

Did the US Media Reflect the Reality of the Kosovo War in an Objective Manner? A Case Study of *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times*

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In 1999, NATO unprecedently involved itself in the Kosovo War by bombing the FRY (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) without the UN approval. Along with its military campaign, NATO had to launch a propaganda campaign. The Kosovo War provides a good opportunity to check the media performance. Oriented by the theory on social construction of reality, the framing theory in particular, this essay examines, comparatively, the news covered by *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times*, using Lexis-Nexis as the database and a combination of content analysis and discourse analysis as research methods. This study found that, though neither of the two selected papers presented an obvious political slant in their reporting on the Kosovo issue, both of them failed or ignored to report some of the crucial issues related to the Kosovo crisis, such as the Appendix B of the Rambouillet Accords, NATO's cluster-bombing of non-military targets, and NATO's strike on the Serb TV station. The result of this study gives support to the theory on social construction of reality that news cannot be a completely objective reflection of reality.

The Kosovo War in 1999 marks the first time that North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) attacked a sovereign country for purposes other than military defense. By launching air strikes against Yugoslavia, NATO wanted to tell the world that it could do anything to reach its goal, even without UN approval. NATO's military intervention in the Kosovo War thus becomes a significant event in the history of international relations. Many people questioned the legitimacy of NATO's attacks against Yugoslavia. In order to justify its action and to quiet the public opinion, NATO had to engage in a propaganda war as well. For media research, the Kosovo War provided a good opportunity to investigate media processes and performance. This study is motivated by the desire to form a better understanding of Western media, in the context that the democratic countries constantly bemoan the lack of media freedom in non-democratic countries. Specifically, it aims to examine whether the U.S. media reported objectively on the Kosovo War.

Two American daily newspapers, *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times*, are chosen for examination since geographically they are both located in Washington D. C., but politically they have distinct editorial orientations. As suggested by Song (2004), *The Post* has liberal slant, whereas *The Times* "is devoted to the support and dissemination of conservative causes" (p. 39).¹ They can reflect to a great extent the volume of written

¹ Before he gets his own conclusion that these two papers have distinct political orientations, Song employs previous studies like *The media elite: America's new powerbrokers*, by Robert S. Lichter, Stanley Rothman, and Linda S. Lichter (Bethesda, Md.: Adler & Adler, 1986) to show *The Post*'s political slant and *The Times*' own statement of principles in its first edition to prove its conservative orientation.

reporting concerning the Kosovo War, the content covered or uncovered, the media response to the development of the war, and the messages delivered to the readers by the US newspapers in terms of the nature of the war and NATO's conduct in the war.

Instead of only checking and analyzing what was presented by the newspapers on issues related to the Kosovo Crisis, this study pays more attention to what was not reported or was only rarely reported and presented to the public by these two papers. From this unique perspective, the essay attempts to examine the objectivity of the American newspapers through *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times*, and the correctness of the theory on the social construction of reality.

Background of the Kosovo War

Kosovo was an autonomous region in the former Yugoslavia, which has struggled for its independence ever since it was annexed to Serbia in the early twentieth century. Both sides of the Kosovo conflict—the Serbs and the Kosovo Albanians—have historic claims for Kosovo. Albanians claim to be direct descendants of the Illyrians, the earliest known inhabitants of Kosovo, while the Serbs claim that Kosovo was part of the original Serbian kingdom and the cradle of their civilization. Whatever the historic claims are, the undeniable fact is that the Kosovo Albanians comprised about 90% of the total Kosovo population² when the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the collapse of communism in the former socialist countries started in late 1980s. Both the domestic and international political situations became favorable for the Kosovo Albanians' independence cause.

In order to bring Kosovo under direct control and to strengthen his personal political power, Serbia's nationalist leader, Slobodan Milosevic, deprived Kosovo of its autonomy in 1989. The Kosovo Albanians strenuously opposed the revocation of its autonomy and struggled for independence. With the change of time and actual situation, Kosovo Albanians' passive resistance was replaced by violent reaction. In 1998, Milosevic responded to the armed Albanian resistance with a campaign of ethnic cleansing, which caused wide international concern.

The pretext of NATO's intervention was that Kosovo was having a humanitarian catastrophe. The problem with military interventions, however, is that they often serve more than one objective. Only one of these objectives, but not necessarily the primary one, is to restore the respect for existing norms of humanitarian law. One of the most important reasons that NATO intervened in the Kosovo crisis is that NATO was preparing to celebrate its fiftieth birthday—an opportunity to set out the Alliance's vision of its future role. Underlying the Kosovo War is the US global strategy of setting a new world order after the Cold War, where the US and NATO would have a free hand to protect their interests, ideological values, and credibility.

Before the war, NATO used the threat of force. Both Serb and Kosovo delegations were summoned to Rambouillet, France, for the so-called "political negotiation." The

² Due to various factors, the demographic figures of Kosovo changed significantly over the past century. In 1961 Serbs still made up about one-third of the province's population, by 1971 they comprised one-fourth and by 1989 only about 9% of Kosovo's population.

nonnegotiable Rambouillet Accords³ was rejected by Serbia because the acceptance would mean the loss of sovereignty of the state. The following is part of the stipulations in Appendix B of the Rambouillet Accords:

NATO personnel, under all circumstances and at all times, shall be immune from the Parties, jurisdiction in respect of any civil, administrative, criminal, or disciplinary offenses which may be committed by them in the FRY. . . . NATO personnel shall enjoy, together with their vehicles, vessels, aircraft, and equipment, free and unrestricted passage and unimpeded access throughout the FRY including associated airspace and territorial waters. (Rambouillet Accords, 1999)

It is clear that the US and its allies were not interested in negotiation. What they truly wanted was to get rid of Milosevic and gain control of the Balkan Peninsular. Behind the well-intentioned purpose of the humanitarian intervention in the Kosovo War lies the unspeakable Western geopolitical strategy.

Literature Review

According to the theory of social construction of reality, news is a socially created product, not a reflection of objective reality (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). That is to say, news organization gives us only a piece of reality dependent upon interrelated factors such as ideological, economic, political, and new organizational policies and restraints. Different media theorists emphasize different factors. Some hold that the political, economic, and social system within which the news organizations operate are more powerful factors imposing additional constraints on the journalists and their organizations. Others assert that costs, time restraints, and other operational factors have more decisive impact on a journalist's news selection and content (Tuchman, 1978).

Media framing also shapes the social construction of reality and provides a conceptual and theoretical framework for analyzing the news content in this study. Entman (1993) defines *framing* as a way to describe the power of a communicating text. Framing involves selection and salience; it is an unavoidable part of the process of choosing what aspect of reality to describe and how to describe it. In Ryan's words (1991), framing is a process of "how news stories are made, i.e. how pieces of information are selected and organized to produce stories to make sense" (p. 53).

Studies have shown that the ideological orientation of a newspaper is crucial as to what, how, and how much the paper presents news reality to its readers. Mann (1974) examined the stands of 22 medium-to-large newspapers toward the Vietnam War and their reports of the sizes of the anti-war demonstrations, finding that pro-war newspapers tended to report smaller estimates of the anti-war protests; whereas anti-war newspapers provided larger estimates.

³ The Rambouillet Accords (Feb. 23, 1999) is also called Rambouillet Agreement. Its full name is *Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo*, which contains eight chapters as the main body of the text. Chapter 7 includes two appendices, of which Appendix B has been widely denounced. For further information please refer to <http://www.commondreams.org/kosovo/rambouillet.htm>

Kenney and Simpson (1993) compared *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times* in their coverage of the 1988 presidential campaign and found that *The Post's* coverage was more balanced, whereas *The Times'* coverage favored the Republicans. Song (2004) found that both *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times* favored articles that shared similar ideological and political views with their paper.

With regard to the Kosovo War, a number of studies have been conducted with an attempt to discover the truth related to issues such as the legitimacy of the war and the role of media. Scholars like Konstantinos Kouvoulakos (2000), Michael MccGwire (2000), and James Biessett (2001) have refuted the argument that it was necessary for NATO to override national sovereignty to defend the human rights of an the oppressed Kosovo Albanians. Peter Phillips (1999) even wrote that “the US military and NATO kept the American public propagandized and ignorant about our most recent war [the Kosovo War]” (p. 48). Rhiannon Vickers (2000) revealed how Tony Blair used the political media techniques to help speed up the ending of the Kosovo conflict. Audrey Lustgarten and François Debrix (2005) took the case of the Kosovo War to examine the role of the media in monitoring international humanitarian law during military interventions, concluding that the Western media cannot play the role of humanitarian mediator by reporting on the lack of respect for international humanitarian law by so-called humanitarian forces in the context of military interventions. One more study that is worth mentioning is Richard Vincent’s (2000) “A Narrative Analysis of U.S. Press Coverage of Slobodan Milosevic and the Serbs in Kosovo,” where he noted the four themes that captured journalistic attention: (a) Serbs as terrorists, (b) Serbs as evil, (c) Milosevic as a dictator, and (d) Kosovo refugees as fearful victims of Milosevic and Serbs. In addition, international organizations like the Independent International Commission on Kosovo (1999) as well as Amnesty International (2000) offered very detailed information related to the Kosovo War, among which the role of media and NATO’s operation were also examined and criticized.

As can be seen from the above-mentioned studies, scholastic researchers perceive the Kosovo War from a very critical perspective. Most of the research papers we can find regarding the Kosovo War hold negative views about NATO’s “humanitarian intervention” and the subsequent reporting of the war by the media. These studies have contributed to a better understanding of the Kosovo War and the role of Western media during the war, especially when the media was not presenting without bias. But due to the fact that these researches, except the one done by Lustgarten and Debrix, are mainly qualitative studies, the observations are sometimes doubted for the author’s subjectivity. Thus more quantitative studies should be done to give a relatively more objective investigation. Lustgarten and Debrix did some quantitative research in their paper “The Role of the Media in Monitoring International Humanitarian Law During Military Interventions: The Case of Kosovo,” focusing on CNN reports while sometimes referring to BBC and *The New York Times*. This paper is also based on the quantitative research, but with its focus on the examination of performance of the US written press.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This essay tries to answer the following questions, for which a number of possibilities are given to in the form of hypotheses. Only one of the hypotheses for each question will be confirmed to be true.

1. Did the two daily newspapers, *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times*, provide the audience a true picture of the reality with regard to the Kosovo War and the NATO intervention?

H1: Neither of the two papers provided a true picture.

H2: Only one of the two papers provided a true picture.

H3: Both of the papers provided a true picture.

2. Is there distortion in the reports presented by *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times* concerning the Rambouillet Accords, NATO's cluster bombing, and the bombing of Serbian TV station by NATO?

H1: Neither of the papers reported with distortion.

H2: One of the papers reported with distortion.

H3: Both of the papers reported with distortion.

3. What is the similarity or difference between the two newspapers included in the study in terms of their reporting of Kosovo War?

H1: Due to the different political slants of the two newspapers, *The Washington Post* is assumed to have presented more reports to justify the US-led NATO's military intervention to solve the Kosovo crisis, whereas *The Washington Times* presented more reports to show the incorrectness of the US involvement in the Kosovo crisis.

H2: Despite their different political slants, there is no apparent difference between the two papers in the reporting of the reality of the Kosovo War.

Research Methods

The paper comparatively examines the news covered by *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times*, using Lexis-Nexis as a database and searching instrument. The distinction between these two newspapers makes them proper candidates for a comparative study to examine the objectivity of the news reports by the US newspapers on the Kosovo War in 1999.

The time period for choosing samples for this study is from February 1, 1999 to July 31. This is because the Rambouillet meeting took place in February and the Kosovo War was between March 24 and June 10. The reason why the fifty days after the war are also included in the time period for sample choosing is that there are still a considerable number of articles regarding the Kosovo War during these days. Compared to TV programs that pay more attention to real-time reporting, written press is expected to produce more reports after the war, either on the aftermath of the war or making up the important information that failed to be presented during the war. Generally speaking, written media allows more room for retrospection than the oral media.

The samples are collected by searching for keywords like “NATO,” “Yugoslavia,” “Rambouillet,” “cluster bomb,” and so forth, that appeared in the articles published by *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times* between February 1st and July 31st. Not all the key words are typed in at one time. Two or three keywords are typed in each time, depending on the focus and purpose of the searching.

Apart from the content analysis, the paper employs discourse analysis as well. That is to say, it is not enough only to count the frequency of relevant keywords and the length of the articles in the newspapers. It is important to analyze the context of events. It is also important to read into details for a better understanding of the tone and the political slant of the articles. The data collected will be given dichotomy or trichotomy classifications accordingly. The combination of content and discourse analyses is expected to yield an in-depth insight of the objectivity of the two selected newspapers and, by extension, the whole US written media at large.

Findings and Discussion

The search of keywords “Yugoslavia” and “NATO” in *The Washington Post* published in the whole year 1999 resulted in 465 articles, of which 416 articles are between February 1-July 31, accounting for 89% of the total. It is almost the same case with *The Washington Times*. Out of the total of 278 news reports, 240 occur fall within the five months between February 1-July 31, accounting for 86% of the total. The high percentages of the reporting between February 1 and July 31 on the Kosovo crisis support the validity of the time period chosen for this research.

Findings of the Search for “NATO,” “Yugoslavia,” and “Rambouillet”

The searching of the above key words resulted in nine articles in *The Washington Post* and nine articles in *The Washington Times*.

Six of the nine articles found in *The Washington Post* are published before the war, mostly in February. The remaining three are published during the war, on April 8, April 28, and June 4, respectively. It is quite natural that no Appendix B was ever mentioned in the reporting before the war, because the Appendix B was forwarded to the Yugoslavian party only one day before the bombing.⁴ The six pre-war articles are relatively neutral and objective, analyzing why NATO wanted to engage in the Kosovo crisis, why the Serbian party did not sign the agreement, and what the real difficulties were in reaching an agreement between the relevant parties. Direct quotations of all the parties and key figures were often used to give a sense of the objectivity of the reporting. Then on April 8th, *The Post* published three letters, two of which were extremely sympathetic with the Serbian side, while the other one blamed Milosevic for “ethnic cleansing and genocide.” This kind of reporting can only be regarded as neutral, because the paper expressed both negative and positive opinions in making their case and did not give any editorial commentary of its own. On April 28, a month after the starting of the war, *The Post* published a very short op-ed with only 270 words, in

⁴ Appendix B, otherwise called Annex B, is described in *The Kosovo Report* (1999) as a “crucial document” introduced “at a late stage at Rambouillet” and “widely viewed in retrospect as a blunder.”

the form of an interview, where the purposes of Appendix B and NATO’s intention were questioned. This is the first and the only time in *The Post* when the Rambouillet Accord was mentioned and discussed. The only article that can be described as obviously anti-Milosevic and supportive of the NATO air strikes is the one on June 4, entitled “Air Power is Working in Kosovo.”

Similarly, six of the nine articles found in *The Washington Times* are prewar reports and had no chance of knowing the secret Appendix B of the Rambouillet Accords. The articles entitled “Peacekeeping or Peacemaking” (Feb. 17), “Adult Supervision . . . Needed on Stage” (Feb. 23), “Forward into the Quagmire” (Mar. 16) are written obviously against the US and NATO intervention in the Kosovo crisis and justified why Milosevic refused to sign the agreement. For example, the article on February 17 said that “Mr. Milosevic will agree to an interim solution as long as the KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army] does not resume its terrorist activities” and asked, “Does the Rambouillet meeting represent the third partition of Yugoslavia?” The article on March 16 claimed that “The efforts by the interventionists, mostly Democrats, to deceive us . . . is illogical and untrue.” On the other hand, the other three articles were quite negative reports on the Serb repressive operations against the Kosovo Albanians. Particularly the article on March 19 entitled “More Carrots, Mr. Milosevic?” totally supports a NATO military intervention, calling Milosevic “bully” and “Europe’s leading terrorist.” Only one relatively neutral article was found during the war period. Two reports were found after the war, with one on June 18 sounding neutral and one on July 11 holding extremely anti-Clinton views. The latter was entitled “The War in Kosovo was a Big Diversion,” accusing Clinton of wanting to go to war in Kosovo just because he was having a tough time with all kinds of scandals stateside and “unacceptable demands were deliberately included in the accord [Rambouillet Accord] because Mrs. Albright wanted to drop a few bombs.” Comparing the above 18 articles, we can see that each of the papers published only one article that was directly linked to the content of the Appendix B of the Rambouillet Accords, and both papers published negative and positive comments and reports regarding the intervention of the NATO airstrikes against the Former Yugoslavia. No obvious difference can be detected at first glance. However, if examined closely, it can be found that *The Post* reported more neutrally than *The Times*, especially in criticizing the government and the democratic party’s interventionist decision, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Reports in The Post and The Times and Their Political Biases

Name of the Paper	Political Bias (Dates of Publication)								
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	-
<i>The Post</i>	0 (14/2)	0 (16/2)	0 (17/2)	0 (18/2)	0 (24/2)	0 (13/2)	0 (8/4)	+	-
<i>The Times</i>	0 (26/3)	0 (18/6)	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
			(25/2)	(10/3)	(19/3)	(17/2)	(23/2)	(16/3)	(11/7)

Note. “0” stands for neutral, “+” for pro-NATO intervention, “-” for anti-NATO intervention, and “-” for anti-NATO intervention and anti-US government or anti-US Democratic Party.

Table 2 Reports in *The Post* and *The Times* Concerning the Cluster Bombs

Name of the Paper	Number of Reports (Dates of Publication)	Political Stand
<i>The Post</i>	1 (11/7)	Strong accusation of NATO's use of cluster bombs on civilian targets
<i>The Times</i>	0	×

As can be seen from what was described above, the Appendix B was not reported timely. This might be due to the fact that the newspapers had no access to NATO's secret documents at that time. But on the other hand, it proves the theory that news reports can never cover and reflect the complete social reality. Some facts can be hidden and some can be distorted; the reporters can be deceived and manipulated. When a reporter is framing a news report, he himself has already been framed by the reality.

The result shows that seven of the articles published in *The Post* have no clear political bias, with only one pro-NATO and one anti-NATO. As for *The Times*, only two can be considered neutral, while three are pro-NATO and four are anti-NATO. *The Post* published no anti-US government articles, whereas *The Times* published two. This indicates that *The Times* is more politically biased than *The Post*, at least on the issue of the US and NATO's intervention in the Kosovo War.

*Findings of the Search for "NATO," "Yugoslavia," and "Cluster Bomb"*⁵

Only three articles were found in the search of the above key words: none from *The Times* and all three from *The Post*. The two articles published during the war on May 13 and June 9 only mentioned the word in the sentences "the sole evidence that Yugoslav troops populate the nearly vacant battlefield below is the explosive burst of oily black smoke from a fuel tank when a cluster bomb hits home" (May 13) and "several Yugoslav troops may have been killed when an American B-52 dropped cluster bombs" (June 9). The former, entitled "8 Powers Give Security Council Resolution on Kosovo Conflict" is about the possibility of reaching an agreement between NATO and Yugoslavia, whereas the latter is only about the hardship experienced by the US pilots in spotting the hidden ground troops. These two articles do not show a distinct political stand, thus can be categorized into neutral. However, due to the fact that neither of them deals with the use of cluster bombs by NATO on civilian targets, they cannot be considered as reports with regard to cluster bombs. It was not until July 11, a month after the war ended, that the *The Post* publish an article entitled "A War-Torn Reporter Reflects," where detailed information was given on the civilian casualties

⁵ Cluster bombs are inexpensive and imprecise weapons. They are made up of more than 200 individual bomblets that float down on small parachutes and are often used against enemy troop concentrations and armored columns. During the Kosovo War "they have been responsible for over 500 civilian deaths" (Kosovo Report, 1999).

caused by the NATO cluster bombs. The article is rather long (1801 words) and offered information on why the Geneva Convention prohibits the use of cluster bombs on non-military objectives, criticizing NATO's use of cluster bombs. The result of this searching and text examining is shown in Table 2.

The findings show that both newspapers under investigation failed the timely reporting of NATO's use of cluster bombs. This again indicates that news reports are not capable of reflecting what is happening in reality. *The Washington Post*, being larger and more influential, provides wider coverage in the reporting of the Kosovo War. The fact that it published the relevant report one month after the end of the war shows its effort to make up the missing information, which should have been considered by the paper as of crucial importance. We have no way to know why the issue of cluster bombs was ignored during the war. But nevertheless, the late report on this issue by *The Washington Post* at least gives us an impression that the paper is trying to be objective and responsible for its readers. In some way, it is manifesting itself as politically unbiased.

Findings of the Search for "NATO," "Yugoslavia," and "TV Station"

Four articles were found by the searching of the above keywords, with three from *The Post* and one from *The Times*. The bombing of the Serb TV station by NATO occurred on April 16. The article published by *The Post* on March 28 wrote about the role of the TV station in launching a propaganda campaign before NATO's air strikes and had nothing to do with the bombing of the Serb TV station. The article on April 26 only mentioned that NATO "put his [Milosevic's] television stations off the air" and moved on to discuss how Milosevic strengthened his rule in Yugoslavia till that time. Neither did the article on May 4 give any comments on the bombing of the Serb TV station. Rather, it talked about the possibility of reaching an agreement with the mediation of Russia and the necessity of stopping the demonizing of Clinton in Yugoslavia and Milosevic in the US as the premise of negotiation. It is very surprising to find out that *The Post* did not give a single comment on the bombing of the Serb TV station. A slight tone in favor of the NATO operations could be sensed in the articles, but not to the extent that they can be grouped into those pro-NATO articles. Due to the fact that NATO's bombing of the Serb TV station was not the theme of the three articles found in *The Post*, they had to be excluded from this group of articles. By contrast, *The Times*

Table 3 Reports in The Post and The Times on NATO's Bombing of Serb TV Station

Name of the paper	Number of reports (dates of publication)	Political Stand
<i>The Post</i>	0	×
<i>The Times</i>	1 (24/4)	Strong denouncement of NATO's violation of Free Media

published an article on April 24, eight days after the incident, which reported directly on this incident, quoting all kinds of responses, including the NATO's justification for its own action, denouncement from the journalists rights groups, and other voices, such as the condemnation of the Italian Foreign Minister Dini. Although the article allowed room for all the voices and responses to the incident, using direct quotations, it could still be sensed that the author was against such a strike on the TV station. The article was named "West Fires Shots in Broadcast War: Hits TV Station, Airs Own Information," implying clearly the standpoint of the author. Table 3 shows the result of searching for articles that discuss and comment on NATO's bombing of the Serb TV station.

Findings of the Above Three Searches

The findings of the above three searches provide the following results:

1. Neither of the papers under investigation reported timely on the Appendix B of the Rambouillet Accord, the use of cluster bombs on civilian targets, or the bombing of the Serb TV station. The quickest response to these three issues is the one published by *The Times* on the bombing of the Serb TV station, eight days after the incident. But it failed to report on the other two issues. *The Post* did report on the two former issues, but the reports appeared rather late, both about two months after the real happening. And surprisingly, the paper just touched upon the bombing of the Serb TV station and gave no comments at all.

2. Notably few reports were found in the two papers on the three issues. From the 25 reports found in the three searches, only three were found directly linked to the three issues not widely known to the public during and after the Kosovo War, namely the Appendix B of the Rambouillet Accord, the use of cluster bombs by NATO on civilian targets, and NATO's bombing of the Serb TV station, one report for each issue. The small number of the reports suggests a lack of interest or information on relevant problems.

3. Neither of the papers reported with a completely consistent political bias. Both of the newspapers published articles for and against the US-led NATO operations. In other words, they shifted from one side to the other, reporting sometimes negatively, sometimes positively, but usually neutrally, on NATO's intervention and actions, as shown in Table 4. Nevertheless, it can be observed that *The Post* tends to be more neutral in its reporting than does *The Times*.

Conclusion

It is undeniable that Milosevic was engaging in purposeful violation of the humanitarian law to ethnically cleanse the Kosovo Albanians from Kosovo. Not

Table 4 Reports in The Post and The Times Concerning the Above-Mentioned Issues

Name of the Paper	Negatively	Neutrally	Positively	Totally
<i>The Post</i>	2	11	1	15
<i>The Times</i>	5	2	3	10

Note. "Negatively" refers to anti-NATO intervention or anti-US government's interventionist policy; "Positively" refers to pro-NATO intervention.

unexpectedly, the horrible things committed by Milosevic's military forces had drawn more attention. But the focus of this kind of reports might lead to the exclusion of other issues that took place at the same time and were as crucial as the main theme reported. And it is on this point that many researchers posed questions. As shown in the part of literature review, a large number of studies have investigated the media performance with regard to the Kosovo War and most of them came to the conclusion that media focused too much on the portraying of the evil Serbs and the tyrannical Milosevic.

This essay is devoted to examining whether real effort was made by Western media to discover some hidden information and expose all the crucial facts to the audience. The issues of particular interest for this essay are how and how much the US press media reported on:

1. The Appendix B of the Rambouillet Accord
2. The use of cluster bombs by NATO on civilian targets
3. NATO's bombing of the Serb TV station

The analysis of all the samples indicates that *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times* shared one thing in common in terms of the reporting on the Kosovo War: both of them missed some important information and neither of them reported timely on issues under investigation. We are in no position to know whether some information was ignored intentionally and the relevant reports were cancelled or delayed purposefully. The fact we know from the examination of the articles found in our searches is that some of the crucial issues related to the Kosovo crisis were ignored and delayed by the two American newspapers. This provides evidence that news reports are in no way capable of presenting the total truth of the reality, though some attempts were made by reporting the truth even at a later time. Therefore the first hypothesis of the first question posed in the essay is proven to be correct, that is to say, *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times* could not give the audience a true picture of the whole reality. They provided only part of the reality in regard to the Kosovo War and NATO's intervention.

As for the question of whether the reports presented by the two newspapers suffered any distortion, the examination finds no negative answer. That is to say, though some of the facts were missing, those that appeared in the papers were not distorted. This shows that the papers abide to the journalistic principles and media ethics of not telling lies. They could choose not to present the information or delay the information for a later time when the people are no longer so interested in that particular affair; they could not afford the price of distorting facts in their reports.

Finally, generally speaking, neither of the two selected papers presented a clear political slant in their reports on the Kosovo conflict. Both published articles questioning NATO's intention of intervention and the legitimacy of NATO's military means and operations during the war. On the other hand, both presented reports showing their pro-NATO attitude because NATO's intervention was generally perceived as an attempt to put an end to the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo. However, a closer look could help us see the fact that *The Post* reported on the Kosovo War more neutrally than *The Times*. *The Post* presented only two articles criticizing NATO, but neither aimed to accuse the US Democratic Party or the Clinton Administration for the US involvement in NATO's Kosovo intervention. *The Times* published five articles reporting negatively on the US government and NATO, where sometimes a

strong political slant could be easily sensed. This may explain to some extent why *The Post* has a larger audience.

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