

Reporting War: U.S. Press Coverage of the Breakup of Yugoslavia, 1991-1992

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to chronologically analyze U.S. print media from the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* that revolved around the conflict that began in Yugoslavia in 1991. The period of June of 1991 to June of 1992 was selected to detail the coverage of the conflict as its very beginning and to trace its development in light of Maria Todorova's concept of "balkanism" and aspects of war journalism. Coverage from the conflicts in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia was examined to determine how prevalent aspects of balkanism and war journalism were in news reports as war developed and moved locations. It appears that the frequency of references to balkanist were more frequent at the beginning of the conflict while particular aspects of war journalism become more common as the conflict enters into Bosnia. This suggests that as the conflict progressed the focus of war journalists shifted from characterizing Yugoslavia and ethnic groups within Yugoslavia in terms of preexisting stereotypes to reporting the humanitarian crisis that was emerging shortly after war broke out in Bosnia.

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Chapter 1 – Balkanism Reflected in U.S. Media.....	5
1.1 Emergence of balkanism	5
1.2 U.S. and Yugoslavia.....	7
1.3 Aspects of war journalism	9
1.4 Research Goals.....	11
Chapter 2 - Onset of Conflict, June-July 1991	13
2.1 June 1991: Ancient Hatreds and World War I.....	14
2.2 July 1991: Recalling World War II.....	16
2.3 Communism.....	18
Chapter 3 – Croatia: August to December of 1991	23
3.1 Croat-Serb divide	24
3.2 Fascist accusations	26
3.2.1 Access to sources	29
3.3 Stories on the ground.....	31
3.3.1 Dubrovnik	32
Chapter 4 – Bosnia: May to June 1992.....	37
4.1 Receding balkanism	37
4.2 Displaced and trapped.....	40
Conclusion.....	46
Bibliography	49

Introduction

“Writing off Balkan violence as primeval and unmodern has become one way for the West to keep the desired distance from it.”

- Mark Mazower¹

This quote, taken from Mark Mazower’s short history on the Balkans, echoes the sentiments of many authors who have written on conflicts in southeastern Europe. The set of wars that took place between 1991 and 1995 is certainly subject to Mazower’s analysis. The armed conflict that resulted in the full dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1995 was complex. Four distinct groups of people, Slovenes, Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians, became involved in violence that divided a nation and resulted in a multitude of displaced people, not to mention the toll on human life. Much writing has focused on attempting to explain the collapse of Yugoslavia. Samantha Ramet has convincingly argued that a combination of factors led to the destruction of the nation of South Slavs.²

The purpose of this piece of writing does not deal with the reasons behind the outbreak of violence that propelled Yugoslavia to breakup. Instead, it looks to examine how media covered the war. A large collection of work has also been devoted to how this war was covered by media outlets. Extensive studies have been devoted to stereotypes and characterizations that emerged in media reporting of the conflict. Usually these works function topically – detailing how Yugoslavia as whole or individual ethnic groups within the country were portrayed. This

¹ Mark Mazower, *The Balkans* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2000), 154.

² Samantha Ramet, “Explaining the Yugoslav Meltdown,” *Nationalities Papers* 12 (2004): 731-762.

work looks to take a different approach in analyzing media coverage of the clashes that occurred within what is now the former Yugoslavia.

Originally I was inspired by Joseph Pearson's journal article that used Dubrovnik as a case study for examining British print media and its exaggerated reporting of damage to the city during its siege in late 1991.³ I was inspired to seek out specific case studies that, when studied in detail through print news, would shed some sort of new light on the wars in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia. My goal was to trace some vague pattern that I hoped would emerge if I were to just dig into the sources.

My inspiration and enthusiasm grew upon reading Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans*. Her concept of "balkanism," the stereotypes and sense of "other" that fall within it, and her contention that journalism in particular perpetuated this view of the Balkans provided direction for this research.

The goal then became to examine news media in light of balkanism along a timeline of events to see what patterns emerged from print news stories that dealt with the conflict as it progressed. This, in turn, led to investigating the specific media genre of war journalism. Thus my framework was established: to chronologically examine print news reports that came out of the conflict through the lenses of balkanism and war reporting.

By reading and analyzing print stories from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* my goal was to see how aspects of balkanism and war journalism were prevalent in these articles and how these aspects diminished or grew within coverage as the epicenter of violence shifted from Slovenia, to Croatia, and into Bosnia. This work devotes one chapter analysis of war journalism that emerged out of Yugoslavia that dealt with three republics in which armed

³ Joseph Pearson, "Dubrovnik's Artistic Patrimony, and its Role in War Reporting," *European History Quarterly* 40 (2010): 197-216.

conflict took place. And it appears a pattern does emerge: mentions of balkanism are more frequent at the beginning of the conflict while particular aspects of war journalism become more common as the conflict enters into Bosnia.

Chapter 1 – Balkanism Reflected in U.S. Media

1.1 Emergence of balkanism

Maria Todorova's concept of "balkanism," inspired by Edward Said's "orientalism,"⁴ addresses the stereotypes and reductionism that emerged in Western dealings with southeastern Europe dating from the beginning of the twentieth century.⁵ The introduction of her work traced how the concept of balkanism had developed over time and how the region had, and continually has, been treated as the "other" when viewed from a Western and as such, a "civilized" standpoint. In describing the established point of view of the West and the Balkans, Todorova drew upon Larry Wolff's work on the creation of the East-West dichotomy that emerged in the late eighteenth century within Europe.⁶ Along with this distinction came the association of the East with backwardness and its lack of development, as well as its "superstitious cultures unmarked by Western Enlightenment."⁷

Todorova highlighted the two historical "legacies" of the Balkans from the Byzantine and Ottoman periods and related how the region acquired stereotypes due to its subjugation to, association with, and influence under the Ottoman Empire. Todorova further points out that the process or processes of "Europeanization," "Westernization," and/or "modernization" that were meant to be carried out within the Balkans in order to shed "the last residue of an imperial legacy" of the Ottoman Empire's influence while emulating the example of the European

⁴ Related to how the 'orient' had been treated by 'the West': Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

⁵ The following discussion is based fully on the Introduction to Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3-20.

⁶ Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe, The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994).

⁷ Todorova, 11-12.

nation-state. These processes were never fully completed.⁸ Thus the association of the Balkans with Eastern cultures (Byzantium and Ottomon) contributed to viewing the region as being “backward” as the region failed to live up to standards of “Westernization” that other parts of Europe had undergone.

As travel descriptions of the region began to emerge in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Todorova contended that the Balkans were not completely deemed as the “other” but rather a bridge between East and West, a place that was “semideveloped, semicolonial, semicivilized, semioriental.”⁹ She argued that these descriptions solidified the emerging stereotypes of backwardness and separation from the rest of Europe associated with the region. Todorova indicates that this classifying, or rather, lack of classifying, of the Balkans as neither East nor West, but as an “in-between” region became problematic when one attempts to engage in discussing the region. The author explains this lack of classification by Mary Douglas’ writing in *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* which equates the ambiguity of failing to categorize the Balkans as either East or West with anomaly, in that is “not fitting a given set or series.” Thus in Todorova’s view, identifying the Balkans as an anomaly caused it to be perceived as a source of danger due to its inability to be fit into an existing construct.¹⁰

By the twentieth century “[b]alkanization’...had become a synonym for a reversion to the tribal, the back- ward, the primitive, the barbarian.”¹¹ This association was solidified in the

⁸ Ibid., 12-13.

⁹ Ibid., 16.

¹⁰ Todorova drawing upon: Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (Harmondsworth Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1970,) 12, 48–50, 115–116, 191–192.

¹¹ Todorova, 3.

early part of the twentieth century with the Balkan wars and the outset of World War I.¹² Todorova contends that journalists, historians, and politicians from the West took on such characterizations when writing about the Balkans, perpetuating stereotypes and simplifications, and have continued to do so. This “balkanist discourse” has become prevalent in journalism in particular, which Todorova sees as perpetuating its popularity.¹³ Herein lies the connection with Todorova’s concept and what this study intends to do.

1.2 U.S. and Yugoslavia

If journalism covering southeastern Europe perpetuates stereotypes put forth by Todorova’s concept of “balkanism,” so should war journalism that is related to the region. The breakup of Yugoslavia between 1991 and 1995 and how media covered the event has been the subject of much research and writing. There have been studies on television coverage of the conflict,¹⁴ how British news sources dealt with the war;¹⁵ how media within wartime Yugoslavia incited violence between communities;¹⁶ comparing news coverage of the conflicts that took place in Bosnia and Rwanda concurrently;¹⁷ how global print media dealt with the

¹² Ibid., 19.

¹³ Todorova, 19.

¹⁴ For example see: *Bosnia by Television*, Ed. James Grow, Richard Paterson and Alison Preston (London: BFI Publishing, 1996).

¹⁵ Gregory Kent, *Framing War and Genocide: British Policy and News Media Reaction to the War in Bosnia* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2005).

¹⁶ Mark Thompson, *Forging War: the Media in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Hercegovina* (Luton: University of Luton Press, 1999); and Kemal Kurspahic, *Prime Time Crime: Balkan Media in War and Peace* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2003).

¹⁷ Garth Myers, Thomas Klak, and Timothy Koehl, “The inscription of difference: news coverage of the conflicts in Rwanda and Bosnia,” *Political Geography* 15 (1996): 21-46.

children who resulted from wartime rape;¹⁸ the relationship between the press, public opinion and foreign policy during the war in Bosnia;¹⁹ and how British print media exaggerated reporting damage of the city of Dubrovnik during its siege in the conflict.²⁰ While a variety of media has been examined in relation to the conflict, as evidenced above, this study will focus solely on the medium of print news within the U.S. More specifically, it will analyze the coverage of the conflict by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

A comprehensive study of U.S media has been conducted by James J. Sadkovich in his *The U.S. Media and Yugoslavia, 1991-1995*.²¹ Sadkovich set out to examine “what the media [print media, television, and radio] produce and how or why they do so [as] media influence[s] our perceptions of reality by shaping and defining events and suits for us.”²² He looked at the July 1991, when the outbreak of conflict began, to the December 1995 Dayton peace agreements using print media, television, and radio to analyze how U.S. media outlets covered the war and the stereotypes that emerged in the coverage. Sadkovich systematically described how stereotypes emerged within specific ethnic groups within Yugoslavia; Serbs, Croats, and Muslims residing in Bosnia.²³ This study looks to take U.S. media of the Yugoslav wars and examine it chronologically rather than categorically by ethnic group. Additionally it has a

¹⁸ R. Charli Carpenter, “‘A Fresh Crop of Human Misery’: Representations of Bosnian ‘War Babies’ in the Global Print Media, 1991-2006,” *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 38 (2009): 25-54.

¹⁹ Yaeli Bloch-Elkon, “Studying the Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy in International Crises: The United States and the Bosnian Crisis, 1992-1995,” *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 12 (2007): 20-51.

²⁰ Joseph Pearson, “Dubrovnik’s Artistic Patrimony, and its Role in War Reporting,” *European History Quarterly* 40 (2010): 197-216.

²¹ James J. Sadkovich, *The U.S. Media and Yugoslavia, 1991-1995* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998).

²² *Ibid.*, xii-xiii.

²³ *Ibid.*, 122-162.

tighter focus. It looks to examine this study looks analyze a specific genre of reporting; war journalism in print media.

1.3 Aspects of war journalism

Since this study is centered on war journalism within the Balkans, the nature of such a genre of reporting needs to be addressed. Howard Tumber and Frank Webster in their *Journalists Under Fire: Information War and Journalistic Practices* provide an in depth analysis of war journalism.²⁴ The focus of their substantial work is to first describe how war has changed over time from the more historical “Industrial War” to present form of “Information War”²⁵ and to also depict how the onset of “Information War” has affected frontline journalism and how this type of reporting is carried out. To describe and characterize war journalism, Tumber and Webster draw heavily upon journalists who have served as reporters in wartime situations. Within their discussion of war journalists and war journalism, Tumber and Webster describe the motivations that war journalists cite for reporting on wars. These motivations vary from the “rush” of being on the frontline, “truth-seeking” within the conflict, being a part of history, portraying the impact of war on civilian populations, and making a difference through reporting by bearing witness to atrocities and gross injustices.²⁶ An aspect pertinent to this study is the level of compassion that is deemed necessary for war

²⁴ Howard Tumber and Frank Webster. *Journalists Under Fire: Information War and Journalistic Practices* (London; Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publication, 2006).

²⁵ Ibid. 28-30: “Industrial War” is defined as war conducted between sovereign nation-states that consisted of the mobilization of large amounts of manpower and resources to support war efforts. “Information War” is characterized by the use of advancing technologies to conduct war rather than mass mobilization of populations; instead it relies on smaller numbers of professionals to carry out the fighting.

²⁶ Ibid., 64-66, 68.

journalists to be effective reporters. War journalists within *Journalists Under Fire*, report that becoming involved in reporting and demonstrating sensitivity to the circumstances of war. They describe the difficulty of reporting on war and *not* being affected by it. One journalist in particular points to the fine line between compassion and objectivity in reporting from a war situation. He says:

There's always that gnawing fear that you're somehow profiting from the misery of others because so much of what's reported, particularly by war and foreign correspondents, is tragedy and terrible things happening to people. You're very much an intrusion in their lives at a very difficult moment and you have to walk a fine line between compassion and objectivity when you're in these situations. You're barging in on people and asking them questions when something very very disturbing has happened to them or to someone they know. And you know – and they know – that tomorrow, you'll be onto another story but they'll be left for the rest of their lives to deal with that. You have to keep that in mind and be sensitive to people, be respectful, keep your distance, be compassionate, sensitive about how you deal with them and what you ask them. When I can, I like to go back – a day later, a week later – and follow up and see what happened, when things are less emotional and less stressful.²⁷

In short Tumber and Webster conclude that war journalists aspire to get the story straight and “tell it like it is” without reporting in a disinterested or detached manner. Rather

²⁷ Ibid., 73.

than writing without interest, the journalists is “striving to get things right by reliance on sources that can be cited and evidence that can be confirmed by an accredited authority.”²⁸

1.4 Research Goals

The purpose of this study is to use Todorova’s concept of balkanism and the specifics of war reporting to analyze chronologically how U.S. print media evolved as the conflict unfolded and the arena of warfare shifted from its beginnings in Slovenia, in June of 1991 to its shift to Croatia, and finally into Bosnia in the months of April, May, and June of 1992. The goal is to identify how prevalent aspects of balkanism and war journalism were in print media coverage from this period and how these aspects evolved alongside the conflict.

The period of June of 1991 to June of 1992 was selected in order to focus on how perceptions in the *beginning* of the conflict emerged in the reporting of the conflict or conflicts. The purpose for selecting the very beginning of the armed conflicts that took place is to attempt to establish a line of development in the content print news and how Yugoslavia, the people of Yugoslavia, and the Balkans were characterized. This chronological approach is different from the topical approach taken by Sadkovich, who described the stereotypes of Serb, Croats, and Muslims in media coverage individually.

This study focuses on print media from two individual news outlets: the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. The purpose for selecting print news is to provide a more in depth, as well as contained analysis of the coverage that emerged in U.S. newspapers directly

²⁸ Ibid., 168-169.

related to the conflict. Another reason for electing to select print news is to examine a specific genre or subgenre of journalism: war journalism.

The goals of this research are to use a chronology of U.S print media coverage from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* from June of 1991 and to June of 1992, examine the content for evidence of Todorova's concept of balkanism and aspects of war journalists, and identify changes in content in the beginnings of this conflict.

Chapter 2 - Onset of Conflict, June-July 1991

While Maria Todorova²⁹ has broadly pointed out the stereotypes that have emerged in “Western” dealings with southeastern Europe and James J. Sadkovich³⁰ has done so specifically and thoroughly within U.S. media coverage, there has yet to be a focused study of the outbreak of fighting within Yugoslavia that began in Slovenia, advanced to Croatia, and finally engulfed Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period between June of 1991 and June of 1992, the period in which the conflicts all had their beginnings. Sadkovich has pointed out the stereotypes that emerged within U.S. media (television, print, and radio) categorically by ethnic group but there has yet to be a systematic study of press coverage that follows along the progression of the conflict. The purpose here is to do just so; to trace how war journalists from the United States covered the event and how the content of their reporting changed as fighting advanced from republic to republic and to start with where the outbreak of open conflict began, Slovenia.

To properly establish a chronology of how press coverage of the Yugoslavia wars of 1991-1995 evolved as the conflict progressed there must be a starting point. An appropriate and logical starting point would be June of 1991 when both the republics of Slovenia and Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia. Thus the month of June serves as the basis for this examination of how press coverage from the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* began viewing the conflict, its roots, and the Yugoslav republics involved.

The purpose of setting out to trace the news coverage of the outbreaks of fighting in the respective republics looks to accomplish these things: to see how Todorova’s concept of

²⁹ Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3-20.

³⁰ Sadkovich, *The U.S. Media and Yugoslavia, 1991-1995* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998), 122-162.

balkanism might be represented in the of the conflict in this period of June and July of 1991, to point out how or if the source of balkanism shifts as the conflict progresses, and to finally examine these shifts in the news coverage in terms of war journalism.

2.1 June 1991: Ancient Hatreds and World War I

From the beginning of the conflict and ultimately the war that resulted in the violent breakup of Yugoslavia, much media attention focused on previous conflicts that had occurred within the region as a whole. The early coverage by the *New York Times* in June of 1991 expressed fear in the face of an outbreak of fighting and its potential implications for all of Europe. There was a particular focus on recalling the impetus that set off World War I and the role this part of Europe played in that war's beginning. A *New York Times* June 22 article that highlights the visit of U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker to discuss the growing conflict within the country quotes him as expressing, "fears that this nation could break up in violence, fomenting the kind of instability in the Balkan region that helped touch off World War I."³¹ Along with this, there appeared to be a growing fear that violence in the Balkans would cause instability Europe-wide, further equating the present climate of Yugoslavia with that of just before World War I. David Hoffman of the *Washington Post* refers to "the feud between Serbia---and Austria Hungary that touched off World War I in 1914" in reference to the present situation in the country.³² Similarly, Chuck Sudetic described southeastern Europe as "a region with a long tradition of violence where ethnic tensions and territorial disputes played a major

³¹ Thomas L. Friedman, "Baker Urges End to Yugoslav Rift," *New York Times*, June 22, 1991, 1.

³² David Hoffman, "Baker Urges Yugoslavs to Keep Unity," *Washington Post*, June 22, 1991, A1.

role in setting off World War I.”³³ Another article by Sudetic published one day later, June 26 after Slovenia and Croatia declare independence,³⁴ again stressed the analogy with World War I, emphasizes the “fiery nationalism of this region” as being one of the “roots” of World War I.³⁵ An article dated the same day from the *Washington Post* claims, “The underlying conflict that prompted today’s secession announcements reaches back centuries and is a product of the same *ethnic enmity* that has bedeviled Yugoslavia since its inception.”³⁶

In a similar vein to the above quotes focused on the history of the Balkans in view of new conflicts, both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* pointed to the long history of fighting within southeastern Europe. Such “ancient hatreds” were generalized and given to the region as a whole at this point and were mentioned before any outbreak of violence within Slovenia. There are themes of history repeating itself,³⁷ as well as the potential of awakening “ancient antagonisms.”³⁸ Blaine Harden pointed to tensions between Serbs and Croats specifically when he wrote, “The enmity between Serbs and Croats derives from centuries of suspicions and conflicting cultural influences and resulting violence.”³⁹ This highlights a long

³³ Chuck Sudetic, “Yugoslav Premier in Plea to Republics,” *New York Times*, June 25, 1991, A16.

³⁴ On June 25, 1991 Croatia and Slovenia declared themselves “sovereign and independent states.” On June 29 both suspend these declarations for three months. See Samantha Power, “Breakdown in the Balkans: A Chronicle of Events January, 1989 to May, 1993,” (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1993), 16-17.

³⁵ Sudetic, “2 Yugoslav States Vote Independence to Press Demands,” *New York Times*, June 26, 1991, A1.

³⁶ Blaine Harden, “Yugoslav Regions Assert Independence,” *Washington Post*, June 26, 1991, A1. Emphasis added.

³⁷ See Friedman, “Baker Urges End,” *New York Times*, June 22, 1991, 1 quoting U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker: “We worry frankly about history repeating itself.” A *Washington Post* article by David Hoffman published on June 22 quotes Baker as well.

³⁸ Sudetic, “Yugoslav Premier in Plea to Republics,” *New York Times*, June 25, 1991, A16.

³⁹ Blaine Harden, “Yugoslav Army On High Alert After Secessions,” *Washington Post*, June 27, 1991, A1.

history of violence within the region that defines it as “uncivilized” within Todorova’s concept of balkanism.

These themes, along with references to World War I, fall neatly within Maria Todorova’s concept of “balkanization” as the conflict is heavily framed within the “violent history” of the region known for fomenting “ancient hatreds.” These stereotypes about the essentially “uncivilized,” as opposed to “Western civilization,” are generally applied to Yugoslavia as a whole during the opening stages of the conflict. As there is no armed conflict as of yet, this month can only be analyzed in terms of Todorova’s balkanization rather than through the lens of war reporting. As the conflict advances, the outbreak of open conflict between forces from individual republics and the Yugoslav National Army begins there is a change in which historical events specific to the region war journalists choose to include in their reports.

2.2 July 1991: Recalling World War II

Comparing the climate in Yugoslavia to that prior to World War I and fears of reprising a history of “ancient enmities” appear as a lead up to an actual outbreak of violence in Yugoslavia. In early July of 1991 fighting between Yugoslav National Army and Slovene forces began in Slovenia while fighting between Croats and Serbs in Croatia gained in intensity.⁴⁰ Once violent action did take place after the June 25 declarations of independence of Slovenia and Croatia, the recollection and contextualization of historical events shifted from general “ancient hatreds” common among all Yugoslav peoples and references to the volatile

⁴⁰ Power, 17. Conflict between Serbs and Croats within Croatia had been taking place for almost a year prior: Power, 5.

climate within the region prior to World War I. As clashes between Croats and Serbs intensified in early July, journalists began to focus on a different period of Yugoslav history, specifically World War II. Correspondents drew upon the ethnic fighting that took place between Serbs and Croats after Croatia was established as a Nazi puppet state to frame the current state of conflict between the two ethnic groups.⁴¹

An article by John Tagliabue from the *New York Times* dated July 3 expressed fear that fighting similar to that which took place between Croats and Serbs during World War II would once again resurface, pointing specifically to the mass killing of Serbs at the hands of Croats during this time period.⁴² This marks a point where the focus of journalists from the *New York Times* turned to the Serb-Croat conflict, describing their “longstanding enmity” as the main force driving Yugoslavia apart.⁴³ They are also termed as “traditional” enemies.⁴⁴

As early as June 26, the *Washington Post* refers to World War II as “an occasion for ethnic butchery,”⁴⁵ and on July 3, the leftover “bitter memories.”⁴⁶ A Blaine Harden piece published July 9 combined both the idea of an extensive history of violence and how it appeared in World War II in the context of his article. He writes of the “bitter, age old feud

⁴¹ For a brief description of what occurred under the Nazi occupation of Croatia see André Gerolymatos, *The Balkan Wars: Conquest, Revolution and Retribution From the Ottoman Era to the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 241-243.

⁴² John Tagliabue. “The Yugoslav Blowup: The Center Comes Apart,” *New York Times*, July 3, 1991, A6.

⁴³ Stephen Engelberg. “Warily, Croats Move Toward Slovene Side,” *New York Times*, July 3, 1991, A6.

⁴⁴ Engelberg. “In Croatia, the Cafes Are Full And the Talk is of Hostile Serbs,” *New York Times*, July 4, 1991, A6.

⁴⁵ Harden, “Yugoslav Regions Assert Independence,” *Washington Post*, June 26, 1991, A1.

⁴⁶ Harden and Mary Battiata, “Slovenia Promises To Let Troops Go,” *Washington Post*, July 3, A1.

between Croats and Serbs...which reached a savage peak during the Nazi occupation of [Croatia] in World War II, when they killed each other by the thousands.”⁴⁷

Again one finds Todorova’s concept of “balkanization” coming through the reports written and published by the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* as the tension and conflict between Serbs and Croats is described in a historical and tradition context. As Todorova has pointed out, “[b]alkanization’...had become a synonym for a reversion to the tribal, the back- ward, the primitive, the barbarian.”⁴⁸ This is evident in the reports that were published in July of 1991 that referenced back to World War II. Drawing attention to a “bitter, age old feud” and describing past conflicts as “savage” involving the “butchery” of a large number of people clearly point to the tribal and barbarian reversion and backwardness that Todorova points out in “balkanization.” Describing Yugoslavia and the ethnic groups within it, accentuates its difference from the “civilized” and “Western” world.

2.3 Communism

Using World War II as a reference point for the expanding conflict played a role in how these two ethnic groups were represented in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* publications in the month of July. A theme dealing with the more immediate history of the region surfaced during June and July of 1991. Journalists focused on the communist past of the region and begin connecting both Serbia and the Yugoslav National Army with what appeared to be its continuation of communist practices. This began almost immediately after Yugoslav

⁴⁷ Harden, “Yugoslav Crisis Pact Sets EC Involvement In Country’s Future,” *Washington Post*, July 9, 1991, A12.

⁴⁸ Todorova, 3.

National Army forces enter Slovenia. Two *New York Times* articles dated June 28 describe Yugoslav National Army officers as being “steeped in Marxist thought during their training”⁴⁹ while Serbia is described as being governed by former communists who have been “frequently blamed for undermining Yugoslavia’s attempts at market-based economic reforms.”⁵⁰ A *Washington Post* article dated the same day reported similarly.⁵¹ The connection with communism remained intact as the conflict advances. July 2 articles from both news sources discussed Serbian leadership being dominated by a revamped and renamed Communist Party while the main core of YNA high command comes from longtime Communists.⁵² Journalists from the *Washington Post* continually referred to Serbia as the only remaining “hard-line” communist or socialist government in Eastern Europe.⁵³ Throughout the coverage of the event in July, the YNA is most consistently described in terms of its Serbian leadership, and being made up of mainly communists or Marxists, and being a communist holdover.⁵⁴

In opposition to this, there emerges a connection between the two breakaway republics of Croatia and Slovenia and their “western” tendencies by journalist from both the *Washington*

⁴⁹ Sudetic, “Face-Off Across a Road’s White Line,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1991, A1.

⁵⁰ Tagliabue, “Yugoslav Army Uses Force in Breakaway Republic,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1991, A3.

⁵¹ Harden, “Yugoslav Army Attacks Slovenia, Meets Resistance at Border Posts,” *Washington Post*, June 28, 1991, A1.

⁵² Tagliabue, “New Warning by the Army Imperils Yugoslav Standoff,” *New York Times*, July 2, 1991; and Jim Fish, “Yugoslav Army Upended in Slovenia,” *Washington Post*, July 2, 1991, A1.

⁵³ See: Harden, “Yugoslav Regions Assert Independence,” June 26, 1991, A1; Harden, “Yugoslav Army Attacks Slovenia, Meets Resistance at Border Posts,” June 28, 1991, A1; Harden and Mary Battiata, “Slovenia Promises To Let Troops Go,” July 3, 1991, A1; and Harden, “Yugoslav Crisis Pact Sets EC Involvement In Country’s Future,” July 9, 1991, A12.

⁵⁴ For the *New York Times* see: Sudetic, “Yugoslav Troops Battle Slovenes, Ending Cease-Fire,” July 3, 1991, A1; Engelberg, “Yugoslavia Tense As Its Peace Talks Reach Stalemate,” July 7, 1991, A1; and Engelberg, “Yugoslav Army Revamping Itself After Setbacks,” July 16, 1991, A13. From the *Washington Post*: Blaine Harden, “Yugoslav Army Disengagement Blocked by Slovenian Militia,” July 2, 1991, A1; and Blaine Harden and Mary Battiata, “Fighting Halted In Yugoslav Crisis,” July 4, 1991, A25.

Post and the *New York Times*. In contrast to this portrayal of Serbia and the Yugoslav National Army, both Slovenia and Croatia are described in terms of their relative economic prosperity and their pro-Western thinking which indirectly equates them with capitalism. From *New York Times* reports the two republics are described as the richest⁵⁵ and most wealthy or prosperous⁵⁶ of the Yugoslav republics while being the two republics that are either most “westward-looking”⁵⁷ or “western-minded”.⁵⁸ *Washington Post* journalists depicted the two similarly as “the most prosperous and Westernized” republics of Yugoslavia.⁵⁹

Already in late June and July a capitalism vs. communism, and thus East-West, dichotomy started to emerge in how *New York Times* and *Washington Post* journalists wrote about the two sides (Slovenia and Croatia vs. Serbia). Serbia and the Yugoslav National Army were most frequently reported in terms of their connection with the Communist Party or deemed a communist holdover while Slovenia and Croatia are depicted as having a connection to “the West” and their willingness to break from their communist past. While this immediate history of communism can be viewed as drawing a line between East and West, and interestingly including Croatia and Slovenia as somehow part of the West, journalists also drew upon the Ottoman and Hapsburg influence of the region to further emphasize the divide.

A July 5 article by Chuck Sudetic of the *New York Times* attempts to explain the key differences between Serbs and Slovenes based on their respective historical development. He

⁵⁵ Tagliabue. “New Warning by the Army Imperils Yugoslav Standoff,” *New York Times*, July 2, 1991, A14; and Sudetic. “Yugoslav Army Threatens Truce, 2 Republics Say,” *New York Times*, July 10, 1991, A1.

⁵⁶ Stephen Engelberg. “Warily, Croats Move Toward Slovene Side,” *New York Times*, July 3, 1991, A6.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Tagliabue, “Yugoslav Tanks Mass Near Rebels,” *New York Times*, July 4, 1991, A1.

⁵⁹ Harden and Battista, “Slovenia Promises To Let Troops Go,” *Washington Post*, July 3, 1991, A1.

ascribes the difference in terms of Ottoman rule of the Serbs versus the Hapsburg dominion of the Slovenes. He claims, “Ottoman rule left the Serbs with *a legacy of militancy and clannishness* that were essential for survival in an almost lawless society,” while Hapsburg rule left Slovenia “less isolated” from Western Europe compared to the “lawless” and Ottoman-dominated Serbia.⁶⁰ This is clearly another distinction between east and west and also an example of the type of balkanism described by Maria Todorova as a Serbian past associated with and influenced by the “uncivilized” Ottoman Empire was sure to have an impact on Serbia and the Serbian people as a whole.⁶¹

Washington Post journalists wrote similarly characterizing the differences between Serbia vs. Croatia and Slovenia by their historical connections to former empires. An article dated July 4 highlighted the connection between Slovenian and republics history as being part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.⁶² In addition to subjugation under two very different empires, Blaine Harden emphasized the differences in religion (Catholic vs. Orthodox) and alphabet (Latin vs. Cyrillic script).⁶³

The distinctions made between Croatia and Slovenia together and Serbia began to form a divide within Yugoslavia that does not fall as concretely into Todorova’s balkanism. Under balkanism the entire region is generally created as the “other” in relation to the West and thus *all* of Yugoslavia should be included. This “other” is created by highlighting communism,

⁶⁰ Sudetic, “Amateur Soldiers Enjoy Respite of a Fragile Truce,” *New York Times*, July 5, 1991, A6. Emphasis added.

⁶¹ Todorova makes the connection between Edward Said’s “orientalism” and her concept of balkanism in her introduction, 3-20. Also see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

⁶² Michael Z. Wise, “Slovenian Town Exults at Pullout of Yugoslav Tanks,” *Washington Post*, July 4, 1991, A1.

⁶³ Harden, “Yugoslav Crisis Raises Questions About Nature of National Unity,” *Washington Post*, June 30, 1991, A1.

clearly separate from a democratic and capitalist West. *New York Times* and *Washington Post* reports connected Serbia with communism while Slovenia and Croatia were tied to the West through their association with the Hapsburg Empire and their prosperous states and apparent Western leanings. Thus this sense of “other” was only applied to part of Yugoslavia. Descriptions of Croatia and Slovenia as “pro-Western” or the “most prosperous” of the Yugoslav republics attaches them, at least loosely, with the West. This East-West divide is further entrenched when journalists went further back within the histories of the countries. Drawing upon the “Western” influence of Austria-Hungary of Croatia and Slovenia as opposed to the Ottoman influence that Serbia was subjected to certainly deepened the divide. Though a distinction was made between the West and Yugoslavia as part of the Balkans that is consistent with Todorova’s balkanism, it is not fully applied to all of Yugoslavia. Croatia and Slovenia were included in the West while Serbia is specifically pointed out as being the “other.”

From the beginning of the outbreak of the conflict that led to the dissolution of Yugoslavia, June and July of 1991, evidence of Todorova’s notion of balkanism readily appeared in the print media that was generated by the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*. Journalists called upon a long history of brutal violence that characterized how conflicts had previously been conducted while simultaneously created a distinction between the West and Yugoslavia as a member of the Balkans. As the situation became more serious and armed conflict intensified, the nature of balkanism found within the new reporting of the fighting further shifted. The next chapter will address this as the conflict moved exclusively into Croatia.

Chapter 3 – Croatia: August to December of 1991

During July and into August the arena of the conflict moved from Slovenia. On July 18 the collective presidency of Yugoslavia agreed to pull Yugoslav National Army troops out of Slovenia.⁶⁴ From this date until the end of 1991, the conflict became centered in Croatia. Sharp clashes between Croats and minority Serbs in Croatia, as well as the Yugoslav National Army marked this period. For the purpose of examining the conflict in Croatia two focal points, the cities of Vukovar and Dubrovnik, were selected in order to analyze the content of reports from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Both Dubrovnik and Vukovar were under attack from Yugoslav National forces between August and December of 1991. Vukovar was selected given its positioning in the eastern portion of Croatia closest to Serbia while Dubrovnik was chosen due to its historical significance.

The purpose of this chapter is to further the chronology of print news coverage from the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* of the armed conflict as it intensified. In this period, August to December of 1991, there appeared to be a transition in how journalists wrote about the fighting. As evidenced in the previous chapter, coverage revolving around Slovenia contained considerable examples of Todorova's balkanism. As Croatia became the center point, the reports emerging from correspondents stationed within Yugoslavia contain less references of balkanism. Instead, there are more reports that are sympathetic to those suffering the consequences of open armed conflict. The following two sections will detail this shift.

⁶⁴ Power, 19.

3.1 Croat-Serb divide

The East-West, communist-capitalist contrast between Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia that emerged in writing on Slovenia were present as the center of fighting was firmly established in Croatia. References to the communist nature of the Yugoslav National Army and Serbian leadership remained. This was more prevalent in coverage from the *New York Times* during this period.⁶⁵ References from both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* began to shift from “communist” to “nationalist,” especially in the case of the *Washington Post*. An August 27 article from Chuck Sudetic of the *New York Times* referred to Serbian leadership has both communist and nationalist.⁶⁶ Sudetic wrote one day later of “irreconcilable policies of ethnic nationalism” that emerged in both Croatian and Serbian governments since the collapse of the Yugoslav Communist Party.⁶⁷ While Serbia, Serbs, and the Yugoslav National Army were described in terms of communism, both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* labeled both Serbia and Croatia as “nationalist”. For example Croatian President Franjo Tudjman was referred to as “fiercely nationalist” on one *New York Times* report⁶⁸ while a *Washington Times* article identified Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic as a “hard-line nationalist.”⁶⁹ Additionally *Washington Post* journalists used nationalist terminology when references were made to specific groups. For example, Blaine Harden referred to the “ultra-nationalist”

⁶⁵ From *New York Times* see: Sudetic, “New Croatia Strife After Bonn Warning,” *New York Times*, August 26, 1991, A3; Sudetic, “Attacks on Croatia Called Worst of War,” *New York Times*, August 27, 1991, A3; David Binder, “Ethnic Conflict in Yugoslavia Tearing Apart Its Army, Too,” *New York Times*, October 1, 1991, A1; Sudetic, “Shells Still Fall on Croatian Towns Despite Truce,” *New York Times*, October 6, 1991, 17; and Sudetic, “Yugoslav Battles Rage on Eve of Talks,” *New York Times*, November 5, 1991, A3.

⁶⁶ Sudetic, “Attacks on Croatia Called Worst of War,” *New York Times*, August 27, 1991, A3.

⁶⁷ Sudetic, “Croatia Says Call-Up Is Next Move,” *New York Times*, August 28, 1991, A3.

⁶⁸ Tagliabue, “Enjoy Accuses Army of Aiding Serbs,” *New York Times*, August 30, 1991, A3.

⁶⁹ Harden, “Yugoslav Army, Hailing Vukovar Victory, Calls Its Own Tune,” *Washington Post*, November 23, 1991, A17.

Croatian Party of Rights in his October 10 report⁷⁰ while Harden later (November 27) designated an aggressive group of Serbian youths as “nationalist bullies.”⁷¹

This shift in terminology essentially negated any distinction that was made between Serbs and Croats on an ideological level. No longer was the clash framed in terms of communists or former communists vs Western-leaning republics. Instead nationalism became the ideology that characterized the two opposing groups and was the common thread between them. Though communism vs. capitalism became less of the focus, distinctions between Serbs and Croats were underscored via different means. This marks the first major shift in the chronology of news coverage.

The religious difference between Serbs and Croats began to be mentioned more in the news pieces from the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* during this period. Religion had been briefly mentioned in the coverage of Slovenia but was further emphasized as the armed engagements were strictly between Croats and Serbs in Croatia. Chuck Sudetic reported “Ancient animosities between Yugoslavia’s Roman Catholic Croats and Eastern Orthodox Serbs...awoke from 45 years of dormancy soon after this country’s Communist Party disintegrated.”⁷² Further reports draw attention to the religious distinctness of the two groups.⁷³ An August 31 report from the *Washington Post* by Blaine Harden described the difference in terms of both religion and centuries-old rule: “The two republics sit on opposite side of Europe’s great cultural faultline. Serbs are Orthodox Christians and were ruled for centuries by

⁷⁰ Harden, “Croats Field Militant Militia,” *Washington Post*, October 10, 1991, A31.

⁷¹ Harden, “Serbian Toughs Freely Harass Republic’s Antiwar Activists,” November 27, 1991, A19.

⁷² Sudetic, “Yugoslavia Truce Quickly Unravels,” *New York Times*, August 29, 1991, A9.

⁷³ Alan Cowell, “A ‘Pause’ That Vanished In the War of Theatrics,” *New York Times*, September 23, 1991, A6; and Stephen Engelberg, “Yugoslav Ethnic Hatreds Raise Fears of a War Without an End,” *New York Times*, December 23, 1991, A1.

the Ottoman Turks. Croats are Roman Catholics and were ruled for centuries by the Austrian Empire.”⁷⁴

Though communism was no longer used as a means of differentiating between the two ethnic groups, religion became focus of divide. This factor, particularly what was written by both Sudetic and Harden above, exude balkanism. Sudetic conveys an image of “ancient animosities” resurfacing which points to the backwardness included in Todorova’s concept. Pointing to a “cultural faultline” refers to a distinction between East and West that is included in balkanism. Harden’s phrasing and recalling the history of Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian influence implies that Roman Catholic Croats were on the appropriate side of such a cultural rift while the Orthodox Serbs, with their Ottoman history, are positioned on the other side. This distinction further points to Serbia as the “other,” as being outside of Western Europe. Though religion was an obvious characteristic that distinguished the republics of Serbia and Croatia, it was used by journalists to aide in clearly defining the two sides of the conflict. And doing so by recalling historical influences in the Balkans, Austrian and Ottoman, was effective in creating a distinction between Western Europe and the “other.”

3.2 Fascist accusations

Another theme that became apparent in the news reports was accusations of Croatian fascism. These accusations served to further detail a history of brutal violence in the region and further balkanist discourse. In 1941 Nazi Germany occupied Yugoslavia and an independent Croatia was established through Croatian Fascist and Nazi cooperation. Under this partnership

⁷⁴ Harden, “Croats Seek Shelter From Serbian Fire,” *Washington Post*, August 31, 1991, A1.

hundreds of thousands of Serbs were killed.⁷⁵ Journalists covering the outbreak of the armed conflict in Slovenia referred to this event as the conflict began to shift to Croatia. After the fighting was firmly established in Croatia, the violence and killing that took place in World War II was further revived in news reports. During the time period of 1941 to 1944 Serbs were the main victims between the two groups. This point was emphasized by journalists. It is essential to note that references to “fascist” Croatia or Croats were drawn from Serbian sources. Despite the source of the information, this characterization of Croats appeared with relative frequency during this period and warrants discussion as it highlights a key issue of war reporting; access to information.

From August of 1991 and December of 1992 when the conflict that engulfed Yugoslavia was focused in Croatia there were periodic yet consistent references to “fascist” Croatia and Croats from correspondents from both the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*. On August 27 Sudetic of the *New York Times* quoted Serbs as making land claims in eastern Croatia. These claims were partly based on killings of Serbs committed by Croats in World War II.⁷⁶ Harden also made mention of Croat killing of Serbs in World War II, though he did point to Serb retaliation and thus attributed violence to both sides.⁷⁷

Invoking the fascist past of Croatia and violence that resulted in the death of a large number of Serbs served to justify the present conflict. A *New York Times* report on the fighting

⁷⁵ Gerolymatos, “The Balkan Wars,” 241-242. He cites figures of 750,000 Serbs killed between 1941 and 1944 in Yugoslavia. Additionally some 60,000 Jews and 26,000 Gypsies were killed in the same period. Gerolymatos draws these numbers from Luigi Albertini, *The Origins of the War of 1914*, vol. 2, trans and ed. Isabella M. Massey (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 18-19.

⁷⁶ Sudetic, “Attacks on Croatia Called Worst of War,” *New York Times*, August 27, 1991, A3.

⁷⁷ From the article: “During World War II, Croats massacred tens of thousands of Serbs, and Serbs retaliated by killing thousands of Croats,” Harden, “Croats Seek Shelter From Serbian Fire,” *Washington Post*, August 31, 1991, A1.

in Vukovar cited the Serbian government's claim that they were trying to avoid a similar atrocity to that of the Second World War and quoted one Serb soldier who referred to all of the dead Croats in Vukovar as Ustashi (the name for Croatian fascists).⁷⁸ Blaine Harden's dispatch on November 22 centered on the Serb-led press tour of Vukovar⁷⁹ where he described the scene:

The grotesque parade-during which corpses of Serbs with cleaved-open skulls and gouged-out eyes were displayed for reporters before luncheon was served in a bombed-out hotel—was punctuated by a long oration from a senior army colonel. "I want you to remember what a town looks like after the Ustashi have been there. I would ask you to see the fate of Vukovar as the reincarnation of fascism."⁸⁰

Though Harden fully recognized the agenda of the Serb press-tour as propaganda and attributed blame to both Serbs and Croats the consistent references to "fascist" allegations lends itself to viewing Croats as the "villain" of the conflict.

Another Harden piece drew attention to Ustashi imagery taken on by Croatian militiamen:

⁷⁸ Sudetic, "Croatian Cityscape; Stray Dogs, Rows of Wounded, Piles of Dead," *New York Times*, November 21, 1991, A1.

⁷⁹ Vukovar was captured by the Serbs on November 17, 1991; Power, 26.

⁸⁰ Harden, "Vukovar Carnage Fules Atrocity Claims," *Washington Post*, November 22, 1991, A1.

On the wooden stocks of their automatic weapons, some fighters in the militia have carved the U symbol of Croatia's notorious Ustashi government that, in 1941-45, collaborated with Adolf Hitler and forcibly converted Eastern Orthodox Serbs to Catholicism. Hundreds of thousands of Serbs not converted were expelled from the fascist state or murdered in death camps.⁸¹

In this particular case, Harden did not quote from Serbian sources accusing making fascist accusations, but rather he directly connected Croatian militiamen with the violent history of fascism in Croatia.

Framing the conflict in terms of Serbia protecting ethnic Serbs provided a justification for Serbia to continue fighting in Croatia. While this served a purpose for the Serbian government, the reporting of this reasoning, the consistent quoting Serb accusations of Croat fascism, and the continued reference to the Second World War II slaughter of Serbs created a sense of a history of savage violence that was specific to Croatians.

3.2.1 Access to sources

The issue of sources available to correspondents stationed in Yugoslavia must be addressed at this point. It appears that these journalists from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* had to rely heavily on biased Serbian sources as evidenced by the large amount of quotes drawn from Serbians. This obviously limited the information that was available to these journalists and what information was available favored Serbians. Howard

⁸¹ Harden, "Croats Field Militant Milita," *Washington Post*, October 10, 1991, A31.

Tumber and Frank Webster, in *Journalists Under Fire: Information War and Journalistic Practices* focus on the challenges journalists face when covering and writing about armed conflict. One particular point made by Tumber and Webster that is relevant to this discussion is “perception management.”⁸² This term refers to combatants’ attempts to manage how they are perceived by controlling information given to journalists. Put even more simply, combatants are trying to make themselves look good, or at least not so bad. This is certainly what was taking place after the fall of Vukovar when international press was led around the city and shown and told the Serb version of events. Given the fact that Serbs had a monopoly on information, particularly in the case of Vukovar after it fell to Serbian forces, it is understandable that Serb sources are heavily quoted. Journalists have to work with what information is available in order to do their best to “tell it like it is” and produce some sort of story.⁸³

Despite the limited information that may have been available to journalists at the time, what comes out of the news stories from both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* is a sense that there is a history of violence in this region. There are reports that highlight either Yugoslavia or the Balkans as having long been a place where conflict has been common. One *Washington Post* article cited assassinations as playing a “pivotal role” in the “convuluted politics” of the country.⁸⁴ Another piece states, “As in many past Balkan wars, a majority point of conflict in this one has been allegations by both sides of unspeakable atrocities by the enemy.”⁸⁵ While these are two examples that point to Yugoslavia and the Balkan region as

⁸² Tumber and Webster, 19.

⁸³ Ibid., 18-19.

⁸⁴ Harden, “Croats Field Militant Militia,” *Washington Post*, October 10, 1991, A31.

⁸⁵ Harden, “Vukovar Carnage Fuels Atrocity Claims,” *Washington Post*, November 22, 1991, A1.

having long been using violence, the majority news reports point to the violent past of Croatia and how it affected Serbs. Pointing to such violent characteristics aligns itself with Todorova's conception of balkanism in that a long history of violence that permeates to the present time is "backward" and "barbian."⁸⁶

3.3 Stories on the ground

There is evidence of balkanism in the war journalism that was produced in the coverage coming out of Croatia in the fall and winter of 1991 from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. In this period a shift in the content of reporting began to emerge. As violence increased and casualties began to mount, journalists from both publications began to turn their focus to the effects of armed conflict and those affected. Tumber and Webster found an importance placed on compassion when reporting from zones of conflict. This compassion is derived from war journalists natural tendency to become affected by and involved in what and who they are reporting on. They place emphasis on remaining sensitive to the circumstances from which they are reporting, specifically when dealing with human suffering.⁸⁷

More news stories began to appear when fighting was focused in Croatia when compared coverage revolving around the conflict in Slovenia. This is due to the longer duration of the conflict. There were stories that called attention to the small republic of Slovenia facing off against the much better equipped Yugoslav national army or the difficulty of inter-ethnic

⁸⁶ Todorova, 3-20.

⁸⁷ Tumber and Webster, 72-73.

fighting.⁸⁸ These types of stories exuding a certain amount of sympathy become more common in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* coverage that centered on Croatia. This marks a change in the content of reports coming from both newspapers. More space became devoted to stories of human suffering than previous coverage.

3.3.1 Dubrovnik

Dubrovnik is a unique case in the reporting that took place in Croatia between August and December of 1991 given its rich history. The city was founded in the seventh century and was once the seat of the Republic of Ragusa. UNESCO deemed it a “masterpiece of human creative genius” and named it a UNESCO World Heritage site.⁸⁹ As pointed out by Joseph Pearson in his “Dubrovnik’s Artistic Patrimony, and its Role in War Reporting (1991)” British print media focused attention on the historical value of Dubrovnik. This was also the case for both the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* reporters stationed in Yugoslavia. Journalists pointed to the city’s status as a UNESCO protected⁹⁰ and the historic Old Town and its

⁸⁸ Stephen Kinzer, “Republic’s Soldiers Wait for a Charge by Federal Army, *New York Times*, June 29, 1991, 4; Harden, “Fighting Spotlights Slovenia’s Ingenuity and Arms,” *Washington Post*, June 29, 1991, A19; and Henry Kamm, “Slovenes Haunted by Clashes Over Secession,” *New York Times*, July 12, 1991, A4.

⁸⁹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. Paris: World Heritage Center 2 February 2005: cited in Joseph Pearson, “Dubrovnik’s Artistic Patrimony, and its Role in War Reporting (1991),” *European History Quarterly* 40 (2010): 198.

⁹⁰ For example see: Laura Silber, “Yugoslav Forces Attack Dubrovnik Resort,” *Washington Post*, October 3, 1991, A39; and Sudetic, “Serbian Forces Push Up Coast Toward Dubrovnik,” *New York Times*, October 25, 1991, A5.

architecture.⁹¹ What also appeared with the coverage of Dubrovnik were stories related to the human suffering of the city's inhabitants.

The siege on Dubrovnik came in two stages. The first was between October 1 and 24 while the second lasted from October 30 and to December 6.⁹² While there were reports that detailed the historic significance of the city, there were also reports that exhibited compassion for the people living under siege. A *New York Times* article dated November 13 drew attention to the citizens of Dubrovnik and conditions under siege:

Dubrovnik's 50,000 people, who have been trapped in the city without normal water, telephone and electric service since Oct. 1, are reported to be running out of drinking water, food, and medicine. About 90 percent of Dubrovnik's population is Croatian.

"I don't understand why people don't want to help us," a sobbing Pavo Sisevic, 41, told a Reuters News Agency correspondent who managed to file a report from the city today. "We don't have any weapons to fight with. We are helpless. My house, my town will vanish. Presidents and kings once came to this city, everyone came, and now they won't help us."⁹³

⁹¹ There are many examples that highlighted the historical value of the Dubrovnik and its architecture. I cite two examples here: it was deemed a "masterpiece of Renaissance and Baroque architecture that was for centuries the hub of a wealthy, independent city-state" by Sudetic, "Shells Still Fall on Croatian Towns Despite Truce," *New York Times*, October 6, 1991, 17; Laura Silber pointed out the medieval and Byzantine influences in her "Army Denies Shelling Dubrovnik," *Washington Post*, October 22, 1991, A23; and Andrej Gustincic, "Shelling by Army Crippled Dubrovnik," *Washington Post*, November 13, 1991, A21.

⁹² Power, 23-27.

⁹³ Sudetic, "Shelling of Besieged Yugoslav Port Is Intensified," *New York Times*, November 13, 1991, A12.

The plight of Croatians in Dubrovnik is clearly pointed out by Sudetic. By reporting the desperate situation of the citizens of Dubrovnik he exhibits compassion as highlighted by Tumber and Webster.

Days later a ship carried some 2,000 people from Dubrovnik further up the coast of Croatia. David Binder from the *New York Times* wrote of the “misery” these refugees endured:

...[S]tarting at 7 A.M., thousands of refugees hoping for a spot on the boat gathered at the Gruz Harbor in the northwestern part of Dubrovnik alongside dockyards still aflame from the army bombardment. There were wounded people, old men on crutches, nuns in coifs, pregnant women and young mothers breast-feeding infants.

A few minutes out of the harbor, the [ship] began to buck choppy seas that tossed passengers about the gangways and flung bottles and other loose gear onto the decks. Waves striking the rocks on shore bounded 18 feet or more in to the air.

Soon many of the passengers, including bewildered children, were seasick....

The evacuees were jammed in the cabins – six children to a narrow bed, in the gangways, on the stairs and in the public rooms. They had a night and at least another day before they reached a port up the Adriatic coast...under Croatian control.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Binder, “Refugees Pack Boat Out of Dubrovnik,” *New York Times*, November 15, 1991, A3.

Binder points to the overall miserable situation (“departing amid the flaming wreckage of the bombardment”) faced by a set of defenseless people (pregnant women, young mothers and their children, the wounded, old men, nuns) and the cramped conditions when being removed from their homes. This situation illustrates a sympathetic situation to report on.

A report regarding refugees from Dubrovnik was also written for the *Washington Post*. Dated November 17, the story similarly described the difficult journey:

Convulsed with fear and nausea after a heartbreaking journey, 3,000 women, children and injured and elderly civilians reached the Yugoslav port of Pula early today after being evacuated from the besieged city of Dubrovnik.

The ferry Slavija, tossed by stormy waters and holding more than four times its normal load of passengers, docked after a smothering 36-hour journey.

Passengers shed tears Thursday at seeing their walled city disappear to a dot on the horizon. But their mood changed to fear when the Yugoslav army sent soldiers to board and search the ship.

Many suffered seasickness during the journey...A cacophony of moaning, crying and pleading rose from corridors and stairwells. Passengers hung onto railings, their clothes and hair drenched by the spray of six-foot waves.

“Is there a God?” cried one woman thrashing on the deck as the ship rocked back and forth.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Andrej Gustincic, “Dubrovnik Refugees Leave One Storm for Another,” *Washington Post*, November 17, 1991, A35.

Again the set of circumstances of these people leaving their besieged city via a turbulent and suffocating provides evidence of the journalist's sensitivity to the situation and through writing evoke sympathy from the reader. These examples fit with Tumber and Webster's notion that the role of the journalist reporting on war is to exhibit a sense of compassion in their writing⁹⁶ and also to grab the attention and sentiments of their audiences and open their eyes to conflict that the journalists is plays witness to.⁹⁷

In examining the coverage that revolved around the conflict that took place in Croatia, one finds a shift in the content and style of reporting from both the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. Journalists began to use less balkanist language in their content and began to shift their attention to the human suffering that was taking place as the armed conflict expanded and more casualties resulted. While distinctions continued to be made between Serbs and Croats, they were defined in terms of religion rather than ideology, as was the case for Slovenia. This East-West distinction faded as Yugoslavia, and specifically Croats, were framed in terms of having a history of violence. In the Croat case, it is the Second World War, a bloody event pitting Croats and Serbs that is recalled. Recalling an event of "slaughter" that took place between Serbs and Croats implies barbarism consistent with Todorova's concept of balkanism. Though evidence of balkanism does appear in the writing, there is also clear examples of compassionate war journalist that appear that evoke sympathy. This is a departure from the prints news coverage that came out of events in Slovenia. It marked a transition from a balkanist focus to that of compassionate reporting of events. This change in content continued as the conflict moved into its final arena: Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁹⁶ Tumber and Webster, 72-73.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 66.

Chapter 4 – Bosnia: May to June 1992

Hostilities began to cool in Croatia by the end of December of 1991⁹⁸ and began to move into Bosnia at the start of 1992. On March 3, 1992 Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic declared the independence of Bosnia from Yugoslavia.⁹⁹ One month later the focal point of conflict fully moved to Bosnia.¹⁰⁰ As the conflict arrived in Bosnia, there was a marked change in how journalists stationed within Yugoslavia reported on the event. As evidenced in the last chapter, more reports began to emerge that dealt with human suffering in the coverage revolving around Croatia and while mentions of balkanism began to recede in comparison with coverage revolving around Slovenia. This trend continued as the violence ticked upward. In April to June of 1992 violence fully broke out in Bosnia. Though some balkanist references remained in news reports from the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* during these months, references to growing humanitarian issues emerged in Bosnia began to far outweigh references to balkanism. This will be discussed in terms of Tumber and Webster's characterizations of war journalism and the role of war journalists.

4.1 Receding balkanism

References to balkanism in correspondent reports that had receded in coverage involving Croatia continued to diminish in reports related to Bosnia. News articles from the

⁹⁸ December 31, 1991 Serb and Yugoslav officials agreed to a cease-fire, the deployment of UN peacekeepers in Croatia, and the withdrawal of the armed forces from Croatia: Power, 29.

⁹⁹ This was on the basis of the February 29 referendum in which 99.4% voted in favor of independence. 63% of eligible Bosnians voted though many Serbs boycotted. See Power, 36-37.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

New York Times provide examples of the notion of the Balkans as a historically violent region. As violence erupted in Bosnia in April, the mayor of Sarajevo's bazaar district, Selim Hadzibarjic, referred to Serb mortaring of the city as "barbarism at its worst."¹⁰¹ Sudetic quoted the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Ralph R. Johnson in echoing sentiments that the shelling of Sarajevo was "barbaric."¹⁰² Senior officials of the Bosnia and Herzegovina presidency labeled the attack as "pure terrorism."¹⁰³ John F. Burns of the *New York Times* made reference to the assassination of Austrian Archduke Fran Ferdinand in Sarajevo with claims that that event "led directly to the outbreak of World War I."¹⁰⁴ Burns also referred to the long history of violence of the region expressing his fear that this conflict "may become little more than a footnote in the turbulent history of the Balkans."¹⁰⁵ These quotes are evidence of Todorova's balkanism as they refer to the long history of violence in the region and directly refer to the barbaric nature of the conflict.

While the *New York Times* focused its references on barbaric fighting, evidence of balkanism from the *Washington Post* came in the form of distinguishing between the West and Yugoslavia. Multiple articles noted Western diplomats,¹⁰⁶ Western governments or countries,¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ Sudetic, "Shelling by Serbs in Bosnia Intensifies," *New York Times*, April 7, 1992, A3.

¹⁰² Sudetic, "Serbs Tighten Grip on Eastern Bosnia," *New York Times*, April 20, 1992, A3.

¹⁰³ Sudetic, "Serbs Intensify Sarajevo Attacks; 'Pure Terrorism,' Bosnia Charges," *New York Times*, April 22, 1992.

¹⁰⁴ John F. Burns, "Sarajevo's Center Erupts in War, Weakening Yugoslav Truce Effort," *New York Times*, May 3, 1992, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Burns, "Pessimism Is Overshadowing Hope In Effort to End Yugoslav Fighting," *New York Times*, May 12, 1992, A1.

¹⁰⁶ Harden, "Yugoslav Army Says It Will Not Leave War-Torn Bosnia," *Washington Post*, April 20, 1992, A31; Harden, "Serbs, Croats Agree to Carve Up Bosnia," *Washington Post*, May 8, 1992, A17; and Silber, "U.N. Leader Rules Out Peace Force for Bosnia," *Washington Post*, May 14, 1992, A17.

¹⁰⁷ Harden, "Bosnia Siege Endangers Relief Effort," *Washington Post*, April 28, 1992, A1; and Harden, "Serbian President Purges Army's Senior Commanders," *Washington Post*, May 9, 1992, A15.

and Western officials¹⁰⁸ in their reports. By labeling governments, diplomats, and news outlets from other parts of Europe or the U.S. Western, Yugoslavia was thus excluded from being grouped as part of the West. What also began to emerge in this Western distinction was blame being firmly placed on Serbia and the Milosevic regime as aggressors in the war in Bosnia. This was cited as coming from the West and the larger international community.¹⁰⁹ Additionally Serbs at large began to be framed as the “villain” of the conflict in the reports from both the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* based off of action taken against U.N. aid attempts. An April 18 article from Sudetic included a report that Serbs hijacked UN aid trucks attempting to reach Sarajevo.¹¹⁰ Ten days later a news story appeared in the *Washington Post* that reported Serb forces again stealing U.N. trucks carrying provisions.¹¹¹

Reports of Serbs stealing provisions are related directly with the appearance of the further inclusion of the toll the conflict is taking on Bosnians. As the epicenter of fighting fixated on Bosnia and the shelling of Sarajevo, the conflict turned into a humanitarian issue as the Bosnian capital became isolated. At this point the reporting turned its attention to those affected by the conflict and the aspects of compassion as well as exposing the harsh effects of war through their writing as outlined by Tumber and Webster.

¹⁰⁸ Harden, “Bosnia’s Capital Reels Under Serbs’ Onslaught,” *Washington Post*, May 3, 1992, A1.

¹⁰⁹ For example see: Harden, “Bosnia Pleads for Help Against ‘Agression,’” *Washington Post* May 5, 1992, A1; and Harden, “Serb Gunners Pound Sarajevo In Fierce Attack,” *Washington Post*, May 30, 1992, A1.

¹¹⁰ Sudetic, “Intense Fighting in Sarajevo Threatens U.S. Aid Flights,” *New York Times*, April 18, 1992, 4.

¹¹¹ Harden, “Bosnia Siege Endangers Relief Effort,” *Washington Post*, April 28, 1992, A1.

4.2 Displaced and trapped

In *Journalists Under Fire*, Tumber and Webster describe the various aspects that comprise war journalism. One such aspect is the role of the journalist to expose atrocities or gross injustices to which they play witness.¹¹² This particular factor comes into sharper focus when dealing with the coverage of the beginning of the war in Bosnia. As fighting broke out in April and escalated shortly thereafter, humanitarian issues quickly began to arise. Large portions of people, mainly Muslims, were displaced from their homes and left as refugees. The inhabitants of Sarajevo were faced with consistent shelling that left them trapped. Both sets of people were left with limited access to basic necessities such as food and water. While there were cases of refugees and civilians under siege in Croatia (Dubrovnik for example), these issues grew exponentially in Bosnia.

As the humanitarian issue became more prescient, news from correspondents in Yugoslavia shifted their attention to covering the plight of citizens. Atrocities and human suffering was then reported upon increasingly in articles from journalists at the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. By April 20, the *New York Times* reported that around 213,000 people were displaced and conveyed the anger of relief workers who “lashed out at the European Community countries today for not contributing significant amounts of aid to Bosnia and Herzegovia.”¹¹³ On April 26 John F. Burns from the *Washington Post* provided a figure of 370,000 refugees from Bosnia forced to flee their homes due to fighting and reported relief

¹¹² Tumber and Webster, 66.

¹¹³ Sudetic, “Serbs Tighten Grip on Eastern Bosnia,” *New York Times*, April 20, 1992, A3.

officials fear of food shortages becoming worse.¹¹⁴ Blaine Harden from the *New York Times* gave a figure of 600,000 refugees.¹¹⁵ Various reports from both newspapers deemed the refugee situation the worst since the Second World War.¹¹⁶ By the end of April there were already large numbers of people displaced from their homes, the majority of them Muslim.

Harden of the *Washington Post* provided a concise evaluation of what was taking place as of May 2:

In some towns, where Muslims have been in the majority for centuries and where they have dared fight back, there has been wholesale destruction of property and widespread loss of life. The town of Foca in eastern Bosnia, on the evidence of video footage shot by Serbs and sold to a British television network, was flattened by shelling and set fire.¹¹⁷

As the conflict entered May, more reports began mentioning the difficulties and challenges faced by citizens living under siege in Sarajevo and those misplaced by the fighting. On May 3 John F. Burns described Sarajevo as a “vista of destruction”:

At dusk, with the fighting continuing, reporters on the scene described a vista of blazing government buildings, bodies of fighters and civilians lying in the street

¹¹⁴ Burns, “Cease-Fire Hold in Yugoslav Republic,” *Washington Post*, April 26, 1992, 16.

¹¹⁵ Harden, “Yugoslav Army Says It Will Not Leave War-Torn Bosnia,” *New York Times*, April 30, 1992, A31.

¹¹⁶ For example: Harden, “Bosnia Siege Endangers Relief Effort,” *Washington Post*, April 28, 1992, A1.

¹¹⁷ Harden, “Bosnia’s Capital Reels Under Serbs’ Onslaught,” *Washington Post*, May 3, 1992, A1.

for hours after the fighting began, artillery and mortar shells pouring down from the hills used for the 1984 Olympic winter games, and of close-range fighting in the narrow alleys of the Bascarsija district, heart of the old Muslim city.¹¹⁸

This illustrates the state of conflict within Sarajevo and thus the conditions facing people who were trapped in the city by the fighting. The situation was such that an article published May 14 by Harden reported, “International agencies based in Sarajevo are on the verge of pulling out,” when a U.N. spokesman was quoted as saying, “The risks are almost intolerable.”¹¹⁹

Further reports from the end of May and June of 1992 highlighted how this conflict affected those remaining in Sarajevo. A *Washington Post* article authored by Harden detailed the lack of food and water in the city and disbelief at Serbian assurances that relief would come:

Among the promises made by the Serbian government this week was that Sarajevo, where an estimated 300,000 people are fast running out of food, would be opened up to the international relief supplies. But that promise was drenched with blood Wednesday morning when three mortar shells, which witnesses said were fired from Serbs’ positions in the hills above the capital, exploded among city resident who had lined up to buy bread. At least 17 people

¹¹⁸ Burns, “Sarajevo’s Center Erupts in War, Weakening Yugoslav Truce Effort,” *New York Times*, May 3, 1992, 2.

¹¹⁹ Harden, “Serbia Rebuke Again on Bosnian War,” *Washington Post*, May 11, 1992, A14.

were killed and more than 100 others injured in a nightmarish scene of severed limbs that was filmed and broadcast around the world.¹²⁰

The same report quoted the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees at the time, Jose Maria Mendiluce, in asserting that 1 million people were near starvation in cities and villages throughout Bosnia that were cut off from aid. The situation for those trapped amid the conflict was growing worse and turning into a full-scale humanitarian crisis.

A June 12 report out of the *New York Times* described the highlighted the growing despair in Sarajevo:

“I haven’t hardly food, I haven’t water, I haven’t electricity, I haven’t gas, I haven’t candles, I haven’t anything,” said Sakir Dzirlo, a 43 year-old electrical engineer...”What will I do?”

With hardly any undamaged buildings for miles in every direction, most residents seemed to have passed the point of outrage over the devastation of what was one of Southern Europe’s most beautiful cities and to be focusing on what many fear will be a fight for survival amid the rubble. With every radio and television bulletin that carried no news of foreign military intervention, people crowding in basement shelters edged closer to despair.

“Please, mister, please do something,” one middle-aged woman pleaded with an American reporter who has been living for a week along Marshal Tito Street in the hardest-hit part of the city.

¹²⁰ Harden, “Serb Gunners Pound Sarajevo in Fierce Attack,” *Washington Post*, May 30, 1992, A1.

Almost every home within several blocks has had someone in the family killed or wounded, and many who have lost relatives have been unable to attend the burials because of the intensity of the shelling. When people do emerge from their bunkers they draw the fire of the gunners in the hills.¹²¹

This example illustrates how journalists explicitly made references to the specific human suffering that was taking place under the harsh conditions.

As with the conflict reporting in Croatia and Slovenia before, with each new movement of violence into a neighboring state, the initial reporting reverted to the age-old assumptions and stereotypical balkanization of the region. The initial focus did not immediately relate the suffering caused by the very nature of war. Instead, the war reporting nearly always extended the effort to relay explicitly just how “barbaric” the principle powers in Yugoslavia had acted in the past and continued to act at the time of reporting. It is only after the human impact of massive suffering occurring in obvious, blatant and undeniable proportions that war journalists in each successive nation-state eventually get down to the actual reporting of the true essence and meaning of war’s affect on civilian populations.

The regression in returning to balkanization in reporting with each successive move of the epicenter of violence is evidence of the built-in stereotypes associated with the region as pointed out by Todorova. With every shift in the geography of the conflict, war correspondents

¹²¹ Burns, “U.N. Envoys Resume Effort To Get Food Into Sarajevo,” *New York Times*, June 12, 1992, A6.

appear to revert to balkanism rather than human suffering. The responsibility of reporting on atrocities in a conflict is to help make certain that war journalists, through their writing, expose humanitarian issues taking place amongst civilian populations in warzones.

Conclusion

This study looked to determine the prevalence of Maria Todorova's concept of balkanism and specific aspects of war journalism within U.S. print media focused the conflict in Yugoslavia from June of 1991 to June or 1992. It focused on two newspapers: the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Balkanism refers to the tendency to refer to the Balkans as backwards, uncivilized, and separate from Europe and the Western world. The aspects of war journalism that were focused on dealt with the role of compassion within war journalism as described by Howard Tumber and Frank Webster. In war journalism an emphasis is placed on maintaining sensitive to human suffering that unfortunately accompanies war and the role taken on by war journalists to expose and inform audiences of gross injustices or atrocities that may result in war situations and create human suffering.

This writing examined three distinct republics of what was then Yugoslavia: Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia. The conflict began in Slovenia, moved to Croatia, and finally fully gripped Bosnia. The purpose was to analyze U.S. print coverage chronologically from one zone of fighting to the next and establish how the content of the new articles contained mention of balkanism and compassionate war journalism as well as how the content changed along this timeline. It appeared that there was a change in the content as the conflict progressed.

Coverage revolving around Slovenia in June and July of 1991 had more instances of balkanist discourse when dealing with Yugoslavia. Journalists from the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* referenced a long history of brutal violence creating a sense of barbarism that was characteristic of the region. There also emerged an East-West dichotomy that treated

Yugoslavia as a separate entity than Europe, though Slovenia and Croatia were made to appear loosely connected with the “West.”

Croatia served as a transitional phase in the war journalism. In the period of August 1991 to December of 1991 references to balkanism were present and instances of compassionate war journalism began to emerge. An East-West dichotomy remained in the reporting but was now framed in terms of religion: the Catholic Croats who were ruled by the Western Hapsburgs opposite the Orthodox Serbs who were subjected to Eastern Ottoman rule. Reference again was made to brutal violence, specifically the slaughter of Serbs at the hands of Croats during the Second World War. Despite these continued balkanism references, reports emerged that detailed the challenging conditions faced by Croats living under attack in the besieged city of Dubrovnik.

Between April and June of 1992 armed violence took full hold in Bosnia. Mention of balkanism began to recede and acknowledgement of human suffering became more common within the war journalism that emerged.

What became apparent was that balkanist references began almost immediately when the epicenter of conflict either began or changed locations. It appears that journalists covering the conflict almost automatically reverted to stereotypical representations and only slowly began to turn attention to the effect the conflict was having on civilian populations. This suggests that the responsibilities of war journalists, the emphasis on compassion and bearing witness and relaying the toll war takes on bystanders of war, was muted by their reversion to relying on balkanist stereotypes, though the focus on communicating human suffering did eventually emerge.

This is one confounding variable in this analysis. That is the case of Slovenia. While there was armed conflict that took place in late June and July of 1991, it was short-lived. Violent clashes in Croatia lasted for months and in Bosnia much longer. Unfortunately longer periods of fighting allow for more human suffering. The brevity of fighting in Slovenia limited the extent to which the conflict could affect the average Slovene living under wartime conditions. This can perhaps explain the frequency of references related to balkanism. Though this hinders the analysis of this particular study, it is a positive that the conflict was short-lived and human suffering was spared.

Though the length of conflicts that took place in Croatia and Serbia may provide explanation for the eventual mention and focus on human suffering by war journalists, there still is the phenomena of balkanism emerging as the go-to framework in which war journalists placed their articles. Immediately falling back on stereotypes in reporting something as serious as war can be dangerous and misleading. As Tumber and Webster note in their *Journalists Under Fire*, war journalists feel the need to do their best to “tell it like it is.” Though this ideal of objectivity is impossible, reverting to stereotypes hinders a war journalist in their attempt to provide the most balanced coverage possible.

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