the fact that there were 300 or so non-pool reporters in Panama already. The Pentagon wished to control access to the story, and thereby the "spin" of coverage, and succeeded.[92]

Not only would the tendency of the media to "index"

stories to government debate come into play, but the government could further control coverage by controlling access to information and to military operations. In Panama, the media did not focus on the United State's use of Panamanian president Manuel Noriega as a CIA informant, or past knowledge of his involvement in drug traffic.[93]

Misinformation and outright propaganda were the rule in Panama, according to Sharkey in Under Fire, as the Pentagon and White House insisted that the invasion was a success, Noriega's government had collapsed without resistance, and the situation was under control.[94] Cable News Network had phone reports of widespread resistance by Noriega loyalists, looting and kidnappings. However, without pictures from the pool reporters, who were kept far from the action by the military, or confirmation from government sources, the official line prevailed.[95]

The media once again relied on government sources to set the agenda, making claims of total American victory, in spite of evidence to the contrary. As David L. Paletz puts it, for their sins of relying exclusively on governmental

> sources, then having been softened by the application of pools and procedures in Grenada and Panama, and their "patriotic" (or bellicose) boosterism, the...American press found their coverage one-sided...censored, and often controlled by the government...and variously criticized by all sides...[96]

Panama and Grenada proved to be the spin doctor's warm up for an even bigger conflict between media and government: the Persian Gulf war.

Desert Storm

Preparations for dealing with the news media during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm rivalled the planning for the military invasion of Kuwait. Kellner writes that the Persian Gulf war was covered as simple entertainment, with good guys, bad guys and narrators, all carefully chosen by government media handlers.[97] He claims the Bush administration took advantage of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 1, 1990, as a way to divert national debate from domestic problems to the Middle East.[98] One journalist, writing after the war, said, "... the real, and dangerous, point is that the Bush Administration and the military were able to tell the public just what they wanted the public to know. Perhaps worse, press and public largely acquiesced in the disclosure of only selected information."[99]

Between August and January, when the U.S. invasion of Kuwait began, there was very little coverage of public opposition to the war. A Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting survey found that of the 2,855 minutes of coverage on TV from August 8, 1990, to January 3, 1991, only 29 minutes dealt with popular opposition to the U.S. military buildup in the Persian Gulf.[100]

Once the fighting started, official military experts were popular interpreters of the events on network television, placing those news programs only one step removed from using government sources as their own

reporters.[101] In addition, government control of media pools and access to military operations left journalists with little to report except what they were spoon-fed at military briefings. Knowing that the media was a captive audience, O'Heffernan points out that the opportunity was there for assuring that coverage follows the official government line, "...media-sophisticated elites can redirect media attention away from unpleasantness, like the poor operational record of Apache helicopters in the desert, and toward less dangerous fare, such as the menus of troops in the Saudi desert."[102]

News organizations expanded coverage, often providing around the clock reports once the fighting started. Gans and Tuchman found that continuing news coverage in times of crisis typically emphasized that despite temporary unrest, the world is orderly and everything will turn out fine.[103] The Persian Gulf war played to this tendency as the government provided pictures and narrative from military briefings that showed "smart bombs" always hitting their targets and other technological triumphs of modern American warfare.[104] This tactic was reinforced by doing an end-run around the networks and offering hometown stories to local stations and newspapers directly, as the military released video and pictures that were better than anything the networks or wire services could offer. Military briefers innundated reporters with facts that offered little real information and required too much time to sort through,

preventing any real information leaking from public relations officers or troops in the field.

The Persian Gulf war also emphasized the relationship between communication media and international relations, Mowlana writes, and showed "...media functioning as major proponents and defenders of the status quo..." In this case, the media "...cease to be watchdogs and fail to play their perceived adversarial roles with officialdom."[105] Indexing had been brought to its highest form, where there was no difference between the government's message and the media reports.

Bosnia

The Clinton administration wanted to end the suffering in Bosnia; the social, political and economic conditions within Bosnia's borders were the main concerns of the administration.[106] But years of conflict went by without any significant action because, Mandelbaum claims, "Putting an end to suffering in Bosnia...would have involved addressing its causes, which would have meant deep, protracted and costly engagement in the tangled political life of the country."[107]

While the public, administration and news media became more outraged by the war in Bosnia, much media coverage was focused on the debate among political elites over sending U.S. troops to the country. The debate made it appear that options were being weighed and things were under control,

when in fact they were not.[108]

But after four years of reports about fighting, atrocities and failed peace efforts, the Clinton administration could hesitate no longer. The United States brought the warring parties together in Dayton, Ohio, and negotiated a peace settlement in Bosnia on November 21, 1995. One of the key provisions was a promise that the United States would commit American troops to lead the peace-keeping effort.[109]

As Douglas pointed out, polls taken right after the Dayton accords were signed, "...show most Americans are opposed to sending troops to Bosnia...but focus groups and more in-depth interviews with people reveal a deep ambivalence about what America's role should be."[110] Not surprising since the news coverage at the time continued to spotlight a "hideous injustice" in Bosnia, but Congressional and administration debate was that "we shouldn't and can't" get involved.[111]

The issue was defined in the media as one of whether American troops should go to Bosnia or stay home. Other arguments about American involvement fell by the wayside. All along, the issue of an exit strategy for American troops was at the top of the Clinton administration's agenda.[112]

The Dayton accord did not end suffering in Bosnia or provide plans to redress the grievances of those injured or displaced by the war. The Dayton agreement did make it

possible to put U.S. troops into Bosnia with a minimum of risk. The United States abandoned the social work strategy, Mandelbaum writes, and rewarded "...what the administration had termed Serb aggression and ratified the results of ethnic cleansing."[113] American interests were claimed by President Clinton because of concerns the fighting might spread. The President invoked memories of past wars to justify the use of U.S. troops. "If war reignites in Bosnia," Clinton wrote, "it could spark a much wider conflagration. In 1914, a gunshot in Sarajevo launched the first of two world wars."[114]

The news media followed the carefully crafted arguments of Congress and the administration, limiting the debate to the narrow issue of "go," or "no go." As in other wars since Vietnam, the United States never questioned the right to intervene, only if it could do so with a minimal risk to American troops.[115] This desire to do something without having to pay the price, as Mitroff and Bennis write,

> ...epitomizes today's public, and image-laden contemporary news coverage fulfills this desire. The audience is removed from the consequences and is lulled into a false sense of security because the media seem to claim everything is under control. Or, the way to keep things under control is to do what the administration wants.[116]

Once the fighting was over, and Bosnia effectively partitioned between Serb and Muslim, the United States could intervene with minimal risk to American lives. The news media played along with the "go" and "no go" debate,

indexing coverage to what the elites in Washington were talking about, and virtually ignoring the multitude of other issues that would eventually cause American troops to be committed far beyond the one year promised by the Clinton administration.

Much of the evidence cited by authors about American media coverage during wars since Vietnam is anecdotal. Only a few studies have tried to show a provable tie between what is debated in Washington and the direction of media coverage of foreign affairs. The purpose of this study was to examine the debate over putting American troops in Bosnia, and determine how closely media coverage was indexed to that debate in 1995 and 1996.

Summary

Evidence of influence on the news media in the United States is an important factor in judging whether citizens are getting a fair and balanced view of world events. Several theories and studies have been examined in this review that attempt to analyze what influences media reports and how the source of that influence can be determined.

Research of this type can give journalists and journalism educators a method of analyzing current policy and practice in the coverage of international news stories, especially those involving U.S. government policy decisions

as those stories play out over a long period of time. Analysis of news coverage informs the practice of journalism and allows more knowledgeable debate about the both the shortcomings and positive aspects of current journalism practice.

The review of the literature suggests that additional research is needed to adequately explain whether outside factors do, in fact, influence news stories. This study will conduct a content analysis of news reports on the issue of putting U.S. troops in Bosnia, and the continuing commitment of those troops past the end of 1996. In addition, a comparison of the news reports, public opinion polls and government debate on the issue will be done based on a chronology of events. A description of the methodology for the study is contained in Chapter III.

ENDNOTES

[1]Charles Lane, "Washington Diarist: War Stories," The New Republic, January 3, 1994, 43; also, Susan Douglas, "Double Standards," The Progressive, January, 1996, 17.

[2]Robert M. Entman, Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 66.

[3]Bill Clinton, U.S. Efforts Toward Peace and Stability in the Vital Balkan Region," H. Doc. 103-111 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993).

[4]Text of President Bill Clinton's Speech At Paris Peace Accords ceremony, Cable News Network (December 14, 1995).

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CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Careful analysis of research information regarding influences on media reports and patterns of reporting on major events allows practicing journalists and journalism educators to draw some important conclusions about the practice of news reporting in the United States.

This study compared certain aspects of news reports from the New York Times and the Associated Press (AP) regarding decisions by the Clinton administration to send U.S. troops to Bosnia at the end of 1995, the discussion over the impact of that policy during 1996, and debate over the continued deployment of U.S. troops in Bosnia that was announced at the end of 1996. Public opinion polls contained in news stories done by the New York Times and AP will also be examined to determine any changes in public opinion that were reported over the two-year time period under study.

Research Design

The debate about U.S. troops in Bosnia will be broken into two groups:

1) The first group of data involve the initial debate about sending U.S. troops, which took place throughout most of 1995. Although the first U.S. troops entered Bosnia on December 5, 1995, the main deployment did not take place until after January 1, 1996. Debate about whether to send a large U.S. force to Bosnia continued until the end of 1995. Therefore, this issue will be considered contained within the 1995 calendar year.

2) The second group of data involves the debate about keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia after the end of 1996. This debate began immediately after the main deployment of troops in January, 1996, and continued at the end of December, 1996.

The news reports and editorials in 1995 were analyzed to determine how many stories were done about the issue of sending U.S. troops to Bosnia by each news agency, what sources were used for information in the story, and the direction of the sources' opinions used in the stories - whether in favor, against or neutral regarding committing U.S. troops in Bosnia. The news reports done during 1996 were analyzed to determine how many stories were done about keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia past the end of 1996, what sources were used in the story and the direction of the

sources's opinions used in the stories - whether in favor, against or neutral regarding committing U.S. troops to Bosnia.

By analyzing what sources were used, the direction of the sources' opinions in the New York Times and on AP, and the pattern of increase/decrease in the number of sources for or against committing U.S. troops to Bosnia or keeping the troops in Bosnia during the two-year time period, it was possible to determine if there were any significant differences between opinions expressed in polls, government debate on the issue, and the news sources in the stories that were written. It was also possible to determine if the sources and direction of the news stories became more alike over the time period.

Editorials carried on the op-ed page of the New York Times were also analyzed over the 1995-1996 time period in regard to the direction of the editorials' opinions about U.S. troops in Bosnia. This allowed a comparison of the direction of New York Times editorials and news stories over the same time period.

Data Collection Plan

The results of this study were generated by measuring the frequency, direction and source of all opinions given in the New York Times and AP in all Bosnia-related stories and editorials during the calendar years 1995 and 1996. News accounts and editorial page content were analyzed

separately.

The population for analysis was all news stories and editorials in the New York Times and the Associated Press, found in a keyword search of "Bosnia and U.S. Troops," in the Lexis/Nexis data base, published between January 1, 1995 and December 31, 1996. This provided a study of the entire population of stories done by these media outlets on this topic, rather than a random sample. This method of data collection and analysis is similar ones used in other indexing studies.[1]

Between January 1, 1995 when former president Jimmy Carter negotiated the first lasting cease-fire in Bosnia, and December 31, 1996, when the Clinton administration was discussing sending an American-led paramilitary force to capture Bosnian leaders indicted on war crimes charges, there were 317 news stories and 110 editorials in the New York Times and on the Associated Press newswire dealing with committing U.S. troops to Bosnia or keeping the troops there past the end of 1996.

The study was designed to test two main hypothesis, the first from Bennett, that the news media tend to "index" the voices and viewpoints in both news and editorials to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about an issue. The null hypothesis is:
1) The direction of sources quoted in New York Times news stories as for or against sending U.S. troops to Bosnia in the calendar year 1995 or 1996 does not correlate with the

direction of New York Times editorials during the same time periods.

The study also tested Entman's hypothesis that as a story grows in importance and plays out over time, the homogeneity among media in reporting of that story increases.[2] The null hypothesis is:

2) There is no relationship between the number of sources of a certain type used in news stories regarding sending U.S. troops to Bosnia and the news outlet (AP or New York Times) publishing those stories.

Bennett and Entman both comment on the heavy reliance of reporters on "official" sources, to the exclusion of other types of sources. An additional, related null hypothesis studied in regard to this issue was: neither news outlet (AP or New York Times) relied more heavily over the time period under study on government rather than non-government sources in reporting on the issue of sending U.S. troops to Bosnia.

The New York Times was chosen for this study because it often "cues" other media coverage in the United States, as Bennett found in a study of the Iran/Contra debate.[3] The Associated Press is the largest American wire service, and newsrooms depend on the AP for much of the background context of news stories, as Sussman and Lent discovered, since most news editors have neither the time nor the means to cover international stories independently.[4]

Prestige newspapers, especially the New York Times,

are expected to keep the historical record of the times. The New York Times in particular, Chomsky writes, is the choice of scholars and future generations when studying history.[5] Besides these audiences, prestige papers are read by other journalists and editors, as well as political elites.[6] The "direction" of editorials in the New York Times may be an indicator of whether the Times chooses to be simply a "keeper of the record," even on its editorial pages, or if the op-ed pages are used as a forum for expression of varying opinions. If the direction of opinion on editorial pages follows the flow of news source direction in the news pages on a particular issue (in this case U.S. troops in Bosnia), the question arises: are Times editorials simply following the direction of Congress, the administration or other political elites, or are they providing a forum for many voices on all sides of an issue? This study provided a chance to analyze both editorials and news stories in the New York Times from this point of view.

Comparison of the direction of news sources in New York Times and AP news stories on the issue of U.S. troops in Bosnia allowed analysis of any differences in both the type of sources used and the direction of sources within the news stories, whether for, against or neutral on the issues of placing and keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia. If Entman's hypothesis is confirmed, over the two year time period there should have been an increasing tendency of the

stories from both news sources to use the same kinds of sources and to quote sources expressing the same opinions on the issues.

Measurement of Data

The population of news stories analyzed for this study consisted of all stories from the New York Times and from the AP on the Lexis/Nexis database that contained references to U.S. troops and Bosnia. The Lexis/Nexis search was configured using any mention of Bosnia and U.S. troops within stories by the New York Times or Associated Press. Based on a preliminary story count it was anticipated that a total of more than 800 stories and editorials would be found from each news source on this topic over the two year period. The actual story count including editorials, was 427, once stories were eliminated that had been listed more than once in the NEXIS database.

The individual news source was the unit of analysis. For the New York Times, all material under a single heading (or subheading if part of a larger article) was considered one story. For the AP, each news separate (a story that moves on the wire individually) was considered one story. This method of counting stories is similar to one used by Weaver and Wilhoit in their 1984 study, "Foreign News in the Western Agencies," and by McGill, Szanto and the Freedom Forum Research Group in their 1995 study, Headlines and Sound Bites.[7] The news sources were identified within

each story and counted individually during coding of the data.

A frequency count was done to determine how many stories and editorials each news agency did on the issue of sending U.S. troops to Bosnia or keeping U.S. troops there after the end of 1996. This count was designed to yield information about how important each media outlet considered the story, based on the number of stories published or sent out over the wire, as well as an indication of the ebb and flow of the issue along a two-year time line.

The categories used by coders in analysis of news stories for this study are from framing and indexing studies that examined how many stories were done on a subject over a certain time period, who news reporters used for sources, and the direction of the opinions quoted.[8] Coders read each story from the New York Times and each story from the AP, and then made three judgements. The coders independently judged whether an opinion was voiced in regard to U.S. troops in Bosnia. If an opinion was voiced, the coders also judged who voiced it and the direction of the opinion.

The categories for the analysis were:

1) Source - who was cited in the story as the source of information. If there is more than one source in a story, each source was noted by the coders. Sources were divided into six "voices"; editorial/op-ed, administration source,

congressional source, judicial source, or popular source (non-governmental), which includes interest groups and polls, and finally foreign opinion. Opinions from foreign sources were assigned "neutral" direction, because the study looked at domestic U.S. policy processes as reported in the news media.

Editorial sources were defined as any story or letter appearing on the op-ed page of the New York Times. Administration sources were defined as the president, members of the White House Cabinet or their staff, military officers and Pentagon spokesmen, and NATO officials from the United States. Congressional sources were defined as any member of Congress or their staff, or action by the Senate or House as a body expressed in favor of, opposed to or neutral to the issues under study. Judicial sources were defined as any member of the judiciary or action by a judicial body on the issues under study. Popular sources were defined as interest groups, polls, and individuals (including individual members of the military who were not officers). Foreign sources were defined as any government official or body not associated with the U.S. government, individuals from countries other than the United States, and the United Nations or its representatives.

2) Direction - Once a source was identified, for the 1995 calendar year, the opinion expressed by that voice was assigned a + (positive) if supportive of U.S. troops in Bosnia, a - (negative) if the voice was opposed to putting

U.S. troops in Bosnia, or ± (neutral) if the voice was ambivalent or divided about the issue. For the 1996 calendar year, once a source was identified, the opinion expressed by that voice was assigned a + if supportive of keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia past the end of 1996, - if against keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia, or a ± if the voice was ambivalent or divided about the issue.

For purposes of this study, all voices were weighted the same. The president, a government official, a poll, or a statement from a citizen's group were all given the same value. Action or debate by Congress, the Administration, a judicial source or any group was coded as one "voice" if a single actor was not mentioned, and the action or opinion was characterized as "for" or "against" U.S. troops in Bosnia.[9]

Some examples of coding decisions:

1) A quote attributed to President Clinton and reading, "...As NATO's leader, the United States must do its part and send in troops to join those of our allies (in Bosnia) ..." would be coded Administration(+).[10]

2) A quote reading, "Senate majority leader Bob Dole left the session at a conference room across the street from the White House saying that, 'as of now' he still opposed sending American troops to the Balkans," would be coded Congress(-).[11]

3) A quote reading, "...Col. Mike Sullivan, chief of public

affairs for the Army's European operations, said the reason was a complicated chain of command (for U.S. troops) that begins with the resolution from the United Nations Security Council turning over power for the peacekeeping operation to NATO," would be coded Administration(±).[12]

4) An editorial summarized with the recommendation, "... the Administration should vigorously resist all calls for direct U.S. involvement in the war..." would be coded Editorial(-).[13]

Three coders were used in the study. Intercoder reliability was tested using Holsti's formula: $R = 2M / N_1 + N_2$

$$R = 2M / N_2 + N_3$$

$$R = 2M / N_1 + N_3$$

where M is the number of decisions on which the coders agree, N_1 is the total number of decisions by coder number one, and N_2 is the total number of decisions by coder number two and N_3 is the total number of decisions by coder number three.[14]

The value of R should be a fraction between zero and one, with a value of .85 or higher. The intercoder reliability test's coefficients (R) for this study were: $R = 2M / N_1 + N_2 = 2,236 / 2,378 = .94$

$$R = 2M / N_2 + N_3 = 2,210 / 2,353 = .93$$

$$R = 2M / N_1 + N_3 = 2,306 / 2,361 = .97$$

based on a scale of 0 to 1.0, where 1.0 is perfect reliability.

Many cases of coder disagreement were from clerical error and were easily cleared up (e.g. "Congress" mistakenly coded or counted as "Administration"). The other disagreements involved different interpretation of source opinion direction, with one coder scoring "+" while another might score "±" on the same opinion. These were cleared up by discussion and mutual agreement.

The source and direction coding yielded nominal data, with a frequency count in each category. This allowed analysis of those categories through complex chi square calculations, to determine if there was a significant difference between the categories or levels of the categories. If a significant difference was found, calculations of phi and contingency coefficients were made to determine the strength of the relationship between variables.

For some of the analyses the two-year period was broken down into intervals along a time-line that was keyed to major policy votes in Congress or debates between Congress and the administration about placing or keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia. These intervals allowed us to observe the variation in opinions reported in news accounts and expressed in editorials during the times there was significant policy activity in Congress or the administration. One major event that took place along this time line was a presidential election. This required separate analysis of data in "before and after" divisions

to determine any effect of the election campaign. The time frames associated with most of the election campaign activity fall roughly within the calendar years of 1995 and 1996, so those calendar years were used as the "before and after" divisions.

Public opinion polls mentioned in New York Times or AP news stories were coded as popular voices and assigned a +, -, or ±, using the same values explained for other sources. The polls were also analyzed separately, as an indication of public opinion on the issues of putting U.S. troops in Bosnia in 1995, or keeping them there in 1996. The polls were graphed alongside administration, congressional and editorial opinion as a method of gauging public opinion's place in news reportage on this issue.

When administration policies run counter to popular opinion (as they did with the troops in Bosnia issue), does the prestige press criticize these policies through its editorial pages, providing a forum for discussion, or does it continue the hypothesized preference for "official" sources? Did the New York Times and Associated Press provide alternative viewpoints in their supposedly "balanced" news stories, or did administration voices favoring the policies dominate? Analysis of poll opinion, editorial opinion and the direction of sources quoted in news stories provided a way to test the hypotheses regarding indexing and similarity of sourcing in news stories.

While public opinion polls can vary in the methodology used and wording of questions asked, these issues are not usually addressed in news stories. This is borne out in the stories under study, where polls are cited as showing public opinion for or against putting or keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia, without any analysis of the validity of the polls. Once a poll is published in a news story, the information in that poll becomes "official" to the public, with little or no further analysis in the news media. Therefore, any attempt to evaluate the soundness of poll sampling, question wording or conclusions is beyond the scope of this study.

A crossbreak similar to Table I was used to display data from the news source categories. Data regarding differences in source type by media outlet was displayed in this type of table. The differences in the direction of sources were displayed in a table similar to Table I. Analysis for significant differences was carried out on the nominal data provided.

To aid in the analysis of how the direction of opinion of sources used in the news stories may have changed over time, the two year time period under study was broken down into intervals corresponding to key events in the debate over putting or keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia (N=15). There were eight identifiable time periods in the debate in 1995 and seven in 1996. This method is similar to one used by Bennett in an indexing study of debate over the Iran-

TABLE I

DIFFERENCES IN SOURCE TYPE BY MEDIA OUTLET - (Dates)
BY PERCENTAGES

N =

Source	AP	New York Times	Overall
Editorial			
Administration			
Congressional			
Judicial			
Popular			
Foreign			
TOTAL			

Contra issue during the 1983-1986 time period.[15] Statistical analysis of these cases was done by developing interval level data and calculating Pearson correlation coefficients to determine any correlation between the direction of different sources over the time periods under study. Administration and congressional opinions in the New York Times, both positive and negative, were compared to the direction of positive and negative Times editorial page opinion during each year, 1995 and 1996.

Positive opinions for each source were calculated as a percentage of all positive opinion in the New York Times

during each of the 15 intervals. Negative opinions for each source were calculated as a percentage of all negative opinions during each of the 15 intervals. The interval-level data was then analyzed for any significant correlation between news story and editorial opinion (either +, - or ±).

The number of positive, negative or neutral opinions quoted by each type of source was also calculated for the New York Times, and these categories were compared with the same source categories in the Associated Press stories over the 1995 and 1996 time periods, using the 15 intervals described earlier. The positive and negative sources were calculated as a percentage of all positive and negative opinion in news stories in the New York Times or Associated Press during each of the 15 intervals. This allowed a comparison between these two major news outlets for any correlation between the direction of the sources used in news stories during 1995 and 1996.

Analysis of congressional opinion, for example, was displayed on a table similar to Table II, to indicate the chronological occurrence of changes in congressional opinion and editorials and any correlation between the two.

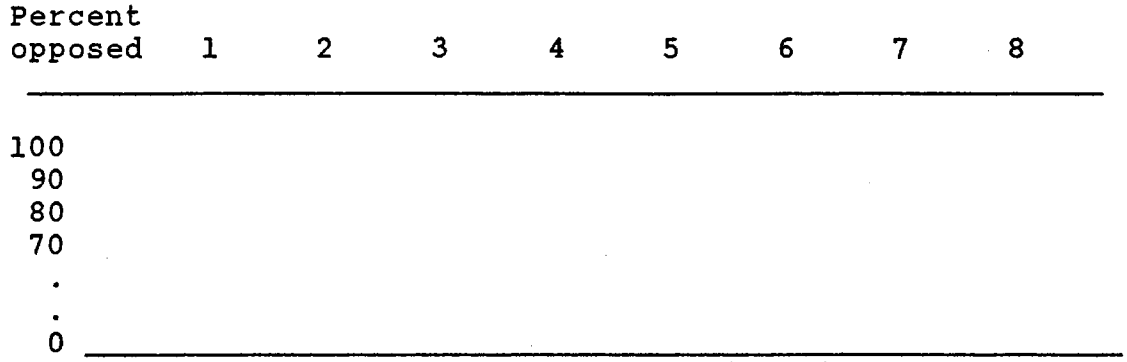
Time Intervals for Analysis - 1995 and 1996

As an aid in analysis, the years of 1995 and 1996 were divided into intervals corresponding to key events in the

TABLE II

OPPOSITION TO SENDING U.S. TROOPS TO BOSNIA - 1995

CONGRESSIONAL AND OP/ED OPINION IN THE NEW YORK TIMES



Note: Each analysis period began the day of a major event involving administration or congressional action in regard to Bosnia. Congressional and op/ed negative opinion were calculated as a percentage of all negative opinion in the New York Times during each interval of 1995.

debate over putting or keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia. The intervals are not equal time periods, as in months or weeks, because the study was designed to look at the ebb and flow of the issue, not the simple passage of time.

The beginning of each of the 15 time periods represents a major event related to the issue of U.S. troops in Bosnia, and the time period continues as coverage of that event plays out in the media. Evenly divided time spans, such as weeks or months, would be an arbitrary division of the two years, and would not be useful for this analysis. This method of establishing time periods for analysis is similar to one used by Bennett in his indexing

study of news coverage and government debate over the Iran-Contra issue from 1983 to 1986.[16]

There were eight identifiable intervals in 1995:

1) January 1 - March 13, 1995

January 1 - A truce, negotiated by former president Jimmy Carter, is signed between warring factions in Bosnia, calling for a 4 month cease fire

January 4 - Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole introduces bills to lift the arms embargo against Bosnian Muslims and to limit the use of U.S. troops in any United Nations peacekeeping force

February 15 - House passes a bill to cut U.S. aid for U.N. peacekeeping efforts and give Congress more control over committing U.S. troops to U.N. command

2) March 14-May 30, 1995

March 14 - Defense Secretary Perry says a small number of U.S. troops may be sent to Bosnia and/or Croatia

March 20 - Bosnian Muslim army launches a major offensive

March 31 - United Nations votes to scale back the number of peacekeeping troops in Croatia

May 25 - Serbs shell Sarajevo; NATO airstrikes are called in against Serb positions; 350 U.N. peacekeepers are taken hostage by Serbs; Serb shell kills 71 in Tuzla

3) May 30 - June 8, 1995

May 30 - Senator Dole agrees some U.S. troops could be used to rescue U.N. peacekeepers

May 31 - President Clinton announces he is ready to send U.S. troops to help relocate and/or rescue U.N. peacekeepers. Senator Dole calls Clinton's position a "major policy shift"

June 2 - U.S. pilot Scott O'Grady shot down over Bosnia; Clinton says he meant U.S. troops would be used for rescue only

June 3 - President Clinton "clarifies" that U.S. troops in Bosnia would be used only for rescue or emergency repositioning of U.N. peacekeepers with Congressional approval

June 7 - Pilot Scott O'Grady is rescued; House rejects a bill that would have repealed the War Powers Act

4) June 9 - August 10, 1995

June 9 - House votes to lift arms embargo against Bosnian Muslims

June 14 - House requires money for sending U.S. troops to Bosnia be tied to a U.N. mandate

June 16 - Bosnian Muslims launch an offensive to move Serbs from around Sarajevo

July 12 - NATO commanders plan a U.N. withdrawal from Bosnia; Serbs take the "safe area" of Srebrenica
July 15 - President Clinton meets with leaders of Britain, France and Germany about Bosnia
July 20 - Senator Dole postpones a Senate vote on lifting the Bosnian arms embargo
August 1 - House votes to lift arms embargo
August 8 - National Security Advisor Lake takes plans for a settlement and NATO bombing to allies

5) August 11 - October 4, 1995
August 11 - President Clinton vetos lifting the arms embargo, sends envoy Holbrook on new peace mission
August 28 - Serbs shell Sarajevo market, 37 killed
August 30-31 - NATO jets bomb Serb positions throughout Bosnia
September 14-15 - Serbs agree to pull back guns; NATO stops bombing; Muslim-Croat troops win back 1,500 square miles of territory

September 21 - Senate hearing on reappointment of Head of Joint Chiefs of Staff Shalikashvili, Republican members question him about any plans to send U.S. troops to Bosnia
September 30 - Defense spending bill is defeated, including provision requiring president to get approval of Congress before sending troops to Bosnia

6) October 5 - October 30
October 5 - President Clinton announces a ceasefire in Bosnia and that peace talks in the U.S. are set
October 6 - Clinton says up to 20,000 U.S. troops may be needed in Bosnia
October 15 - U.S. envoy Holbrook travels to Moscow and Balkan capitals; Dayton named as site for talks
October 18-19 - House and Senate committee hearings held so the administration and Defense Department can outline plans for Bosnia
October 23 - Clinton administration spokesman admits the one year plan for troops in Bosnia "an estimate"
October 30 - House passes non-binding resolution that there should be "no presumption" U.S. troops will be sent to back up any peace agreement worked out in Dayton

7) October 31 - November 27, 1995
November 1 - Peace talks start in Dayton
November 8 - U.S. and Russia agree on Russian troops' role in Bosnia
November 17 - House votes to stop funding for U.S. troops being sent to Bosnia if the president doesn't ask for Congress' approval
November 21 - Dayton peace plan initialed

8) November 28 - December 31, 1995
November 28 - President Clinton makes a national television address about plans to send U.S. troops to Bosnia
December 1 - Senator Dole announces support of sending U.S. troops, with a time limit
December 5 - U.S. troops begin arriving in Bosnia
December 13 - Senate votes support of troops in Bosnia with a one-year time limit
December 14 - Dayton peace accord signed in Paris
December 19 - Senate passes defense bill with pay raise for troops in Bosnia, Clinton threatens veto
December 21 - Bad weather delays arrival of main U.S. troop contingent in Bosnia until after December 30

The seven intervals identified in 1996 were as follows:

1) January 1 - March 1, 1996
January 1 - Bridge over Sava River completed and in use to bring in main U.S. force
January 2 - First American wounded -- by land mine
January 12 - President Clinton visits troops in Bosnia
January 26 - President Clinton signs defense bill after limitations on troop placement were removed
February 4 - First American death in Bosnia, land mine; Congress renews calls for withdrawing troops
February 22 - Bosnian Serb General Mladic orders soldiers to kidnap American and other NATO troops

2) March 2 - March 28, 1995
March 2 - Bosnian Serb military leaders indicted by War Crimes tribunal; Serbs threaten to sever all ties with peacekeepers in Bosnia
March 19 - Pentagon report predicts resumed fighting in Bosnia after NATO withdrawal
March 21 - NATO leaders push for continued troop presence after the end of 1996
March 25 - Hillary Clinton visits U.S. troops in Bosnia

3) March 29 - May 13, 1995
March 29 - U.S. General Joulwan says NATO allies want U.S. troops beyond the end of the year
April 3 - Commerce Secretary Ron Brown and 34 others killed when plane crashes in Croatia
April 5 - U.N. investigators uncover first mass graves
April 29 - Three Muslims killed near Sjenina trying to return to homes in Serb territory

4) May 14 - July 1, 1996
May 14 - President Clinton meets Muslim and Croat leaders in Washington to encourage federation with joint military and economic operations

May 22 - War Crimes tribunal calls for arrest of Serb leaders Mladic, Karadzic and others

June 12 - Defense Secretary Perry says U.S. troops may have to remain in Bosnia well after December 31, 1996

June 21 - House Speaker Newt Gingrich questions the president's promise to bring troops home by end of year

5) July 2 - October 1, 1996

July 2 - Twelve hundred U.S. troops rotate out of Bosnia and are replaced by military police officers

July 10 - President Clinton says arming and training of Muslim-Croat army to begin immediately

July 22 - U.S. Admiral Leighton Smith warns of violence during election campaigns without NATO troops; Vice President Al Gore troops will be out by December 31

August 27 - Bosnian municipal elections postponed, national vote still set for September 14

September 10 - NATO commanders asked for extended mission plans; Clinton administration still says troops will be out by December 31

September 14 - Bosnia national elections held

September 25 - Defense and White House officials hedge when asked about getting U.S. troops out by end of 1996; NATO leaders express concern about U.S. withdrawal

6) October 2 - November 8, 1996

October 2 - Defense Secretary Perry admits up to 7,500 U.S. troops will be in Bosnia until mid-March, Republican senators at hearing are "outraged"

October 3 - Perry and Joint Chiefs head Shalikashvili are focus of fierce questioning by Senate Armed Services committee

October 15 - New U.S. troops arrive in Bosnia October 28 - Perry denies he made commitment to NATO allies that U.S. troops would remain in Bosnia until 1997; NATO allies say Perry did make commitment

7) November 9 - December 31, 1996

November 9 - President Clinton admits he's considering keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia through 1997

November 15 - Clinton announces at least 4,000 U.S. troops will stay until June 1998; Congress is in recess

November 17 - Clinton administration and Defense department admit they were "wrong" to predict that U.S. troops would be out by December 1996

December 9 - New National Security Advisor Sandy Berger says there will be "no permanent U.S. presence in Bosnia;" some members of Congress call for immediate withdrawal plans

December 18 - U.S. plans a paramilitary force to help capture Bosnian war criminals

(All statements, articles appeared in New York Times or on Associated Press on date cited.)

Limitations

The results of this study must be limited to the news outlets surveyed, the categories studied and the issue of U.S. troops in Bosnia. The results should not be generalized to all news media in the U.S. The reasons for these limitations include the time frame studied, the fact that two out of many media outlets were selected for analysis and that only one issue was examined. A more exhaustive study of the media's coverage of this issue would be needed in order to generalize these results to more media outlets or to other news events.

ENDNOTES

[1]W. Lance Bennett, "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations in the United States." Journal of Communication 40(2) (1990): 114.

[2]See W. Lance Bennett, "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations," 106; Robert M. Entman, Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 67-68.

[3]Bennett, "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations," 113.

[4]Gerald Sussman and John A. Lent, Transnational Communications: Wiring the Third World (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1991).

[5]Noam Chomsky, "All the News That Fits," Utne Reader, February/March, 1986, 56-65.

[6]Herbert J. Gans, Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 91, 126.

[7]David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, "Foreign News in the Western Agencies," in Foreign News and the New World Information Order, eds., Robert L. Stevenson and Donald Lewis Shaw (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1984), 155-157; Larry McGill, Andras Szanto and the Research Group of the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center, Headlines and Sound Bites: Is That the Way It Is? (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 67-72.

[8]Bennett, "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations," 103-125; Robert M. Entman, "Framing U.S. Coverage of International News: Contrasts in Narratives of the KAL and Iran Air Incidents," Journal of Communication 41(4), (Autumn 1991): 6-27.

[9]Bennett, "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations," 114-115.

[10]Terrence Hunt, "Clinton Argues for Troops in Bosnia," Associated Press, October 7, 1995.

[11]Todd S. Purdum, "Clinton Woos Congressional Leaders on Sending Troops to Bosnia," New York Times, 3 September 1995, sec. 1, p. 5.

[12]Ian Fisher, "Peacekeeping Logistics: Trains Are Ready But Most Won't Be Rolling Until Christmas," New York Times, 16 December 1995, sec. 1, p. 6.

[13]New York Times, "Bipartisan Foreign Policy," 2 January 1995, sec. 1, p. 22.

[14]Ole R. Holsti, Content Analysis for Social Sciences and Humanities (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1969), 167-194.

[15]W. Lance Bennett, "Marginalizing the Majority: Conditioning Public Opinion to Accept Managerial Democracy," in Michael Margolis and Gary A. Mauser, eds., Manipulating Public Opinion (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, Inc., 1989), 354-355.

[16]Bennett, "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations," 116-117.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This research study was designed to test three hypotheses regarding news coverage by the New York Times and Associated Press during 1995 and 1996. The stories analyzed dealt with the issue of placing U.S. troops in Bosnia in 1995 and keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia after the end of 1996.

The study used content analysis of all news stories and editorials published by the New York Times and Associated Press (AP) during 1995 and 1996 that were contained in the Lexis/Nexis database. The content analysis was designed to determine what sources were quoted about the issue of U.S. troops in Bosnia in the stories from both news outlets, how many sources of various types were used in the stories, and whether the sources expressed a positive, negative or neutral opinion about the issues under study.

Once the news sources were identified, categorized and the "direction" of their opinion noted, statistical analysis was designed to determine what connection, if any, existed between the direction of opinions expressed by news sources

in the New York Times about the issues under study and the stories on the same topic on the Times editorial pages over the two year period, 1995 through 1996.

The statistical tests also examined whether one news outlet or the other appeared to use more of a certain type of news source. Finally, the tests examined whether the type of news sources quoted appeared to become more similar over the two year period, when comparing the sources used by the New York Times and the Associated Press.

Results of public opinion polls conducted during 1995 and 1996 regarding U.S. troops in Bosnia were coded as "popular" voices during the coding process, and included in that count. The public opinion poll results on the issue of U.S. troops in Bosnia conducted by the Gallup organization are also displayed in some graphs in this chapter for purposes of tracking any changes in public opinion alongside opinion expressed in news stories and editorials. Only polls conducted by the Gallup organization were used because Gallup conducted polls on the issue of U.S. troops in Bosnia more frequently during the period under study. Including polls from other organizations, with different question wording and differing methodology, would also make comparison of the results less valuable.

Research questions were developed from the hypotheses: 1) Does the direction of official sources quoted in New York Times news stories as for or against sending U.S. troops to Bosnia in 1995 or keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia

in 1996, correlate with the direction of New York Times editorials during the same time period?

2) Is there a relationship between the types of sources used in these stories, and the news outlet (AP or New York Times) publishing these stories in 1995 and 1996?

3) Did the New York Times or AP rely more heavily on government than non-government sources in the stories under study during 1995 and 1996?

News Stories and Editorials - New York Times

Table III shows the percentage of sources quoted in the New York Times news stories and editorials expressing a positive (+) opinion about placing U.S. troops in Bosnia during 1995. Figures for each source type are expressed as a percent of total positive opinions in the New York Times during each time period. The table is divided into eight time intervals, based on the ebb and flow of news events and political debate regarding sending U.S. troops to Bosnia, as explained in Chapter III.

No judicial opinions on the issues under study were found in any stories or editorials during 1995 or 1996 and so are not included on any tables or figures in this chapter. Foreign sources were coded as neutral (±) and so have no statistical value when analyzing the opinions for and against the issues expressed by sources. Foreign sources are not included in the statistical tests or shown on the tables in

this chapter.

Administration, congressional and popular opinion were tested against op/ed opinion (stories from the Times editorial pages) by pairing administration sources with op/ed sources, congressional sources with op/ed sources and popular sources with op/ed sources in the eight time intervals.

TABLE III

NEW YORK TIMES - 1995
ADMINISTRATION, CONGRESSIONAL, POPULAR AND OP/ED
PERCENTAGE POSITIVE OPINION

N = 258

	Time period							
Source Type	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Admin	80	82	71	92	92	70	64	43
Congress	10	6	18	0	4	6	11	16
Popular	0	6	7	4	0	12	0	16
Op/ed	10	6	4	4	4	12	25	25

Note: Each source figure is shown as a percentage of total NYT positive opinion during that time period.

A comparison of administrative and op/ed positive (+) opinion as a percentage of all positive opinions in the New York Times during 1995 shows an apparent decline in

administration positive sources beginning in the sixth time period, while op/ed positive opinion increased during the same time periods. A computed Pearson r of -.84 shows a strong negative correlation between the two measures over the entire 1995 time period. Since that Pearson r is larger than .7067, it is significant at the .05 level of confidence.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, in regard to a correlation between positive administration and op/ed opinion, although the correlation shown is a negative one and does not statistically support the hypothesis that administration and op/ed opinion were "indexed," and would rise and fall together over time.

Congressional and op/ed sources were analyzed, as a percentage of all positive opinions expressed in news stories and editorials over the 1995 calendar year. Comparison of these two measures shows that they match closely for the first two intervals of 1995, then diverge after that, with congressional positive opinion peaking in the third interval and then dropping to zero in the fourth interval, before beginning a slow rise for the rest of the year. Op/ed positive sources remained consistent at between four and six percent for the first five intervals, before climbing to as much as 25 percent of positive opinions in the last three intervals.

A computed Pearson r of +.450 shows a moderate correlation between movement of the two measures during the 1995 time period. The null hypothesis is rejected in regard

to a correlation between congressional and op/ed opinion.

Popular opinion in favor of placing U.S. troops in Bosnia was also measured against op/ed opinion for 1995. A comparison of popular and op/ed opinion shows while the percentage of positive popular and op/ed sources ran nearly parallel during the third through sixth time intervals in 1995, they diverged in the last two intervals. A computed Pearson *r* of +.314 shows a moderate correlation between changes in the two measures during 1995. The null hypothesis is rejected.

All three sources of positive opinion in New York Times news stories were found to have moderate to strong correlations with op/ed opinion from the Times editorial pages during 1995. The measure of administration to op/ed opinion was a negative correlation, the other two were positive.

In Table IV, negative opinion expressed by sources in New York Times news stories and editorials during 1995 is shown as a percentage of total negative opinions in the New York Times during each time period. Analysis of administration and op/ed negative opinion during 1995 shows widely divergent movement, and yielded a Pearson *r* of-.490, which shows a moderate negative correlation between the two measures. The null hypothesis, that there is no connection or indexing between changes in the amount of administration and op/ed negative opinion, is rejected.

TABLE IV

NEW YORK TIMES - 1995
ADMINISTRATION, CONGRESSIONAL, POPULAR AND OP/ED
PERCENTAGE NEGATIVE OPINION

N = 173

	Time period							
Source Type	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Admin	16	66	15	32	7	0	7	6
Congress	58	0	70	65	40	38	86	19
Popular	6	33	10	0	0	19	0	53
Op/ed	19	0	17	0	53	43	7	21

Note: Each source figure is shown as a percentage of total NYT negative opinion during that time period.

Congressional and op/ed negative opinion was analyzed over the 1995 time period and comparison of changes yielded a computed Pearson r of -.180 which shows a weak negative correlation between the two sources.

A comparison of popular and op/ed negative opinion during 1995 shows a huge increase in popular negative opinion during the last time interval in 1995. This was due mainly to a large number of individual soldiers who were interviewed as they were about to be sent to Bosnia or who were part of a small force already in the country. A Pearson r of +.079

shows there is a weak correlation between changes in the percentage of popular and op/ed negative opinion during 1995.

A similar analysis of source opinion was done for 1996, using the seven time intervals determined for that time period. Table V shows the percentage of administration, congressional, popular and op/ed positive opinion during 1996, expressed as a percent of all positive opinion in the New York Times during each time period. Opinions of

TABLE V

NEW YORK TIMES - 1996
ADMINISTRATION, CONGRESSIONAL, POPULAR AND OP/ED
PERCENTAGE POSITIVE OPINION

N = 189

	Time period						
Source Type	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Admin	69	83	30	80	70	81	70
Congress	0	0	0	3	3	0	0
Popular	19	0	40	0	17	0	15
Op/ed	12	17	30	17	10	19	15

Note: Each source figure is shown as a percentage of total NYT positive opinion during that time period.

positive, negative and neutral were coded from all sources regarding the issue of keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia after the end of 1996.

Analysis of the administration and op/ed positive sources and their changes during 1996 show that they appear to move in opposite directions from each other at times, and a negative correlation between the two is strong. A Pearson *r* of -.697 was computed for administration and op/ed positive opinion. The null hypothesis is rejected, although the correlation is negative, rather than positive.

A comparison of congressional and op/ed positive opinion during 1996 shows that very few congressional sources used in New York Times news stories expressed positive opinions about keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia after the end of 1996 during any of the time periods. However, op/ed opinion remained relatively stable throughout the year. A Pearson *r* of -.024 shows there is a weak negative correlation between change in congressional and op/ed positive opinions during 1996. The null hypothesis is supported.

Analysis of popular and op/ed positive opinion during 1996 shows that there were no positive popular sources in any news stories during three of the seven time intervals, while op/ed opinion in favor of keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia remained relatively stable. A Pearson *r* of +.461 shows a moderate to strong correlation and indicates there is a connection between changes in popular and op/ed positive

opinion during 1996. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Negative opinion in New York Times stories during 1996 was also compared. Table VI shows a comparison of administration, congressional, popular and op/ed negative opinion as a percentage of all negative opinion in New York Times stories during 1996.

TABLE VI

NEW YORK TIMES - 1996
ADMINISTRATION, CONGRESSIONAL, POPULAR AND OP/ED
PERCENTAGE NEGATIVE OPINION

N = 97

	Time period						
Source Type	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Admin	56	71	40	62	45	58	37
Congress	22	14	0	23	25	42	26
Popular	22	38	30	15	30	0	26
Op/ed	0	0	30	0	0	0	11

Note: Each source figure is shown as a percentage of total NYT negative opinion during that time period.

Analysis of administration, congressional popular and op/ed negative opinion during 1996 shows that there was almost no negative opinion expressed in New York Times

editorials. The only exceptions were in the third time interval when stories began to leak that the U.S. might not meet its deadline to pull out troops by the end of 1996, and at the end of the year when it was apparent that U.S. troops would be in Bosnia for at least another 18 months.

Comparison of administration, congressional, and popular opinion changes during 1996 with op/ed opinion changes yielded moderate to weak correlations between the movements of the sources being tested, because of few op/ed sources.

Type of Sources Used in News Stories

One indication that news stories from different media outlets may become more alike over time, as Entman hypothesizes, is if the sources used in those stories become increasingly similar.[1] News stories from the New York Times and Associated Press (AP) were analyzed to determine any change in the type of sources used over the 1995 and 1996 time periods in stories about U.S. troops in Bosnia.

The nominal count of source types, based on the definitions outlined earlier in this study, showed both the New York Times and AP depended more heavily on administration sources than any other domestic news sources in stories about U.S. troops being sent to Bosnia in the 1995 calendar year, as seen in Table VII. Complex chi square tests show that there is a significant difference in the types of sources used by AP and the New York Times during 1995. A computed

chi square of 12.828 is significant at the .05 level of confidence. However, the contingency coefficient on this test (C=.138) shows there is a weak relationship between the media outlet and type of source used. There does appear to be a significant difference in the type of news source, administration, congressional or popular, used by the two media outlets in 1995 and 1996.

TABLE VII

TYPE OF NEWS SOURCE BY MEDIA OUTLET FOR 1995 BY PERCENTAGES

N = 656

Source Type	New York Times (N=412)	Associated Press (N=244)
Admin	58	53
Congress	27	39
Popular	15	8

Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected with regard to the differences in types of sources used by AP and the New York Times.

The source differences were also tested for 1996, and significant differences were found in the use of sources within each news outlet as well. In tests between

administration and congressional sources, administration and popular sources, and congressional and popular sources for both AP and the New York Times, computed chi squares in each case were larger than a significant chi square of 3.8, indicating the difference would be due to chance less than five percent of the time.

A similar comparison was done for types of sources used in both the New York Times and the Associated Press for 1996. Table VIII shows that AP and the New York Times continued to rely heavily on administration sources in their news stories about U.S. troops in Bosnia in 1996.

TABLE VIII

TYPE OF NEWS SOURCE BY MEDIA OUTLET FOR 1996
BY PERCENTAGES

N = 557

Source Type	New York Times (N=299)	Associated Press (N=258)
Admin	71	62
Congress	27	16
Popular	20	22

Analysis of the types of sources used in 1996 shows there is a significant difference in the type of sources used

in the two media outlets. A computed chi square of 7.508 is significant at the .05 level. However, the contingency coefficient (C=.115) shows a weak relationship between type of source and media outlet.

Significant differences were found in the use of sources within each news outlet as well. In tests between administration and congressional sources, administration and popular sources, and congressional and popular sources for both AP and the New York Times computed chi squares in each case were larger than a significant chi square of 3.8, which is significant at the .05 level of confidence.

One other significant difference was noted in statistics from Table VIII, when comparing the types of sources used by AP and the New York Times between 1995 and 1996. The only significant difference in the type of sources favored by either media outlet was in the number of popular sources used by the Associated Press. The number of popular sources used by AP more than tripled in 1996 compared to 1995. A computed chi square of 39.504 shows there is a significant difference in the number of popular sources AP used in 1996 and 1995 at the .05 level of confidence. The statistic for phi = 4.444 and shows a strong relationship between the two measurements.

These tests indicate that both the New York Times and AP relied more heavily on administration sources in 1995 and 1996 for stories about U.S. troops in Bosnia. Congressional sources were used most frequently after administration sources, and popular sources were used least of all. These

results indicate that the null hypothesis should be rejected in regard to the different types of sources used.

An indication of the relationship between sources used in these stories and the news outlets under study can be found by comparing the percentage of sources used in news stories during specified intervals of 1995 and 1996. This comparison was designed to test the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the types of sources used and the news outlet. The eight intervals in 1995 and seven in 1996 explained in Chapter III were used for comparison of how sources were used over time.

Table IX shows the percentage of each type of the top three news sources (administration, congressional and popular) used by AP during 1995, as a percentage of total

TABLE IX

ASSOCIATED PRESS NEWS SOURCES FOR 1995
BY PERCENTAGES

N = 244

Source Type	Time Interval 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Admin	70	69	34	60	47	44	64	53
Congress	20	15	58	28	53	53	36	36
Popular	10	15	8	12	0	3	0	11

sources in news stories about U.S. troops in Bosnia.

Table X shows the source percentages for the New York Times in the eight intervals for 1995. The same dependence on administration sources is obvious, although Table X shows the New York Times used more administration sources, as a percentage of total sources, during five out of eight intervals in 1995, than did the Associated Press.

TABLE X

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SOURCES FOR 1995
BY PERCENTAGES

N = 412

Source Type	Time Interval 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Admin	48	86	61	67	78	57	59	42
Congress	46	4	32	31	22	24	39	21
Popular	6	10	7	2	0	19	2	37

A computed Pearson r of +.085 was found when comparing the number of AP and New York Times administration sources used over the eight intervals in 1995. This correlation is not significant at the .05 level. The comparison of the use of congressional sources by AP and the Times yielded a

Pearson r of +.081, which is not a significant correlation. The use of popular sources by AP and the New York Times was also compared over the time intervals for 1995, and a Pearson r of +.288 was computed, which is not significant at the .05 level of confidence.

The same comparisons and correlation tests were done for types of sources used by AP and the New York Times in 1996. No significant correlations were found for any of the source types in the seven time intervals used for analysis in 1996.

Although chi square comparison of the types of sources used in 1995 and 1996 by the New York Times and AP shows significant differences in the types of sources used as a total for the year, these tests show that there does not appear to be a correlation between the type of sources used by the Associated Press or the New York Times over the 1995 and 1996 time periods. Therefore, the null hypothesis, that there is no relationship between the type of sources used and the news outlet publishing the stories, is accepted.

Government and Non-government Sources: 1995-1996

The final hypothesis to be tested states that neither the Associated Press nor the New York Times rely more heavily on government than non-government sources in stories about U.S. troops in Bosnia during 1995 and 1996. Government sources were defined as a combination of administration and congressional sources, compared to popular sources. Visual

examination of the tables presented thus far would indicate that this hypothesis should be rejected. Table XI shows the clear emphasis on government sources by both news sources in 1995. Statistical tests were performed on these figures, to determine if the large number of government sources shown in comparison to popular sources represented a statistically significant difference.

TABLE XI

TOTAL GOVERNMENT AND POPULAR SOURCES IN THE NEW YORK TIMES AND ASSOCIATED PRESS - 1995 BY PERCENTAGES

N = 656

Source Type	AP	New York Times
Government	92	89
Popular	8	11

A computed chi square of 6.042 is significant at the .05 level of confidence and shows there is a significant difference in the use of government and popular sources by both AP and the New York Times. The only time popular voices were a notably larger percentage (37%) of sources during 1995 was in the New York Times during the last time interval.

This occurred after the Dayton peace agreement was signed and U.S. troops were already being sent to Bosnia. Many of the popular sources used in news stories during this time were individual soldiers. This increase of popular sources in the last time interval of 1995 was not true for AP.

Table XII shows the total type of sources used by AP and the New York Times during 1996. Again, there is a clear dominance of administration sources, although the New York Times used a larger percentage of congressional sources in all but one time period in 1996 compared to 1995. This may be due in part to the presidential race in 1996, with members of the majority-republican Congress criticizing an incumbent democratic president. That possibility will be examined further in Chapter V.

TABLE XII

TOTAL GOVERNMENT AND POPULAR SOURCES IN THE NEW YORK TIMES AND ASSOCIATED PRESS - 1996
BY PERCENTAGES

N = 557

Source Type	AP	New York Times
Government	78	80
Popular	22	20

Both AP and the New York Times clearly used more popular sources in 1996 than in 1995, as a percentage of all sources. Statistically, a computed chi square of 8.615 shows that there is a significant difference between government and non-government sources in both news outlets during 1996. In examining individual news stories, it is apparent that this increase in popular sources is due to more stories quoting individual soldiers involved in the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia, since the soldiers who were not officers speaking in an official capacity were coded as popular voices.

Sources, Polls and Non-statistical Findings

When analyzing the results of a content analysis that includes the entire population of news stories over a specified period of time, communication researchers have found that some legitimate findings must be based on logical patterns found in the news stories, rather than statistical tests. Guido H. Stempel and Bruce H. Westley point out that when comparing time periods, and looking for variations in coverage by media outlets,

> ...the test must be one of logic, not statistics. On the basis of logic the researcher must conclude either that there were substantial differences between time periods or that the two time periods were similar. The case must stand or fall on the merit of the evidence provided, not on statistical tests.[2]

Bennett makes a similar argument in his indexing study of the Iran-Contra debate over a three-year period,

> "...the emphasis...will be to explore structural and graphically visible patterns in the data... 'Confidence' in this sort of exploratory analysis is obtained by building up 'layers' of consistent patterns based on multiple indicators for each hypotheses..."[3]

When a content analysis is based on the entire population of stories, as in this study, statistical tests are useful when comparing sets of data, but some findings can be made based on "graphically visible patterns," as well.

Returning to the hypothesis about indexing of editorial and news opinion, an examination of New York Times news stories quoting administration and congressional opposition to placing U.S. troops in Bosnia and editorial opposition on the same issue proves interesting. If a newspaper's editorial page is being used as a forum for varying voices on an issue, the number of editorials for or against a particular issue should rise and fall independent of opinions expressed in news stories. But if, as Bennett hypothesizes, the direction of sources in news stories correlates to the direction of editorial page opinion, then a connection can be established between editorial page content and news story content.[4]

Further, if this rise and fall of editorial page content can be traced to debate among government sources about an issue, then questions are raised about the connection of "official" debate on an issue and the amount of editorial debate that the New York Times publishes. Figure 1 shows a comparison of positive administration sources quoted in New

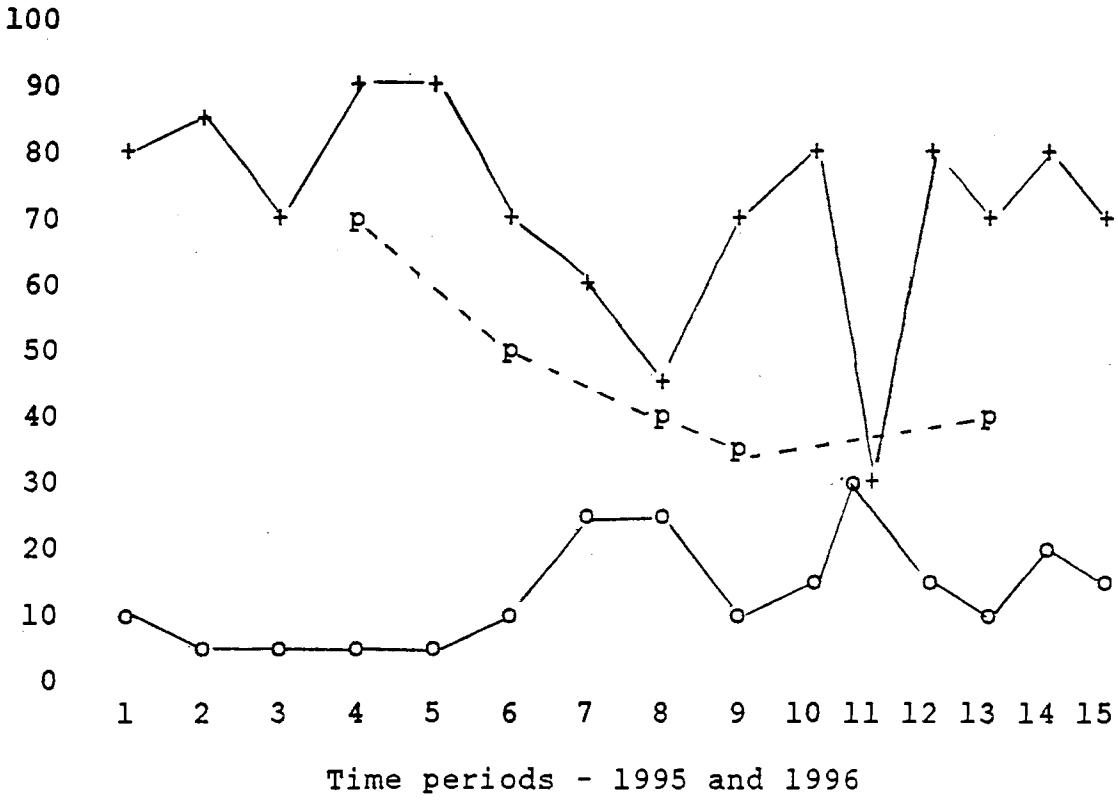


Figure 1. New York Times Administration and op/ed positive opinion as a percentage of all positive opinion. + = Administration o = Op/ed p = Gallup poll % favoring U.S. troops in Bosnia (Source: Gallup Organization, Lexis/Nexis, 5-6 June 1995, 19-22 September 1995, 15-18 December 1995, 5-7 January 1996, 28-29 May 1996)

York Times stories and positive editorial opinion in the Times over the 1995-1996 time period. Statistical tests showed a negative correlation between administration and editorial positive opinions, as discussed earlier, and this correlation is obvious from the graph in Figure 1. In regard to administration and op/ed positive opinion in the New York Times, the null hypothesis is supported.

Superimposed on the graph is a plot of public opinion poll results from the Gallup organization over the same two year time period. A clear drop in public approval ratings for placing and keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia is shown on the graph. At the same time, New York Times editorial opinion in favor of placing and keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia rose over the two year time period.

In Figure 2, a similar comparison of congressional and op/ed opinion as a percentage of all opinion in the New York Times during 1995 and 1996 provided a different picture. Superimposing public opinion poll results from the Gallup organization over the news story and editorial opinion gives a clear picture of rising public opposition to placing and keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia. Over the same two year time period, New York Times editorial opposition fell to zero as public opposition peaked.

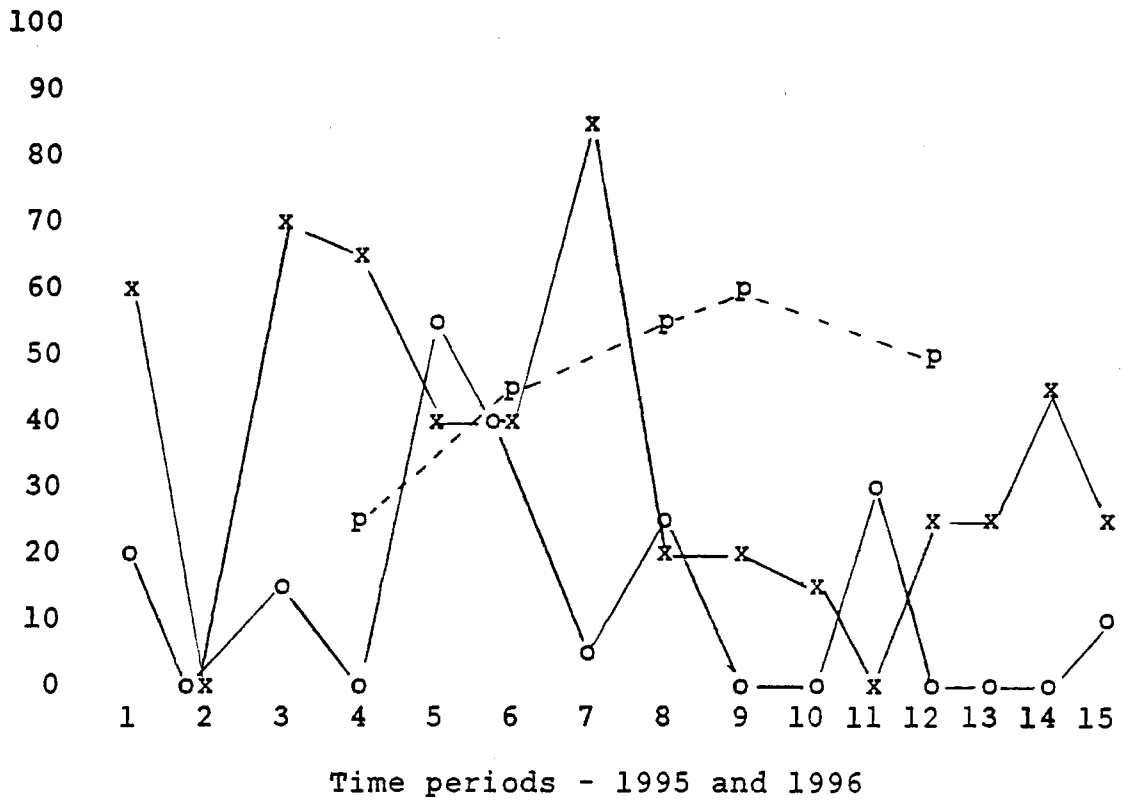


Figure 2. New York Times Congressional and op/ed negative opinion as a percentage of all negative opinion. x = Congressional o = Op/ed p = Gallup poll % against U.S. troops in Bosnia (Source: Gallup Organization, Lexis/Nexis, 5-6 June 1995, 19-22 September 1995, 15-18 December 1995, 5-7 January 1996, 28-29 May 1996)

The connection between debate by Congress and the administration about U.S. troops in Bosnia can be seen more clearly if plotted to show the rise and fall of editorial opposition and congressional negative opinion in New York Times stories against periods of activity and inactivity by Congress. When viewed over the 15 time periods of 1995 and 1996, it can be seen clearly in Figure 3 that congressional opinions against U.S. troops in Bosnia as quoted in Times news stories rose during periods of congressional activity. This might be expected, since more stories about the Bosnia issue would be carried at times of official debate on the issue.

However, Figure 4 shows what happened to New York Times editorial opposition voices at times of congressional activity and inactivity. The Times editorial page fell almost silent when Congress and the administration weren't debating the issue of U.S. troops in Bosnia. This indicates a tie between the number and direction of editorial opinions expressed in the New York Times and "official" debate about the issue between the administration and Congress.

Figure 5 shows a similar pattern of New York Times positive editorial opinion during times of congressional activity and inactivity on the Bosnia issue under study. Times editorial opinion was muted during times of congressional inactivity and picked up when Congress and the administration were debating the issue of U.S. troops in Bosnia.

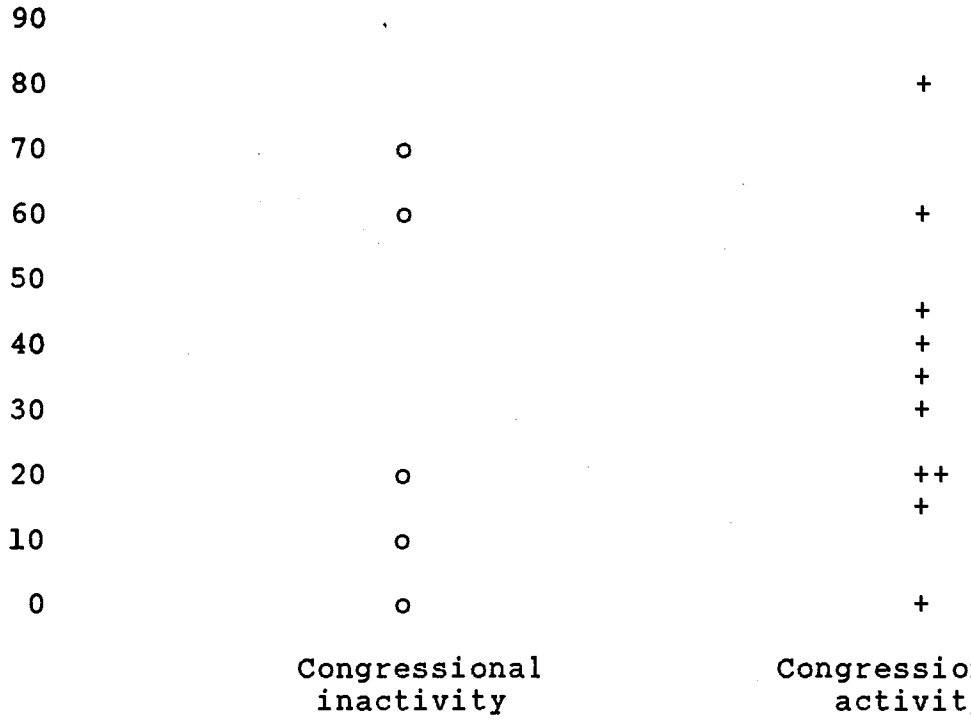


Figure 3. Congressional negative opinion in the New York Times as a percentage of all negative opinion during times of congressional activity and inactivity on U.S. troops in Bosnia.

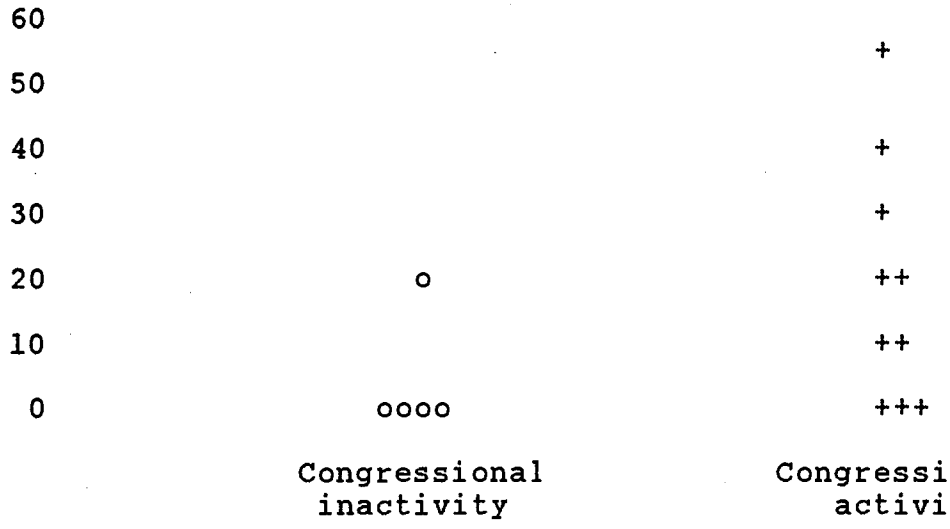


Figure 4. Op/ed negative opinion in the New York Times as a percentage of all negative opinion during times of congressional activity and inactivity on U.S. troops in Bosnia.

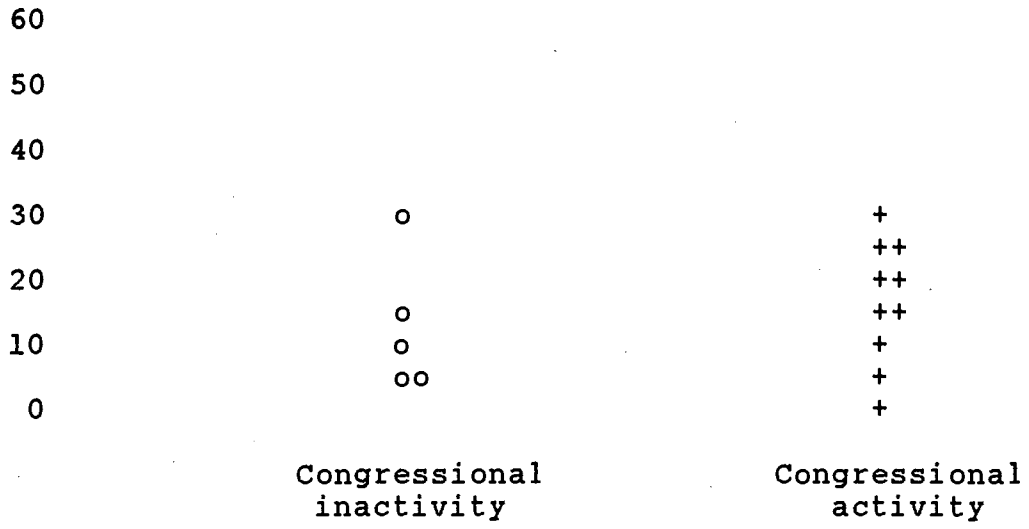


Figure 5. Op/ed positive opinion New York Times as a percentage of all positive opinion during times of congressional activity and inactivity on U.S. troops in Bosnia.

The hypothesis regarding a correlation between the direction of news story opinion and editorial page opinion (indexing) appears to be supported.

SUMMARY

Analysis of data obtained by content analysis of New York Times news stories and editorials, and Associated Press news stories shows that statistically significant differences were found in the type of sources used by the two media outlets on the topic of U.S. troops in Bosnia during the 1995 and 1996 calendar years. More administration sources were used than any other type of domestic news source during both years by both AP and the New York Times. Popular news sources, those not affiliated with the government in any way, were used least often in all of the time periods studied.

Statistical analysis of government (administration + congressional) versus popular sources used in news stories by both media outlets showed significant differences in sources when they were divided into these two types as well. Government sources were by far the largest percentage of sources used in the news stories on the issue by both AP and the New York Times in all time periods during 1995 and 1996.

Varying levels of correlation were found between the direction of sources used and editorial page direction over the 1995-1996 time period for the New York Times. While administration, congressional, popular and op/ed opinions

rose and fell over the 15 time periods used for analysis, there was statistical evidence of significant correlations between administration and op/ed, congressional and op/ed or popular and op/ed positive or negative directions. Overall, the indexing hypothesis was supported by these statistical tests.

Looking at visual comparisons of news story source opinion and op/ed opinion, some patterns that indicate indexing is at work were also found. During time periods when congress and the administration were debating the issues of placing or keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia, New York Times editorial opinion, both positive and negative, was at its highest. When there was little congressional activity or debate, in other words no "official" dialogue on the issues, editorial opinions declined or disappeared altogether.

The recommendations for use of this data and a summary of conclusions are contained in the following chapter.

ENDNOTES

[1]Robert M. Entman, Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 67-68.

[2]Guido H. Stempel, III, "Statistical Designs for Content Analysis," in Guido H. Stempel, III and Bruce H. Westley, eds., Research Methods in Mass Communication (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981), 132-143.

[3]W. Lance Bennett, "Marginalizing the Majority: Conditioning Public Opinion to Accept Managerial Democracy," in Michael Margolis and Gary A. Mauser, eds., Manipulating Public Opinion (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, Inc., 1989), 342.

[4]Bennett, "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations," Journal of Communication 40(2) (1990), 199-120.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was designed to test three hypotheses and three research questions regarding coverage of U.S. troops in Bosnia by the Associated Press and the New York Times over a two year time period. The null hypotheses tested were:

1) The direction of sources quoted in New York Times news stories as for or against sending U.S. troops to Bosnia in the calendar year 1995 or 1996 does not correlate with the direction of New York Times editorials during the same time periods;

2) there is no relationship between the number of sources of a certain type used in news stories regarding sending U.S. troops to Bosnia and the news outlet (AP or New York Times) publishing those stories;

3) neither news outlet (AP or New York Times) relied more heavily over the time period under study on government rather than non-government sources in reporting on the issue of sending U.S. troops to Bosnia.

Analysis of the data collected resulted in null hypothesis number one being rejected in regard to

correlation between opinions expressed by congressional and popular sources in New York Times news stories and editorial opinion during the two years under study. Administration and op/ed opinion showed a strong negative correlation. Overall, there was a moderate to strong correlation between the opinions expressed by sources used in New York Times stories and the opinions in the Times editorials on the issue of U.S. troops in Bosnia during 1995 and 1996. The editorials followed congressional and popular opinion expressed in news stories fairly closely and the editorials ran opposite to what administration sources were saying about Bosnia most of the time.

Null hypothesis number two was also rejected, since the data show there was a strong relationship between the type of sources used and the news outlet. Both AP and the New York Times use of administration, congressional and popular sources was very similar throughout the entire time period.

Heavy dependence on government sources was also apparent in both AP and New York Times stories over the two-year time period. Administration sources outnumbered both congressional and popular sources in both AP and New York Times news stories in nearly all time periods during 1995 and 1996. As a result of these findings, the third null hypothesis was also rejected.

The research questions posed in Chapter IV were all answered affirmatively:

1) The direction of official sources quoted in New York Times news stories as for or against sending U.S. troops to Bosnia in 1995 or keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia in 1996 does correlate with the direction of New York Times editorials during the same time period;
2) there is a relationship between the types of sources used in these stories and the news outlet (AP or New York Times) publishing these stories in 1995 and 1996;
3) and both the New York Times and AP relied more heavily on government than non-government sources in the stories under study during 1995 and 1996.

The importance of the findings in this study depends in part on the role the reader believes the news media should play in the United States, and the influences that shape that role. Three schools of thought about influences on media coverage were introduced in Chapter I of this study; economic interests, social responsibility, and a partnership between journalists and the government.

Bagdikian and others claim the best way to describe sources of influence on the news media is to examine the business climate in which media conglomerates operate.[1] Since Americans are deemed to have little interest in foreign news, the media oblige by offering simplified, formulaic stories that offer little context or background about foreign events. Such stories are cheap to produce and guarantee higher ratings.

The Hutchins Commission, as well as Seibert, Peterson

and Schramm, and others have developed the idea of a "social responsibility " held by the news media, to educate and inform citizens of a democracy.[2] Lichter, Rothman and Lichter claim the news media should favor the views of the government, since government in a democracy represents the people, and the "liberal press" does not.[3]

The third view is that the news media, especially in stories involving international events, tend to rely very heavily on government sources for information, since there is a natural "symbiosis" that has developed between reporters and government sources. Altschull, Epstein, Gans and Tuchman champion this theory of an interdependence of reporters and sources.[4]

All three of these theories appear plausible, and can even work together, when viewed through the lens provided by Bennett and Entman, and examined in this study, as the pattern of influence on news stories is established.[5] The news media can most economically produce stories by relying on easily accessible - even willing - government sources, all the while giving government's voice dominance in their stories. The pattern of heavy reliance on government sources shown in this study is evidence that this does happen, even in the so-called "prestige press" and in the nation's dominant wire service.

Whether the dominance of government voices in news stories matters, particularly in coverage of international events, depends on the definition of a responsible news

media and how it should operate. In Chapter I, a guideline was proposed as the basis for discussion in this study. Bennett suggests that it is reasonable for journalists to give government officials a privileged voice in the news, unless stable majority public opinion is marginalized by this practice or there is some doubt about the propriety of government actions. Then, other voices need to be given more prominence, to operate as a check against unrepresentative government.[6]

Given this definition, how does the news coverage of the New York Times and Associated Press measure up? Since this study was limited to the coverage of news events surrounding the debate about sending U.S. troops to Bosnia in 1995 and 1996, the conclusions reached here will naturally be limited to those news reports.

That government voices are given a predominant place in the coverage analyzed for this study is without doubt. At no time did popular voices come close to eclipsing what the government, defined as the administration and Congress, had to say about the issues. Statistical tests showed that the number of government sources, both for and against placing and keeping U.S. sources in Bosnia, were significantly higher than popular voices.

The power of the presidency was also reinforced by analysis of these news stories. Administration sources were used more often than any other source in stories about U.S. troops in Bosnia. The definition of a responsible

news media accepted for this discussion deems this kind of dominance by government sources acceptable, unless stable public opinion in opposition to government policies is marginalized by the coverage.

How was the public's voice represented in the New York Times and AP news coverage analyzed? Popular voices were without exception used least often by both news outlets. Again, this might be acceptable if public opinion were in favor of government policies. But tracking of public opinion polls shows clearly that a majority of the public eventually opposed plans to send U.S. troops to Bosnia in 1995, and did not approve of keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia after the end of 1996. The Clinton administration moved ahead with plans to send U.S. troops to Bosnia in 1995 and to keep them there well beyond the end of 1996, in spite of growing public opposition.

Journalists have long expressed doubts that the public can understand complex news stories. Lippman asks that the press not be criticized too harshly for failing to provide a body of truth expected by democratic principles because "...we misunderstand the limited nature of news, the illimitable complexity of society; we over estimate our own endurance, public spirit and all-round competence. We suppose an appetite for uninteresting truths which is not discovered by any honest analysis of our own tastes."[7]

Public opinion polls are often marginalized in news stories, as studies by Entman and Lang and Lang discovered,

perhaps because journalists doubt the "uninformed" masses understand the issues, particularly regarding a story as complicated as Bosnia.[8] As the stories analyzed for this study indicate, long-standing public opposition to putting U.S. troops in Bosnia seemed to have little effect on the debate in Washington or on media coverage. Polls were mentioned occasionally, but not to the extent of "official" opinion and never accorded a place in the debate. But there are other ways to place public opinion before the audience as a balance to government sources.

One tool that newspapers have to provide discussion of issues is their editorial and opinion page. If the news media is trying to present a "balanced" view of issues, it would follow that opinion on all sides of a discussion would be published on the op/ed page. An analysis was done of New York Times op/ed page opinión on the issue of U.S. troops in Bosnia as part of this study, in order to find out how the ebb and flow of the story matched opinion expressed in that forum.

Statistical analysis showed that there were often moderate to strong correlations between the direction (negative or positive) of opinions expressed on the New York Times editorial pages during 1995 and 1996 and the direction of sources in Times news stories on the same issue. There was a strong negative correlation between administration positive opinion and op/ed positive opinion in 1995. It would appear that the editorial page was

speaking independently of any influence from the administration.

However, there was a moderate correlation between changes in positive congressional and op/ed sources in 1995. Some indexing might have been at work there, as the op/ed page followed congressional debate. A weaker correlation was found between changes in op/ed opinion and the few popular sources that appeared in news stories before the end of 1995.

A stronger correlation appears between New York Times op/ed and administration negative opinion in 1995. A moderate to strong negative correlation shows again that editorial opinion in the Times and administration opinion in news stories were moving in opposite directions, as the debate continued over sending U.S. troops to Bosnia. Congressional and popular negative opinion showed only a weak correlation with changes in op/ed opinion in 1995.

In 1996, the divergence between negative administration and op/ed opinion again shows up, with the trends in opposite direction. But the importance of this statistic is questionable, since so few negative op/ed opinions were published at all in 1996. The Times did not overwhelm readers with positive editorials, but the negative opinions questioning administration policy received very little space at all.

Even more telling is a closer examination of the pattern of editorials and news story opinion during the two

years under study. This comparison shows that there is a connection to the debate between administration and Congress and the editorial page, after all. At times when the debate between Congress and the administration was most active, the editorial pages of the New York Times were active as well. In 1995, the Times at first had more negative than positive editorial opinions in regard to sending U.S. troops to Bosnia (see Tables II and IV). But as the debate continued in the last two time intervals of 1995, and it became obvious that U.S. troops would be sent to Bosnia, the Times editorial percentage favored more positive than negative voices. Once Senate Majority leader Bob Dole threw his support behind the mission, on December 1, 1995, debate in Congress effectively ended.[9]

In 1996, while a debate continued about how long U.S. troops should stay in Bosnia, and public opposition continued to grow, the New York Times editorial page featured mostly positive opinion, in favor of keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia. Times editorial opposition voices were zero in all but two time periods of 1996.

Further, as shown in Figures 4 and 5, Times opposition voices on the editorial page fell silent when Congress and the administration were not debating or acting on the issue. At the times when a balanced newspaper would be expected to speak out through its editorial pages, continuing the debate on troops in Bosnia, the New York Times said little or nothing, except in support of the

administration's plans. The public's voice, marginalized in news coverage, was not represented on the editorial page, either.

The Times editorial page coverage appeared to be cued by the debate in Congress, and the range of views expressed were tied to the official debate. If political elites were not talking about putting or keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia, the New York Times editorial page was not either. These results were similar to those found in Bennett's indexing study of the Iran-Contra debate from 1983 through 1986.[10] Then, too, the New York Times keyed editorial page coverage to the debate in Congress, and said little or nothing when congressional discussion died down. It appears that at the time the media need to be involved in providing a "marketplace of ideas" to foster discussion of an important national issue, the forum in the New York Times closes up shop.

This kind of tie matters only if the news media are expected to grant the public a voice on important issues in the United States. The issue of sending American troops into a foreign civil war, even though a peace agreement had been signed, is worthy of public discussion. News stories from the New York Times and Associated Press gave voice to popular opinion in larger numbers only after the commitment had been made to send American troops to Bosnia in late 1995. Then, those voices were mostly soldiers, who had little choice but to obey orders and go, even if they

questioned the value of the mission. Independent experts, public opinion polls and the thoughts of the average citizen were contained in only a dozen or so stories during the two year time period.

This kind of reporting, with heavy reliance on government sources and little room for popular debate, results in what some media critics have termed "status quo journalism," which by its very nature is designed to prove that the system works, and minimize criticism or comment. The modern idea of "objective" journalism plays into this kind of coverage. In order to be objective, reporters must quote more than one side of an issue in their stories. If one side is not talking (in this case, when debate stopped in Washington), then there is no way to balance the story, to give the illusion of objectivity. The journalist cannot operate as a watchdog on government, because the government is doing nothing "newsworthy," there is no conflict and so no story.

Add to this the heavy reliance on government sources in news stories analyzed in this study, and there should be a concern about the result being shallow reporting, very limited in the viewpoints expressed about world events. In a situation as complicated as the one in Bosnia, depending almost entirely on government sources tends to lead to stories that lack depth and breadth, and do not foster public understanding of the issues involved.

Most journalists believe the highest form of

professionalism is reporting what officials say and do, without realizing the line between objectivity and manipulation is a very fine one.[11] However, objectivity that depends on the willingness of sources to provide information is not objective at all. It is dependency, and the journalist is often dependent on the people with the most to gain or lose from the story that will be written.

American journalists often fall victim to the conceit that they control what people know and think about, as David Brinkley often put it, "...the news is what I say it is."[12] In fact, "...telling it like it is..." to paraphrase Walter Cronkite's famous phrase, it not always telling the truth, unless the telling includes a broad perspective, including a wide variety of sources and opinions.

This study, and others like it, will hopefully bring about a conscious debate about prevalent news practices among journalists and journalism educators. Journalism students need to be taught how to read between the lines of statements by officials, and look for more perspective on stories than that provided by official sources. This would require that journalists learn to seek out more than just the standard sources for their stories, to provide background and do more than just "boilerplate journalism," where the proper blanks are filled in without challenge.

Popular wisdom in the news media is that the audience wants stories that are simplified, dramatized and couched in terms of "good" and "evil." This results in simple

stories that do little to educate the public, which in turn demands more simple-minded fare. The cycle repeats itself and the audience knows even less about important issues than before.

The war in Bosnia involved complicated issues, and the decision to send American troops to enforce a peace in that country was no less involved. The news media simplified the issue into a simple black-and-white scenario, should U.S. troops go or not? When Congress and the administration debated that issue, coverage continued. When the debate stopped in Washington, so did the debate in the elite media outlet examined in this study.

There was little effort on the part of even the New York Times and the Associated Press to go beyond what was said by official sources. The simplified "go" or "no go" argument did little to inform people of the issues involved. But because of their dependency on government sources, neither news outlet could move the debate beyond that point.

Reporters, and journalism students, need to learn how to rely less on sources and more on their own observations about events. While knowledgeable sources will always be a necessity for journalists, the reporter's own experience and research should allow them to add insights to the story as well. This would require bucking the current wisdom that people simply want personalized drama in news stories and finding a way to tell compelling stories that also

provide an understanding of the issues involved. In other words, hard work and good writing, instead of easy sources and simplified formulas are the keys to responsible reporting.

If the examples found in two of the nation's top news outlets are representative, then a return is needed to an independent press in the United States that operates based on sound news judgement rather than taking its cues from government debate and relying heavily on government sources to frame issues in the news. Journalists need to look outside conventions of newsroom operation for knowledgeable sources of information. News outlets need to develop reliable information on their own that can be used as a check against the readily available handouts from government and other elite sources. Occasional efforts to break beyond the conventions of news operation are sometimes highlighted as "investigative journalism," when in fact this kind of effort should be the norm rather than the exception. Elite newspapers, magazines and broadcast networks in particular have the resources to support this kind of in-depth reporting on a daily basis.

The current standards of reporting should not be abandoned entirely. Official sources are necessary to monitor government activity, and can provide useful information. Objectivity is a worthy goal but has its limitations, both in the ability of humans to view events without bias, and because the convention almost demands a

debate to operate. so "both sides" can be heard.

Some discussion about a new set of normative standards is suggested by the results of this study, and should be considered by working professionals and journalism educators. Areas of discussion should involve:

-An examination of the "beats and bureaus" system of assigning reporters to specific agencies or subject areas. This practice is economically attractive, but may increase the dependency of reporters on official sources, as reporters and officials develop personal as well as professional relationships;

-Searching for issues that are worthy of investigation but outside the usual "official" channels. The recent trend toward "community-based" reporting by some news organizations is an example of journalists looking for issues outside the normal flow of events. However, this idea could become a crutch, allowing people in the community to dictate the news agenda based on what they want to hear, rather than reporters developing and using their expertise to uncover issues that may be unknown to most people;

-News analysis can play an important role in rounding out coverage of important events. Major news outlets, particularly broadcasters, shy away from analysis for various reasons. However, reporters who have developed a certain amount of expertise should be allowed to speak knowledgeably about an issue, even expressing opinions, so

long as the report is clearly labelled as an analysis;
-News outlets can develop their own methods of measuring public opinion, beyond simple polls, to determine what the audience knows about an issue, the depth of the knowledge and how those opinions are formed. Again, major news outlets have the resources to do this kind of research, particularly in concert with colleges and universities;
-Public opinion, based on such studies, could be incorporated in news coverage of policy debates more frequently, rather than being marginalized as is often the case now;
-Journalists should be taught to recognize important issues that may be dying because there is no on-going government debate to sustain coverage, and find ways to keep the stories alive and part of the public debate that is necessary in a democracy.

Such a discussion among news professionals and journalism educators is possible, based on thorough research of media performance, is needed for the health of the profession, and is necessary for the news media to play its important role in our society. Elite news organizations have the resources to support both the research and the dissemination of the results of that research far beyond what is currently being done.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research in this area is needed regarding the issue of indexing and the common sourcing patterns shown by news media demonstrated in this study of one issue and two media outlets. Other "elite" media could be studied, to determine if similar patterns are found there. The Washington Post would be one obvious news outlet to analyze, since it is considered a source of information for many of the nation's political elite and also reflects much of the political activity in the nation's capital. Other major newspapers around the nation should also be studied, and the results compared.

A useful comparison might also be found through a study of European news outlets. Using the issue of involvement in Bosnia, the coverage of other newspapers and broadcast outlets could be analyzed in European democracies to determine if "indexing" is also at work in their media.

Broadcast networks should also be studied, particularly in light of surveys that indicate Americans get a majority of their news from television. The proliferation of news channels on cable and satellite demands that broadcast news be included in future studies of this kind. On-line databases that include both text and video are rapidly becoming available, and make both the words and pictures of television news readily available for analysis.

Beyond content analysis and time-line comparisons, individual interviews with journalists could also provide some valuable insights about the effects of news conventions on coverage of important issues. The reporters who write stories that are analyzed in future research could also be surveyed to determine the extent of their dependence on official sources, and whether they actively seek other sources of information. A study of journalists' perceptions about the types of sources they use would make an interesting comparison with the stories they actually write.

Using other media sources and reporter interviews, different issues could be analyzed, the coverage of media outlets compared to official debate, and determinations made about whether or not there are patterns of indexing. If this appears to be more than an occasional phenomenon, some serious self-study by the news media is in order.

Comparison of individual news sources, by name, would also be useful, in order to determine with greater detail whether the similarity in types of sources used by the news media extends to the use of the same individuals in stories by different media outlets on the same issue. The specific information provided by these sources could also be analyzed, to determine if what is quoted goes to the substance of the stories.

These kinds of studies could be very time-consuming and expensive, but would be useful in determining how

complete and diversified is the news coverage of important international and domestic issues by American news outlets, and the extent of possible government influence on what is presented to audiences as neutral reportage. Elite news agencies should sponsor such studies, if only for the self-interested reason that it might result in better news stories and greater public interest in their news product. Informed debate about the shortcomings and positive practices of journalists is needed to advance discussion of current policy and practice in the coverage of both international and domestic news stories, especially those that involve government policy decisions.

The news media in the United States have a great responsibility, that of informing the citizens of a democracy about their government and society. While the news media may fall victim to manipulation, self-infatuation and simplification, informing the public in a democratic society is still an important function for an independent press. Individuals in a democratic society must be able to make informed decisions about how well their government is protecting their freedoms and dealing with world events.

The temptation is to let the government, which is willing to do so, assure the public through the news media that things are just fine, and that political issues are just too complex for the average person to understand. The reality created by official sources, with full cooperation

of the news media, is that international and domestic issues contain no gray areas, solutions are available by letting the government take care of things, and the public should not worry about the details. If journalists let that happen, and the public accepts such a shallow interpretation of the world, then the news eventually becomes not what an editor or news anchor "says it is," but what the government wants it to be. If the nation's news media allow such a system to persist, then they are doing a disservice to the public and our democratic institution.

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