Chapter 6

Media Functioning During A Violent International Crisis

Differences Between Elite and Popular Press Coverage of American Policy in Bosnia (1992–1995)

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Already at the end of the nineteenth century, the sociologist G. Tarde (1969 [1898]) argued that the mass media had turned from being an institutional platform of opinions to a body that decides opinion. Although this view was somewhat of an exaggeration as later research found, there is no denying the strength of media influence in the modern age. They can act as central agenda-setters (McCombs & Shaw, 1993; Ruddock, 2001), create powerful images, excite emotions, reduce tensions, and present a battery of symbols that can rally the nation (Nossek, 2003; Paletz, 2002; Zaller, 2001). As an American army officer stationed in Bosnia put it, in response to a question by CBS's Dan Rather, his biggest fear was "saying the wrong thing to the media" (Moskos & Ricks, 1995, p. 7).

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The growth of mass communications in the twentieth century was accompanied by growing academic and research interest, especially in the United States, regarding the functioning and influence of the media (Ruddock, 2001). However, lacunae continue to exist, among them the issue of how mass media function during international *crises* in general, and *violent crises* in particular. Much research has been undertaken dealing specifically with war and the mass media, and somewhat less is available regarding the role of the mass media in foreign policy decision making during peacetime. Yet little exists on the topic of foreign policy crisis management and the media, despite the large number of such international relations phenomena in the contemporary era (Malek, 1996).

The present study will make a serious attempt to try and fill this untouched research niche by offering a comprehensive analysis of the media's functions during various phases of an international relations crisis. It will apply a familiar theory from the field of international relations (division of crisis phases) to the developing discipline of mass communication research, in order to achieve a better understanding of the media in times of crisis by examining the differences between types of newspaper. By applying media reports to an international crisis we seek to find links between crisis phases and press positions and frames.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Media-Government

Democratic regimes have a tendency to bask in the myth of a free press, but even in "open societies" the media serve the polity's control apparatus, consciously or not. On the one hand, most media organizations expect their representatives to cover government actions in one way or another. On the other hand, the universal temptation exists for governments to manipulate and control the media—especially true during crisis periods.

The amount and type of governmental supervision and control over the media depend in large part on the political/mass communications philosophy of each country at distinct points in time. Overall, the research literature has centered on five main, general, politico-philosophical approaches (McQuail, 1987; Siebert, Schramm, & Peterson, 1956). We shall focus here on the two that are relevant to this research:[1]

1. In the libertarian philosophy of government/press relations, also called the Free Press theory, the mass media best serve the public as an aggressive, independent, adversarial *watchdog* on govern-

ment actions. This approach assumes a high level of competition between the media themselves, tending to decrease editorial supervision of journalistic practice as well as leading to denial of public education as a prominent journalistic role (Serfaty, 1991).

2. Although the media might be formally and legally free, politico-cultural constraints can render their output highly supportive of the government. This approach can best be categorized as *mobilization*, whereby the media view their task more in terms of supporting the authorities and reinforcing national consensus. This is most widely found among developing nations, but it is also not unusual to see such *self*-mobilized journalism during times of crisis among otherwise libertarian-minded media caught in a "rally-round-the-flag" mentality (Holsti, 1996; Zaller & Chiu, 2000; Zelizer & Allan, 2002). Indeed, previous studies have found that most domestic mass media tend to support national foreign policy aims and goals, especially when the national interest is threatened, thereby acting as a source of "national integration" (Paletz, 2002; Schudson, 2002), that is, a unifying force behind government decisions/actions (Rivenburgh, 1996; Waisbord, 2002).

Situations like these, highlighting the complexity of journalism's public role and the range of press responses, are especially interesting (Arno, 1984; Holsti, 1996; Russett, 1990). However, one must note that it is hard to find in the literature a clear definition of what we call the "self-mobilized media." This approach is different from the "social responsibility" model (Siebert et al. 1956) that posits a degree of self-restraint for specific, localized, social reasons (e.g., protection of a crime victim's privacy), and which normally does not involve self-restraint regarding criticism of government policy. Moreover, it is not always clear for whom the media are mobilized: the constitutional regime, state, government, or specific interest groups. It seems that one can delineate two main roles of the press within the self-mobilization function: on the one hand, "rally-round-the-flag"—that is socionational consensus-building; on the other hand, "support of the government" for its policies and decisions in the conduct of the crisis.

MEDIA

Framing

An examination of the nature of media functioning leads to the question of framing, whereby journalists "package" the information in such a way as to present a specific reality in order to influence audience perceptions (Entman,

1991; Entman & Rojecki, 1993; Gitlin, 1977; Wolfsfeld, 1997). Such packaging usually involves a broad range of subjects, all of which are presented from the same *weltanschauung*, thereby limiting the full panoply of public discourse. As a result of such framing, not only is the issue presented in a preset fashion, familiar to the public and therefore "understandable" (Callaghan & Schnell, 2001; Durham, 1998; Eilders & Luter, 2000; Gamson & Herzog, 1999; Karim, 2002; Norris, 1997; Paletz, 2002), but also the very meaning of the news is changed (Bloch & Lehman-Wilzig, 2002; Kuypers, 1997; Putnam, Phillips, & Chapman, 1996; Scheufele, 1999).

The decision to raise the prominence of a particular subject, to choose and emphasize a certain image or word, to promulgate specific explanations and commentary regarding the reasons for—and consequences of—events, and the attempt to connect new stories with old ones, all contribute to the manufacture of news frames with a definite slant (Callaghan & Schnell, 2001; Entman, 1993; Gamson, 1992; Gitlin, 1980; Naveh, 2002; Nossek, 2003; Paletz, 2002; Tankard, 2001; Zaller, 1992). Such frameworks create a certain image of the world and set the public mood (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2002; Brown, 2001; D'Angelo, 2002; Iyengar & Simon, 1997). Thus, the framing concept has become a central component of journalism studies, especially those assessing media influence (Nossek, 2003).

PRESS TYPES

News frames differ, as one can imagine, from medium to medium. The tendency in print journalism has been to differentiate from the start between two groups: information journalism and narrative journalism. Relatively few newspapers, read by the highly educated elite are called "quality press." Their influence emanates from their audience being (by definition) quite influential. These papers are serious (most, but not all, to the point of being rather dry), viewing themselves as carrying the torch of social responsibility while acting as a political watchdog of democracy. The major emphasis is on "hard news," especially national security, foreign policy, the economy, and so forth, bringing to bear extensive background and wide-ranging commentary on the event/phenomenon (Paletz, 2002). In the literature one can even find a further subdivision of the elite press: the "quality press" functioning in open, liberal democracies; the "prestige press" found in closed, authoritarian regimes (Merrill, 1968). In any case, in the United States the quality press is the main source of foreign policy news through its excellent, wide-ranging coverage of overseas, as well as national, events (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2002; Mermin, 1999; Paletz, 2002). It has at its disposal a wide range of news sources independent of the government (Tifft & Jones, 1999)

and draws its influence from its critical stance and lack of dependence on other institutions, governmental or otherwise.

On the other hand, the nonelite newspapers tend to be called "cheap," "yellow," "mass," "infotainment," with little or no feelings of social responsibility (Dahlgren & Sparks, 1992). They report more "soft news" on human interest subjects, on the "colorful" aspects of the news, through dramatic and entertainment literary and visual devices. Little intellectual effort is demanded of the reader—the reading experience is simple and enjoyable (Paletz, 2002). Literary antecedents of this approach are mythology and romance, emphasizing melodramatic and "human-interest" genres (Roeh, 1989). Specific techniques are colorful description (Bird, 2002), especially in headlines. The reader is enticed to "feel" the news, and the presentation is "camera"-oriented, inviting a "close-up" view of events (Dahlgren & Sparks, 1992). Unfortunately, despite its widespread popularity this entire press category suffers from profound research neglect, as very little serious literature on this type of journalism has been produced.

It has to be noted, though, that a strict differentiation between two archetypes is not altogether accurate, for thousands of papers around the world are what we would call "mass-popular" but not "yellow-sensational." The former produce real news and serious commentary, albeit short and simple. Moreover, the two archetypes do not always act in accordance with their usual approach; if the elite press has slowly begun to adopt some structural-format aspects of colorful journalism (e.g., more color photos and how-to columns), the popular press in times of crisis tends to offer more serious treatment of the issues at hand (Bird, 2002). There is one element in which no clear demarcation between the two types of paper can be made: political position. Both elite and popular newspapers can be found in either the Left or Right camps on a host of issues. However, a paper's political line can indeed influence the framing of its coverage by way of editing techniques, reportorial slant, unidimensional commentary, and the paper's daily, official, editorial take on the issues of the day.

The need for more in-depth examination and analysis of the differences between press coverage by type of paper regarding foreign policy, has become especially pronounced over the past two decades due to the huge expansion of the media and the increased amounts of information flowing from the field. The importance of the mass media is also related to the satiated and highly educated democratic public at large that no longer can be easily railroaded into supporting war. Thus, democratic governments are more dependent on public opinion (Foyle, 1999; Mueller, 1994; Paletz, 2002; Power, 2002; Powlick, 1995; Shapiro & Jacobs, 2000; Sobel, 2001), itself dependent on its major source of information—the mass media (Brody & Morin, 1991; Everts, 2000; Splichal, 1999; Jentleson & Britton, 1998; Malek, 1996; Page & Shapiro, 1992; Rogers & Dearing, 1988; Ruddock, 2001; Van

Belle, 2000; Zaller, 1992). Consequently, several experts recommend pursuing different research strategies. Ours is to examine newspaper frameworks regarding foreign policy, but to do this through the prism of different types of media.

GOVERNMENT—INTERNATIONAL CRISES

One can find definitions in the research literature of two levels of crisis: macro-objective and micro-subjective. From a systems perspective (macro), a crisis entails an event constituting a drastic change, influencing and destabilizing the international system (Brecher & Wilkenfeld, 1997; Young, 1968). From a psychological perspective (micro), focusing on the decision-making process, the foreign policy crisis is defined as a situation that is perceived as threatening one or more of the basic values; leaves finite time for response; and carries a high probability of involvement in military hostilities involving a heightened risk of violence (Brecher & Wilkenfeld, 1997).

The present study follows Brecher's (1993) categorization of four international crisis phases, regarding the extent of violence:

1. *Onset*, the precrisis period typified by change in the intensity of disruption between two or more states, a significant increase in the potential for violence, and threat perception by at least one of them.
2. *Escalation*, involving a significant increase in the severity of disruption and a growing probability of hostilities and use of military force between the parties. On the micro-level this is the peak of the crisis, with increased time pressure and growing probability of violence adding to the feeling of maximal threat.
3. *De-escalation*, characterized by reduction in hostile and violent interactions leading to accommodation and crisis termination.
4. *Impact*, occurring in the postcrisis period, which includes the consequences of a crisis. We omitted this phase from the research, because our study focuses on the functions of the media during a crisis and not afterwards.

These crisis phases and the various parts of the present research were applied to the Bosnian crisis (1992-1995). This was a product of the ongoing Yugoslavian conflict that turned into a crisis and then escalated into outright war (Brecher & Wilkenfeld, 1997). This crisis was one of the first extended, complex, and highly violent crises that American foreign policy makers had to deal with since the demise of the Soviet Union (Daalder &

Forman, 1999; Jentleson & Britton, 1998; Kanner, 2001; LoTempio & Eldred, 2000).

Sarajevo served for years as a sterling example of cosmopolitan culture—a combination of Eastern and Western Christianity, together with Islam. Yet the Bosnian War was characterized by great cruelty: mortar fire on unarmed civilian populations, concentration camps, mass rape, as well as the combined use of military, paramilitary, and guerilla warfare along with terrorism. All these destroyed the city, and in Bosnia as a whole 200,000 people were killed, an additional 180,000 were injured, and 3,000,000 were turned into refugees (Holbrooke, 1998; Power, 2002; Weiss, 1996). Throughout this international crisis the UN passed approximately thirty resolutions, applied sanctions, froze diplomatic relations, set up various peace conferences to discuss the tragedy, but no military intervention was forthcoming for the first two years of hostilities (Daalder, 2000; Daalder & Forman, 1999; Holbrooke, 1998).

As the world's sole superpower since the breakup of the Soviet empire in the late 1980s, the United States has had difficulty defining its international interests and central role in the new international (dis)order (Hass, 1997). The Bosnian case study can serve as an exemplar for understanding the policy of countervailing forces within the United States during the post–Cold War era (Bennet, Flickinger, & Rhine, 1997; Ullman, 1996). One should note that the Bosnian crisis was largely ethnic in character—precisely the type of conflict on the increase since the fall of the Soviet Union (Daalder & O'Hanlon, 1999; Saideman, 2001; Sarkees, Wayman, & Singer, 2003; Seib, 1997; Vuckovic, 1999)—with direct influence on the degree of superpower intervention as well as on media coverage.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Propositions

Before analyzing the position and frame of each newspaper during the crisis phases we offer two basic propositions through which we can detail the elite and popular press's functioning.

1. A link exists between crisis stage and the sundry papers' positions on the issue.
2. A link exists between crisis stage and the sundry papers' framing of the issue.

We are attempting a pioneering study in two senses: (a) *news framing and positions held* during foreign policy *crisis* (not war/peace); (b) distinguishing between *elite and popular press* functioning, for there is hardly any

prior research that describes precisely what such press coverage will look like during each crisis stage.

Methodology

The complexity of the topic and lack of former integrative research required several steps to be taken in approaching the issue. We first mapped all the significant events of the crisis (*Keesing's*, 1992-1994; Reuters, 1995). The period under study was from June 1991 until November 1995—107 specific dates in all. Then we selected only those in which the United States was mentioned (initiating/reacting); thus, twenty-three main events formed the core sample of the study.

In order to examine the newspapers' positions and frames and compare the functioning of the press by type, we thought it preferable to perform a qualitative and quantitative content analysis of two elite and two popular newspapers. Of the former, we chose two of the leading U.S. papers (Merrill, 1995; Smith & Epstein, 2001; Vincent, 2000): *The Washington Post* (henceforth *WP*) and *The Wall Street Journal* (*WSJ*). We focused on commentary and editorial articles in order to analyze framing and positions taken, for these constitute the most important issues on the news agenda and reflect/influence to a large extent the public agenda (Grosswiler, 1996). In the elite press especially, these articles tend to be more critical of government policy than what is presented on the news pages. All daily issues were examined during the twenty-three specific events under scrutiny two weeks before and after each main event, in order to ensure that all relevant material was included.

The same type of analysis was carried out for the popular press. We chose *The Washington Times* (*WT*) and *USA Today* (*USAT*), in part because they cover the same geographic areas as the two selected elite newspapers. However, because of the different nature of the popular press, not to mention the reading practices of its audience, we felt that we had to use a different methodology in order to examine the papers' attitudes. The news headlines were analyzed for a few reasons. First, the readers of this type of paper tend to "scan" the headlines, which are usually quite descriptive, emphasizing the most interesting details from the text (Paletz, 2002), thus priming the audience by highlighting the "main" issue. It seems that most readers very infrequently read the entire text (Nir & Roeh, 1992) as it tends to have built-in redundancy with the headline, especially regarding overseas news. Furthermore, the commentary section is much less popular among these readers than it is for the elite press's more educated and "involved" readership. For the popular press we analyzed Bosnia-related news items for the 10-day period before and after the major events noted above, in order to cover all news related to the issue. Sixty such items were identified in WP

and 64 in WSJ (altogether 124 articles), in addition to 139 from WT and 432 in USAT (altogether 571 news reports)—overall 695 items.

Inquiring into the positions and central frame used by the press required planning and developing different categories and various scales, which helped to describe and define the specific attitudes of the articles/news headline. Because the study is wide-ranging, several scales and categories were developed, of which two are directly relevant to the topic at hand: (a) the main position taken in the article/headline towards government policy (pro, pro with reservations, neutral, anti with reservations, anti). This scale has a constant range between its categories, enabling us to characterize the publications' general approach; and (b) the type of frame (security and world order, economic, humanitarian, domestic politics, or a combination of these). This scale was designed to define which main argument was emphasized in constructing the paper's main position. The examination of the articles and news headlines required a comprehensive and close reading in order to elicit the specific position and central frame of each news item (in the discussion section examples are provided based on these scales). Because our methodology involves a subjective element due to its qualitative components, we also tested for intercoder reliability.[2]

The scales were further divided into the first three central crisis phases as delineated earlier (Brecher, 1993), in order to examine how the press (elite and popular) functioned in each stage. The "Onset" phase included four dates, from April 6, 1992, to February 1, 1993, during which the United States did not offer to intervene diplomatically or militarily. The Escalation phase included sixteen dates from February 10, 1993 (when the U.S. offered to lend its diplomatic services for finding a peaceful solution to the Bosnian crisis), until June 1994. The third phase (De-escalation) included three dates running from October 5, 1995, until November 21, 1995 (Dayton Agreement). In addition, in several cases, in order to further substantiate the findings, the research material included a number of articles and interviews, appearing in different publications, written by senior government officials and media practitioners.

FINDINGS

As we can see from Table 6.1, dealing with the position of the press by crisis phases, the statistical test (contingency coefficient) proved unequivocally (highly significant) that the press's stance vis-à-vis government policy changes from (crisis) phase to phase.

Table 6.2 also clearly shows that the central frame put forward by the press undergoes significant change from one crisis phase to another. Thus, overall changes in the press's treatment of the conflict are strongly correlat-

TABLE 6.1. Position of All Four Newspapers by Crisis Phase

POSITION OF THE PRESS	CRISIS PHASES PHASE 1		PHASE 2		PHASE 3	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Pro	2	2	20	4.4	18	12.7
Pro with Reservations	13	13.5	78	17	21	14.8
Neutral-Balanced	25	26	131	28.7	30	21.1
Anti with Reservations	35	36.5	140	30.6	50	35.2
Anti	21	22	88	19.3	23	16.2
Total	96	100	457	100	142	100

$C = 0.171 \quad p = 0.007$

TABLE 6.2. Framing of All Four Newspapers by Crisis Phase

POSITION OF THE PRESS	CRISIS PHASES PHASE 1		PHASE 2		PHASE 3	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Security and World-Order	50	52.1	303	66.3	84	59.1
Economic	0	0	8	1.7	6	4.3
Humanitarian	29	30.2	94	20.6	11	7.8
Domestic Politics	0	0	20	4.4	28	19.7
Combination	17	17.7	23	5	5	3.5
Other	0	0	9	2	8	5.6
Total	96	100	457	100	142	100

$C = 0.355 \quad p = 0.000$

ed to the crisis phases, constituting a basis for pursuing the specific changes by newspaper type *through the three crisis phases.*

Table 6.3 shows the elite press to be quite highly critical of government policy during the first crisis phase: seventy-five percent of articles were critical. Indeed, during this phase not one single column was unequivocally supportive of government policy regarding the Bosnian crisis, and only a very

few were conditionally supportive. On the other hand, the popular press displayed a much more moderate stance: most news items were conditionally critical or neutral vis-à-vis government policy. The second phase exhibited some decrease of elite press criticism, but almost half the columns (48.2%) were critical and none were totally supportive. In the popular press the largest categories during the second phase were neutral (31%) and moderately critical (30.8%). The highly critical items decreased 40 percent in relative terms and the completely supportive ones increased relatively by over 100 percent (in absolute terms over 1000%!). Thus, during the height of the crisis, the popular press was far more supportive and less critical than the elite press. During the third stage, elite press criticism dropped by about 50 percent, with neutral and supportive positions taking their place—and yet the largest category was still conditional criticism (40%). The popular press, on the other hand, increased the number of absolutely supportive items threefold, with a significant additional number being neutral, and yet here too the largest category remained conditionally critical (34%). Thus, overall, support for the government's actions increased in all the papers during the de-escalation phase of the crisis, but still a good measure of conditionally critical reportage and commentary was in evidence.

TABLE 6.3. Positions of the Elite Press and Popular Press by Crisis Phase

	CRISIS PHASES					
POSITION	PHASE 1		PHASE 2		PHASE 3	
Elite Press	N	%	N	%	N	%
Pro	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pro with Reservations	1	6.2	3	3.6	4	16
Neutral-Balanced	3	18.7	15	18	5	20
Anti with Reservations	7	43.8	25	30.2	10	40
Anti	5	31.3	40	48.2	6	24
Total	16	100	83	100	25	100
Popular Press						
Pro	2	2.5	20	5.4	18	15.4
Pro with Reservations	12	15	75	20	17	14.6
Neutral-Balanced	22	27.5	116	31	25	21.5
Anti with Reservations	28	35	115	30.8	40	34
Anti	16	20	48	12.8	17	14.5
Total	80	100	374	100	117	100

When we turn to the issue of news *framing*, as can be seen in Table 6.4, here, too, we find differences between the two types of press. In the first phase of the crisis, the elite press focused on two frames in equal measure: humanitarian and security (37.5% each) or a combination thereof (25%). The popular press, though, largely emphasized the security issue (55%), with humanitarian issues far behind (29%). In all the newspapers, other frames did not exist at this point. Things changed during the second phase: the elite press emphasized the humanitarian issue (50%), with security decreasing and for the first time economic (4.8%) and political (3.6%) issues emerging. The popular press went in a completely different direction: 74 percent of the items were framed in security terms, with the humanitarian issue dropping by 50 percent and domestic-political (4.6%) as well as economic (1%) frames beginning to rear their heads. In the third phase, the elite press significantly lowered the humanitarian frame, with the domestic-political frame taking up much of the slack (an eightfold increase)—equaling the security frame (28%). These two frames also appeared for the first time in combination with each other (the economic frame doubled its representation). In the popular press, despite some reduction the security frame still dominated (65.8%), with domestic politics increasing by a factor of four and economics by three and a half. In both elite and popular newspapers, the

TABLE 6.4. Framing of the Elite Press and Popular Press by Crisis Phase

	CRISIS PHASES					
FRAMING	PHASE 1		PHASE 2		PHASE 3	
Elite Press	N	%	N	%	N	%
Pro	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pro with Reservations	1	6.2	3	3.6	4	16
Neutral-Balanced	3	18.7	15	18	5	20
Anti with Reservations	7	43.8	25	30.2	10	40
Anti	5	31.3	40	48.2	6	24
Total	16	100	83	100	25	100
Popular Press						
Pro	2	2.5	20	5.4	18	15.4
Pro with Reservations	12	15	75	20	17	14.6
Neutral-Balanced	22	27.5	116	31	25	21.5
Anti with Reservations	28	35	115	30.8	40	34
Anti	16	20	48	12.8	17	14.5
Total	80	100	374	100	117	100

humanitarian frame ceased to be relevant at this phase of the crisis, as the process of ethnic cleansing and other atrocities had by and large ceased to occur in Bosnia.

DISCUSSION: MEDIA FUNCTIONS

Our findings clearly show significant—albeit not consistent—differences between the treatment of the Bosnian crisis by the American elite press as opposed to the popular press. The underlying reason for this seems to be the different news function that each type views as being paramount. Another possible factor underlying such differences could be the nature of their respective audiences, that is, the need for each type of newspaper to present the news and commentary in ways that resonate best with their respective audiences.

The first stage of the crisis (Onset), characterized by lack of U.S involvement, was marked by a relatively high level of criticism on the part of all the newspapers, but more so by the elite press. This is not unusual, as one would expect the elite press to be more involved in foreign policy matters and more willing to serve its watchdog function. The popular press tends to perceive itself less as a watchdog and more as a neutral reporter of the news. This may be in part due to the fact that its audience is broader and more heterogeneous politically and socially, so that being overly critical might well alienate sectors among its traditional readership.

The respective framing at this stage is also not completely surprising: the elite press emphasized to a greater extent the humanitarian problem of ethnic cleansing (this supports the findings of Grosswiler, 1996, and Malek, 1996, who also found greater stress on the humanitarian aspect among the elite press), given the greater interest of its audience on civil rights; the popular press had a more national security slant based on its broader audience's more fundamental interests.

The historical context of the Bosnian Crisis is also important to understanding the different frames of the two types of press. With the Cold War over just a few years earlier, the elite press needed to find a different slant for framing the international news, as its audience would no longer be moved by (or scared into) saber rattling. Given American history and values, the humanitarian frame strikes a deep resonance, especially for the Baby Boom generation brought up on civil rights and other "liberationist" ideologies. Moreover, for those steeped in international politics (readers of the elite press) it seems that it was becoming increasingly clear that although Big Wars were no longer in the cards, the world was increasingly suffering from low-intensity conflict (LIC, e.g., civil wars), most of which are based on ethnic cleavages. Thus, for the elite press (even the *WSJ*), humanitarian framing

of the Bosnian crisis was not merely a particularistic matter but rather could be understood as the paradigm for conflict in the post–Cold War era, and as such more likely to strike a chord with the audience and concomitantly with the powers-that-be (Jentleson & Britton, 1998).

The popular press, however, could not so easily abandon the traditional national security frame that had served it so well for half a century—and even if it was capable of doing so, its broad (and less educated/knowledgeable) audience would certainly not be able to abandon the security news frame on such short notice, a mere two-three years after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Moreover, the general public (certainly, but not only, in a country with a deep streak of isolationism) usually does not tend to have much of an opinion—and certainly will not have a critical perspective—regarding its government's handling of foreign affairs unless (and until) the nation commits palpable resources (monetary or personnel). Thus, one can expect the popular press to remain relatively muted in its criticism of government foreign policy during the first stage of a crisis.

Press criticism of the government's (mis)handling of foreign policy, especially when sounded from the pages of the elite press (by its very nature, read avidly by policymakers), can be quite influential in moving the government to reassess its policy. We make no argument here as to the exact measure of contribution on the part of elite press criticism to such change, but the first stage soon enough led the Administration to the second stage of crisis, Escalation—that is, greater American involvement—and press criticism also decreased somewhat as a result. Indeed, the elite press now criticized the administration not so much for what it was doing but rather for what it was not doing *enough of* regarding the ongoing violence in the area. In order to reinforce this humanitarian frame, the elite press began a semantic process of demonization, comparing the Serbs to "Nazi bad guys" and using such phraseology as "New Hitler," "Serb warlords," and "war criminals." Conversely, the Bosnians were characterized as "victims," "innocent people," and "refugees"—all of whom were undergoing "human suffering" in a "humanitarian disaster." The general situation itself was denoted as "law of the jungle," "genocide," "mass murder," and "systematic slaughter."

The following *WP* editorial, published on April 23, 1993, was representative of elite press framing during this period (our emphases):

> The feeling of **moral obligation** promoted by the new **Holocaust** Memorial Museum, coinciding with the **public outrage** generated by fresh **Serb brutalities** in Bosnia . . . in dealing with the issue of **Serb aggression**. . . . Belgrade and Bosnia Serbs have not bowed to repeated international condemnations . . . threatened **war crimes** trials. . . . It is time to stop the killing and **"ethnic cleansing."**

One can discern here that certain recognizable terms such as "Holocaust" were used to heighten the emotional impact of the news frame. Moreover, the American audience (as opposed, for example, to its French counterpart) is more attuned to a moral-humanitarian than to a "realpolitik" frame, especially when there is a need to overcome its traditional antipathy to overseas involvement, an isolationist position harking back to Washington's Farewell Address.

And yet, as we saw in the Findings section, the popular press continued to emphasize the national security frame. For example, a *USAT* news item (April 20, 1994), after a Serbian attack, was headlined: "New Sense of Urgency in Policy on Bosnia." Above and beyond the reasons noted earlier in this discussion, another possible explanation for the dichotomy between elite and popular press framing of the issue is the materialism/postmaterialism divide (Inglehart & Abramson, 1995). The popular press readership—less educated—is more heavily "materialistic" in the classic values sense (e.g., pre-eminence of security issues), whereas the elite press addresses a highly educated audience with a more postmaterialistic value system—for example, civil rights (Naisbitt, 1982). This is a function of the higher socioeconomic class moving up the Maslow pyramid from basic needs to "higher" needs such as self-expression. Political freedom and other similar abstract, liberal-humanistic concepts, usually speak more to those who no longer have to worry about their basic livelihood—by and large, the entire audience of the elite press. The popular press, most of whose audience is middle-to-lower class, still seeks stability and security, so that their papers' news frame will tend to concentrate on the security issue on the national (and personal) level. In short, it seems that each type of press speaks in an "ideological-value" language geared to the contemporary mentality of its respective audience.

How can one define popular press functioning (and to a very limited extent, elite press as well) at this second stage, in light of its growing support of government policy? With America becoming more heavily involved in the Bosnian crisis, even if not yet militarily, the press began a process of "self-mobilization," taking on in part the role of "rallying-round-the flag." With the nation's reputation as sole superpower "world policeman" being tested, the press began to restrain itself from taking an overly critical position that could cause a public backlash. When the national interest is on the line and danger exists for loss of (American) life in a violent situation, the press becomes much more of a consensus-manufacturing factor. This is especially true of the popular press with its broader-based audience and greater "patriotism."

However, the Bosnian case does suggest that this is not a hard and fast rule, for signs of criticism could still be found in the popular press as well at this stage. For instance, a *WT* news item (April 19, 1994) on the Serbian attack on UN troops was headlined: "Finger Pointing Takes Place of Action

in Bosnia." The elite press, as well, did not exercise full restraint, that is, become fully self-mobilized. A possible explanation for this is that direct national interests were not at stake in the Bosnian crisis (other than America's reputation as sole world policeman), nor were American troops' lives in danger. Indeed, the criticism of Administration policy was that the country was not committing *enough* resources to the crisis:

> Suddenly, in the depths of August and the budget debate, the war in Bosnia has reached a crux. . . . Meanwhile, President Clinton is busy lobbying for his tax increase. . . . We would **certainly support anything that could be done to help the Bosnians**. . . . If the Clinton administration somehow decides to send the Air Force to Sarajevo, we hope that it's **part of some plan that could actually make a difference. So far the West has slipped further and further into this war, with no plan to bring it to an end.** (WSJ editorial, May 8, 1993, p. A 12; emphases ours)

It is clear, therefore, that among other things, the different levels of "rallying-round-the-flag" by the press will be determined by how serious the respective newspaper types view the crisis—and how involved their country has become in resolving the crisis de facto. In the Bosnian case, the crisis was indeed severe—for Bosnia and Central Europe, but was less so for the United States per se. Another element that is involved in the level of press support/criticism is the solidarity found within the ruling Establishment. Here, too, there were some disagreements between the Clinton Administration and the Republican leadership in the Senate, so that press criticism could not have been perceived as being "traitorous."

The third stage (De-escalation phase) presents an equally complex picture. On the one hand, the Administration succeeded in ending the conflict, thereby winding down the violence; on the other hand, the operative outcome was that American troops were heavily ensconced in Bosnia and probably staying there for awhile. Thus, the elite press evinced *both* a high level of support as well as strong criticism. For example, on October 13, 1995, towards the signing of the Dayton Accord, the *WSJ* issued an editorial "Drifting Into Bosnia" (p. A14):

> . . . . Now, the U.S. and NATO will seek to forge a permanent peace by intermediating between indicted war criminals and their victims. . . . In this exercise, 25,000 American troops would be just right, the Clinton Administration tells us. . . . The Bosnians' troop commitment plan betrays the **ad hoc nature of this administration's foreign policy.** Important commitments are made as part of a presidential **rhetorical exercise** or White House **improvisation,** unified by one principle: **Get Bosnia off the front pages until after November 1996.** . . . But it [e.g.

> building the Bosnian army] can't be done with **U.S. troops as peacekeeping hostages** and it doesn't require 25,000 troops. . . . Sending U.S. combat troops into the middle of **somebody else's war** is a serious matter. Fighting troops are trained to fight, not to offer themselves **as targets for war criminal** Ratko Mladic's thugs. If this is to be the role of the U.S. troops Mr. Clinton is promising, Congress has every right, indeed responsibility, to **challenge the President**. . . . Not because we are turning isolationist, but precisely because we believe the American superpower has interests in and responsibilities to keep peace in the world. . . . **This need not require American ground troops.**

The popular press was more supportive overall in phase 3, but here too one can find criticism, albeit framed more in political and economic terms, that is, the consequences for the domestic political scene. For instance, a *WT* news item (November 25, 1995) after the Dayton agreement was headlined "Congress Will Ask why Bosnia Won't Be Rerun of Somalia." This criticism does not contradict its traditional role of cheerleader during a crisis, for the crisis was now basically over. As such, there was probably less need to frame the issues in foreign policy terms (where the action had died down); it was possible and even logical, to frame the issue in terms of *domestic* consequences that interested the general audience in any case. Moreover, with presidential elections approaching, it was obvious that the Administration's overall handling of the Bosnian issue needed to be placed within the general political context.

Overall, though, the press coverage during this latter crisis stage was more positive—a clear reflection of the successful conclusion of the whole affair. However, in comparing the level of praise/criticism between the two types of press, it is clear that each tends to what it views as its prime function. The elite press stressed the watchdog elements of policy critique; the popular press emphasized more the cheerleading approach towards consensus-building. Indeed, the "half" success (end of the war), "half" failure (American troops stuck in Bosnia) enables us to clearly see how each press type gravitates to its basic stance. As we have seen throughout this study, this is but a continuation of the general pattern: the elite press tends to be more critical than the supportive, popular press in all stages—with each type adding some supportive or critical flavor, respectively, in light of violent developments in the international arena.

CONCLUSION

This study offered a comprehensive look at the media's functioning, comparing two different types, during the multiple phases of an international

crisis. The contribution of this research can be seen as both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, we tried to present an integrated outlook combining theories from different fields (international relations and mass communications) in order to explain the media's performance during an international crisis. In doing so, we hope to have made clearer the functioning of the press in foreign policy making, especially during a crisis period, where virtually very little research has been undertaken heretofore. Our basic conclusion is that the media seem to react to the government's foreign policy in a way that adapts to the "politico-philosophical" function of the press (by type) over the various phases of the crisis—in part due to the nature of each newspaper's audience (regarding the readers' educational/ knowledge background as well as their social value system), and, of course, also in relation to the nature of the crisis and its context.

On the practical side, several explanations were offered for the press's functioning during the crisis phases, in the hope that journalism practitioners, government official, and students will more clearly understand the function (position and framing) that the media can play in foreign policy. Hopefully, this will improve the media's coverage and analysis of international crises while enabling foreign policy makers to improve their dealings with the press, especially regarding ethnic conflicts that have come to dominate the international arena at the turn of the millennium.

Nevertheless, much work remains to be done in order to fully explore this complex topic. Future studies might look into different case studies with other elements to broaden our understanding of media functioning during international crises. Such elements might include different types of democratic regimes; a short-term crisis; a small state's foreign policy; other media, for example, electronic—again by type (public vs. private) and so forth. Additional studies should also try to focus on the most effective ways to examine and integrate knowledge from different disciplines while exploring the best methods for scrutinizing the enigma of influence.

As a modest initial exploration, we hope that the present study can be considered a useful first step along the road to a better understanding of how the media deal with what has become an increasingly important subject in both mass communications and international relations studies: press functioning during foreign policy crisis at different levels of violence.

NOTES

1. The three other approaches are: social-responsibility (located between the aforementioned two), authoritarian, and totalitarian. For elaboration see Siebert et al. (1956) for the original four; Hutchins (1947) on social responsibility; and McQuail (1987), for additional philosophical approaches.

2. The results for inter-coder reliability were highly supportive of coding consistency: regarding 'Position', Cronbach Alpha = .932; for the 'Frame' = .938.

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