



# SERBIA & MONTENEGRO MEDIA REVIEW

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SPECIAL EDITION

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## How responsible has The New York Times been in its coverage of events in Serbia & Montenegro?

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By covering a region or nation, the news media is both educating and informing its readers. Especially in the United States, the need for socially responsible news coverage is crucial. The amount of international news coverage has dropped in both newspapers and television news. This drop has led to less information for news readers and a less-informed public.

"Does any of this [quality in international news coverage] matter? There is plenty of evidence that it does, that thorough coverage of international events leads to an informed public opinion, and that this in turn influences foreign policy decisions," wrote Donald Shanor in his book *News From Abroad*.

In print media, *The New York Times* is well-known as a leader in the United States for providing readers with a well-rounded, international news articles.

But is this always the case?

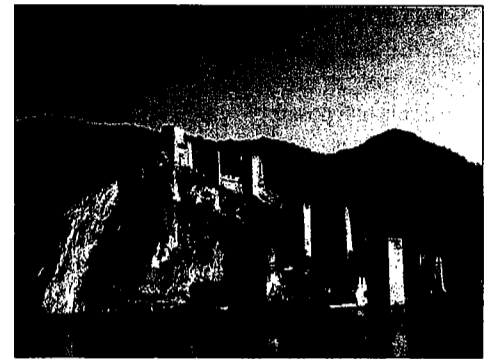
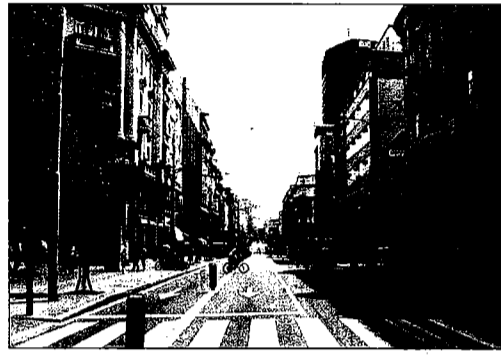
Examining *The New York Times* coverage of Serbia & Montenegro over the previous 12 months (May 2005-May 2006) will provide a good example of whether they are covering a particular nation in Southeastern Europe responsibly.

First, the question is what is social responsibility?

"The media has a job to educate people," said Jelena Cukic, spokesperson for the Serbian Embassy. "You can't just report on how important these issues are, but also on the progress being made in the country."

For a nation such as Serbia & Montenegro, news coverage must not only inform readers of the day's important events, but also inform them of the context in which they appear.

This type of context would not be necessary for better known



All Images courtesy of Wikipedia.org

Three views of Serbia: Monument of King Peter I, Zrenjanin (left), downtown Belgrade (center) and Golubac fortress on the Danube river in northeastern Serbia (right).

nations such as Germany or France, but for countries such as Serbia & Montenegro it is essential to provide historical context. Otherwise, the reader is left in the dark with only an event, placed out of context to comprehend.

Serbia & Montenegro is nation of almost 11 million people located in Southeastern Europe. It was once part of the larger Yugoslavia nation, but all that remains is a loose federation between the larger republic of Serbia and the smaller, mountainous Montenegro republic.

During 1991-1995, the Yugoslav Federation fought a deadly and violent civil war with its former provinces Bosnia & Herzegovina, Slovenia and Croatia.

This event led to an increase in international news coverage as did the 1999 bombing of Serbia by NATO airplanes.

Because of these events last decade, the American readership has a vague sense of the nation of Serbia & Montenegro, but has little context as to where the nation now stands, the problems it faces and why certain events are currently taking place there.

Being socially responsible in international news coverage

means providing a reader with the tools necessary to understand a people or region properly.

The criteria for socially responsible coverage will be looked at in regards to amount of coverage, historical context, use of negative and degrading terms, prolonging of existing stereotypes, variety of writers and perspectives.

Each of these categories will provide a better look into how the leading international news source for American readers is informing its readership about the nation of Serbia & Montenegro over the previous 12 months.

Over the last year, this nation has had its share of major international headlines. Former Serbian dictator, Slobodan Milosevic, died in prison in the Hague, the status of the Kosovo province coming to its conclusion, the upcoming referendum on the status of Montenegro, and the hunt for alleged war criminal, Ratko Mladic.

In the context of these events and the criteria set above, *the New York Times* coverage will be analyzed and looked at to whether it has provided in-depth and socially responsible coverage for its readership.

## Amount of coverage, correspondents used by The New York Times

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The amount of coverage a nation receives internationally is based primarily on the amount of newsworthy events occurring within that nation or region.

Over the previous twelve months, *The New York Times* published 53 articles that specifically covered the nation of Serbia & Montenegro, which was more than any other nation in Southeastern Europe, excluding Greece.

The Serbo-Montenegrin coverage by *The*

*New York Times* far surpassed other newspapers in the United States and focused mainly on hard news stories.

19 articles dealt with various issues regarding the war crime trials involving Serbians and their actions during the Bosnian conflict in the mid-1990s. Many of these articles focused on the hunt for Ratko Mladic and other war criminals at large.

14 articles reported on the situation in Kosovo. This autonomous province is governed temporarily by the United Nations and its status remains undecided.

Each article dealt with issues that will soon be resolved such as whether Kosovo will remain part of Serbia or whether it will be granted independence.

Nine articles covered the death of Slobodan Milosevic, the authoritarian leader who ruled Yugoslavia and Serbia from 1989-2000. He was on trial for war crimes at the time of his death in March 2006.

An additional four articles dealt with the on-going war crime trials in the Hague dealing with other suspects such as the hunt for Ratko Mladic.

The remaining articles dealt with crime (2), fraud as well as

five opinion and editorial pieces on Milosevic's death, the war crime trials, the death of a Kosovar leader and a news analysis piece on the upcoming referendum between Serbia and Montenegro.

Only one article, "Belgrade Rocks," dealt with a social perspective on the people of Serbia & Montenegro.

"All that gets covered, basically, is politics," said Seth Sherwood, freelance writer for *The New York Times*. "I was impressed by how many creative and really cultivated people I met in Belgrade, and I would never have expected that based on what I've read up until arriving. Lots of people are well-versed in literature, art, architecture, music, etc. but we have this [idea] - again, because of the wars - these folks are somehow unsophisticated and ignorant, or worse."

*The New York Times* did publish more articles on the nation than any other large daily newspaper in the United States. By comparison, *The Wall Street Journal* published 9 major articles on the nation, including two editorial pieces.

*The Seattle Times* published 22 articles, all of which were written by various wire services, one of which included a *New York Times* article. Of these 22 articles, most dealt with the war crime trails, the death of Slobodan Milosevic and various issues concerning Kosovo.

See Amount of Coverage... page 3

## Prolonging the Serbian Stereotype

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Serbia has long served in the minds of the United States and Western European nations as a nation which was "the powder keg of Europe."

The nation of Serbia is known for instigating World War I with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, stoking nationalism with the blood feuds between Serbs, Croats and Muslims in the 1990s and as the last war criminals of the late 20th century.

However, these stereotypes fail to provide readers with the reality of the Serbian people. *The New York Times* has prolonged these stereotypes through its coverage of the nation of Serbia and Montenegro.

With the exception of "Belgrade Rocks" by Seth Sherwood, *The New York Times* focused solely on negative aspects of the nation.

"Belgrade Rocks" was an anomaly because it portrayed the nation as a land in which the people had something to offer the world besides crime, violence and hatred.

See Stereotypes... page 4

### Inside this Issue

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# The Editorial Board

Upon looking at *The New York Times*' coverage of Serbia & Montenegro it is little wonder that many people within the United States and Western Europe hold a grudge against them.

For most, the name Serbia & Montenegro conjures up few reference points. At the most, some people may remember the ethnic cleansing enacted by Serbs in Bosnia during the last decade or the genocide which occurred in Kosovo. These and other events have given the Serbian nation a legacy which will take generations to heal.

However, this legacy is not something which the media should promote without context. The media, especially respected international publications such as *The New York Times*, have a responsibility towards its readers to provide it with fair and balanced coverage of a nation.

Serbia & Montenegro today is not the Yugoslavia of the early 1990s. In fact, the state union of Serbia & Montenegro is no longer. Both Serbia and Montenegro now join Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia and possibly by the end of the year Kosovo as independent, sovereign states.

Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, is no longer a hotbed for nescient nationalism. The people of Serbia, as a whole, do not strive for the

"Greater Serbia" ideal with Milosevic promoted with great applaud in the 1989.

Serbia is still recovering from wounds inflicted by its own misleadership. Its people, formerly punished by U.S. bombing raids in 1999 and harsh economic sanctions, are now punished by the narrow-minded coverage of correspondents such as Nicholas Wood, a biased reporter who openly advocates for Kosovar independence and democratic reform. Most correspondents have a duty to report the news, but no to influence opinion and judgement of a nation. The promulgation of terms such as Balkan and balkanization are used by Nicholas Wood and his *New York Times* articles nearly all in reference to Serbia.

The coverage of only political events within Serbia, ignoring economic, sporting and entertainment triumphs shows the unwillingness of *The New York Times* to move past its stereotyping of the Serbs as the "true" Balkan nation: irrational, violent and suspicious.

*The New York Times* must change its coverage of the nations of both Serbia and Montenegro. While coverage of Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Macedonia focus on positive rebuilding, Serbia seems condemned to stories of rising nationalism, art theft and grave robbers.

Montenegro and Bosnia & Herzegovina more than any other nation in the region.

32 articles about Serbia & Montenegro used the term "Balkan" and 12 articles about the situation in Bosnia used the term.

This use is high when compared with the use of term in reference to other "Balkan" nations. The term was used in five *New York Times* articles concerning Croatia, three for Albania, three for Bulgaria, two for Romania, one for Greece and one for Macedonia.

When compared with the use of term in five articles concerning Iraq, the use of the term is not spread evenly and is not used a purely geographical manner.

The term works past its geographical origins and prolongs the stereotype of "the other." The nations in Southeastern Europe with the least usage (Greece, Romania, Bulgaria) are all members of NATO or have recently been visited by United States officials (Croatia, Albania, Macedonia).

The two remaining nations (Serbia & Montenegro, Bosnia & Herzegovina) are not aligned with NATO, the EU and have been in conflict with the United States in the previous ten years.

Earlier in 2005, Bosnia was urged by U.S. officials to "fix" its constitution and Serbia has been at odds with Western European nations and the United States.

"Balkan" was also used in the headline of seven separate articles over the past year. All seven concerned, at least in part, on the nation of Serbia & Montenegro. In part, two focused on Bosnia & Herzegovina and another partly on Macedonia.

The headlines in which "Balkan" appeared also prolonged the notion of the region as a romantically violent place with the articles describing art gangs, death camps and fugitive war criminals.

In soft news and features pieces, *The New York Times* refrained from using the term, thus showing the term carries with it a negative connotation.

By using the term "Balkan" to describe mainly the nation of Serbia & Montenegro shows a high level of social irresponsibility towards the reader of *The New York Times*. It prolongs the stereotype of Southeastern Europe a politically unstable region.

In particular, with 50 percent of the Balkan usage used to described Serbia, it leaves the reader with the idea that Serbia is the most "balkanized" (i.e. unstable, violent, criminal) of all Southeastern European nations.

*The New York Times*' use of "Balkan" continued this separation. By using it mainly to describe Serbia, it creates in the readership a idea that the nation of Serbia is separate for Europe politically, socially and geographically.

By using the term "Southeastern Europe," the New York Times would provide readers with a responsible geographical reference, instead of a vague, politically-loaded term.

## Is the term "Balkan" socially responsible?

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A map showing the Southeastern Europe region, commonly referred to as the Balkans.

*Balkan* adj. 1. of the Balkans, their people, etc. 2. of the Balkan mountains.

*Balkanize*- to break up into small, mutually hostile political units, as the Balkans after World War I.

- From the *New World Dictionary*

The use of the term "Balkan" to describe the region of Southeastern Europe represents the most egregious prolonging of stereotype for the nations which reside in the region. The term is unclear to a point where even the nations which belong to the Balkans is vague.

Serbia & Montenegro, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Greece, Albania, Bulgaria and Romania are typically the nations who are at times referred to as being "Balkan." Each nation that is typically referred to as Balkan does not adhere this label to themselves and usually use only in reference to other nations.

"Unsurprisingly, few wish to remain in the [Balkan] peninsula whose very name - 'The b-word' - became unmentionable for fear of

bad luck, 'toil and trouble,' like 'the Scottish play,'" wrote Vesna Goldsworthy in the essay *Invention and In(ter)vention*. "While Yugoslavia fell apart, the peninsula around it gradually emptied as (formerly) Balkan countries sought to demonstrate that their true allegiance lay elsewhere (in Central or even Western Europe)."

The term in recent years has become antiquated. As with other "loaded" geographical terms such as Oriental, the Balkans carries with it a host of prejudices and stereotypes.

"In academic debates, the 'politically correct' term Southeastern Europe has more or less replaced the Balkans, because it has become impossible to define a country as 'Balkan' with explaining oneself," wrote Goldsworthy.

While the use of the term in academic circles has changed, newspapers have continued to

use the term.

The use of "Balkans" by *The New York Times* in the previous 12 months shows a high degree of socially irresponsibility. First, the use of the term shows a level of misunderstanding about the region and the effect the term has.

"We examine all such disputes [on terms] on the foreign desk and come to an agreement on the desk based on our research and what seems fairest," said Ethan Bronner, deputy foreign Editor at *The New York Times*.

The use of the term "Balkan" by *The New York Times* could hardly be described as fair. The term was used capriciously to explain both the region of Southeastern Europe, but also used in articles about the current civil conflicts in Iraq.

The term "Balkan" was used in reference to the conflict in Iraq in five separate articles. Each dealt with similarities between the current civil conflict in Iraq and the conflicts which existed in Southeastern Europe. By using the terms "Balkan" and "balkanization" to describe Iraq shows socially irresponsibility.

*The New York Times* is effectively comparing the two regions, while portraying the region of Southeastern Europe as somehow being outside of "Europe."

"Everything and everywhere seems to be in danger of becoming 'Balkanized,' with only a tiny proportion of these cases taking place in the Balkans themselves," wrote Goldsworthy.

By continuing to use the term "Balkan," *The New York Times* demonstrated an unwillingness to see past stereotypes.

The term was used in 64 separate articles over the past 12 months. However, the term was not used in purely geographical terms. It was used to describe the nations of Serbia &

## Historical Context: Timeline of Serbian History

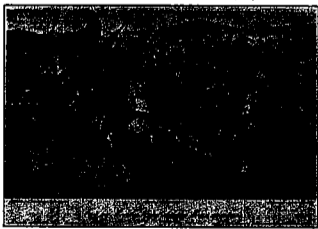
The history of Serbia and the various empires and nation is has existed within have a direct consequence and context in which news events should be interpreted.

Socially responsible coverage should include as much historical coverage as is necessary. Without explanation of the complicated social, political, national and cultural differences that exist among the people of Southeastern Europe, the news article will leave the reader uninformed of the true context of the events.

This timeline features many of the most important events which influence, to varying degrees, Serbian politics, culture and society. While these events cannot be used to excuse certain events, they are helpful in understanding the reasons behind them.

(All Images courtesy of Wikipedia.org)

1389-1878



In 1389, Serbian forces lost the important Battle of Kosovo to the invading Ottoman army, which led to nearly 500 years of rule under the Ottoman empire. The loss is a tragic and mythical event in Serbian history.

It has been exploited in recent years, especially by Slobodan Milosevic, to promote the idea of Greater Serbia as well as discrimination against Muslims, especially Albanians.

1804



In 1804, Milos Obrenovic led the first major rebellion against Ottoman rule. While Serbia would not gain independence officially until 1878, the rebellion led to considerable autonomy within Serbia.

Serbia was the first Southern Slavic nation to gain independence, tensions quickly arose between Serbia and its neighbors. Two wars were fought with Greece, Albania and Bulgaria in 1912 and 1913.

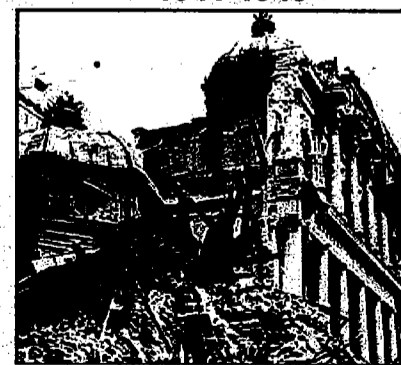
1914-1919



When Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo by a Bosnia Serb. The Austro-Hungarian Empire soon declared war on Serbia, starting the World War I.

During the war, Serbia's government fled to France. After the war, the first Yugoslav republic was declared.

1941-1945



A military coup toppled the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1941, because of the King signing an agreement with Nazi Germany.

Hitler responded with a massive bombing of Belgrade.

A fascist state in Croatia led to the death of thousands of Serbs in concentration camps. Over 1.5 million Yugoslavians died in World War II.

## Amount of Coverage (continued from page one)

"There is much less news than before with most of it being focused on the Hague trials," said Cukic. "Obviously, last decade the media seemed solely dedicated to the Balkan conflict."

Far surpassing other newspapers, *The New York Times* covered more, but did not necessarily cover more in-depth news.

Across the board, articles concerning the death of Slobodan Milosevic, status in Kosovo, the war crime trials in the Hague and the referendum in Montenegro accounted for nearly all news coverage. With the exception of the one A&E article in the Times, no other news was covered.

The reasons for this being that in the interest of the readership, newspapers tend to cover only international events they see as relevant to its readers.

"Stories are typically generated by correspondents but editors also make suggestions. The best stories are pursued, irrespective of who suggests them," said Ethan Bronner, deputy foreign editor for *The New York Times*.

By focusing mainly on hard news articles, the newspaper informed readers of the main political events, but failed to provide a human perspective for its readers. The readers remained in the dark about social and economic issues still affecting the people who live in Serbia & Montenegro.

*The New York Times* was socially responsible in that they covered the nation more than any other American newspaper, yet their sole focus on politics, crime and justice issues was irresponsible to their portrayal of the Serbian people.

## Writers and Perspectives

When covering an international story, a newspaper must decide between using "stringers" or correspondents employed by the periodical. Both come with their benefits and problems.

"We watch the wires closely, but tend to use our articles because we have control over the quality of journalism in them," said Bronner. "We know who reported them, who was spoken to and how confident we are of the information in it."

"Stringers" are typically local writers who are employed by a wire service and write stories when need be.

While these stories benefit from the local perspective of the writer, newspapers editors are rarely personally familiar with the writers. However, these stringers are reliable when it comes to unbiased reporting.

"Stringers can be of enormous help to a correspondent who must cover more than single capital or region," wrote Donald Shanor in his book *News from Abroad*. "Stringers are often respected and experienced journalists who want to keep filing for the foreign media."

By choosing a dedicated correspondent, the newspaper will know personally the writer and trust their views. However, by only allowing one voice, the chance for biased or unfair reporting increases.

Using a mix of both correspondents and stringers, or bringing the perspective of local journalists would help to reduce bias by providing a wider perspective with multiple writers.

However, the way *The New York Times* covered Serbia & Montenegro with one main correspondent, Nicholas Wood, which is not unique to the newspaper.

"This is very common," said Bronner. "We have correspondents in one place and they a country or region for several years."

In covering the nation of Serbia & Montenegro, the *New York Times* relied heavily on Nicholas Wood.

Of the 53 articles written about Serbia & Montenegro, Nicholas Wood wrote a total of 36 articles, which is over 66 percent of all news articles. Another correspondent based in Berlin, Marlise Simons, wrote an additional 8 articles. The remaining 9 articles were written by a four freelance writers and a variety of wire services including the *AP* (1), *Reuters* (3) and *French Presse* (1). The wire services were employed to deal with non-political issues such as the Danube floods and a train accident in Montenegro.

All political coverage was dominated by two voices, mainly Nicholas Wood's. By having one, non-local perspective *The New York Times* failed in being socially responsible to its readership. The intricacies of politics in a foreign nation demand the need for a local correspondent's perspective on at least some of the news stories and Nicholas Wood's political views are evident in his news analysis and his conference speeches (shown above).

In comparison to *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Seattle Times*, the number of writers employed by *The New York Times*



Courtesy: usaid.gov

**New York Times correspondent Nicholas Wood speaks at a democratic conference in Kosovo. He is the only correspondent for the whole Southeastern Europe Region.**

to cover Serbia & Montenegro was limited.

*The Seattle Times*, in its 22 articles concerning Serbia, had a total of 11 different writers and 4 different news wires. The writers were employed by a variety of different newspapers and news services, but included at least two local Serbian writers.

*The Wall Street Journal* had 4 different writers and used *The Associated Press* news service for two articles. In both papers, no writer or news service wrote a majority of the articles. In this they provided their readers with a variety of perspectives, including local Serbian perspectives, in their coverage of the nation.

*The New York Times* failed in providing a sufficient number of writers in order to avoid potential biases. By relying heavily on Nicholas Wood, they were essentially putting all their stock into one individual to provide millions of readers with an unbiased and socially responsible perspective.

## Historical context allows readers to connect present events with past

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Another issue concerning coverage of an international region is historical context. Without referencing historical context in news articles, the reader is left without a context for the events. It is the responsibility of the journalist to provide context for the readers on a region that has a complicated history which a majority of the readers are unfamiliar with.

Without historical context, the reader relies on previously known stereotypes and generalizations of a region and people they know very little about.

"We [Americans] have this [stereotype] – again, because of the wars – that these folks [Serbs] are somehow unsophisticated and ignorant, or worse," said Seth Sherwood, a freelance writer for *The New York Times*.

He saw this lack of knowledge stemming

from an unfamiliarity with the region.

For example, the coverage of Kosovo by *The New York Times* showed a significant lack of historical context. The region of Kosovo, which is still legally an autonomous province of Serbia, has a special and different meaning for Serbians and Albanians.

Kosovo is the site of the Serbian's greatest defeat against the Ottoman Empire in 1389 and has been the site of many battles and invasions since then. It is also serves as the home of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the main religion in Serbia.

However, none of the 14 *New York Times* articles mentioned this context. Instead, each article gave the demographic make-up of the region, in which there is an Albanian majority and Serbian minority.

While this is significant demographic context, the larger historical context must also be given to the readers. Otherwise, the reader is

left with the impression that Serbia has no claim to this province and they are trying to control a province that is not part of the Serb population or their history.

"We include historical information as much as possible but there are certainly times when it gets cut for space reasons," said Ethan Bronner, deputy foreign editor for *The New York Times*.

While space is definitely a concern when it comes to newspaper, there were plenty of articles in the past twelve months which had space for the explanation of the significance of Kosovo.

"They just report on how important these issues are," said Jelena Cukic, spokesperson for the Serbian Embassy.

She saw the lack of historical context as being significant. The United States has only existed for 230 years, the nation of Serbia has existed in some form for over 1000 years.

In the case of the war crime trials involving Serbian citizens and Bosnian Serbs, the historical context is also lacking. While reporting on the continued hunt for Ratko Mladic, *The New York Times* failed to provide context for why the Serbian government has been unable to bring him "to justice" at the Hague.

"They [the American news media] do not see the pressure we are feeling," said Cukic. "They still treat us as if we were the Milosevic regime."

*The New York Times* selectively chose which history to highlight in the region, such as the 1990s war and the historical Albania ties, while failing to mention Kosovo's Serbian heritage and the roots of Serbia's nationalism.

This lack of context means the American perspective on Serbia & Montenegro is skewed. By failing to provide historical context, *The New York Times* is providing irresponsible news coverage to its readers.

1945-1980



Under Tito's leadership, the second Yugoslav nation was declared. A period of unprecedented peace lasted from 1945-1989.

The socialist nation led the non-aligned movement along with India. Yugoslavia also hosted the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo.

1989-2000



Slobodan Milosevic oversaw the breakup of Yugoslavia.

In 1989, he stoked the flames of Serbian nationalism on the 500th anniversary of the battle of Kosovo.

His administration was peacefully overthrown on Oct. 5, 2000.

1991-1995

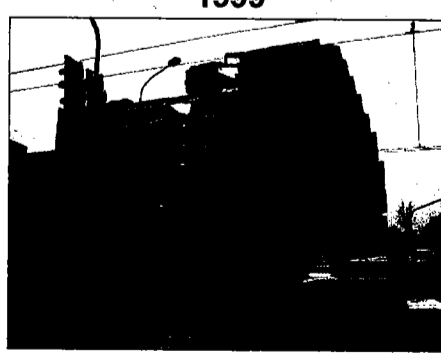


The breakup of Yugoslavia led to the formation of independent states in Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia.

The war lasted four years and cost over 200,000 lives. There were numerous reports of ethnic cleansing and genocidal acts committed both by Serbian and Croat military forces. After the war numerous military officers and officials were indicted in the Hague for war crimes.

The leader of the Bosnian Serb army Ratko Mladic (shown above, center) is still at large. The inability of Serbia to arrest him has caused a stall in EU accession talks with Serbia.

1999



In response to Yugoslavia's treatment of Kosovo's Albanian population, NATO launched massive airstrikes against Yugoslavia from March-June 1999, including government buildings in Belgrade (shown above). It led to the withdrawal of Yugoslavia's military forces from Kosovo.

The United Nations retains de-facto control over the province, although it is officially still part of Serbia. Its final status should be determined by the end of 2006.

2003



In 2003, Zoran Djindjic, the prime minister of the Federation of Yugoslavia, was assassinated in Belgrade. Nationalistic political elements were blamed for his death, although no arrests have been made.

# NY Times fails to responsibly cover referendum results

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On May 22, a referendum was held in the Republic of Montenegro to decide whether it would continue its state union with the Republic of Serbia.

Both republics were the remaining portions of what once was Yugoslavia. After carefully executed negotiations, the nation of Serbia & Montenegro came into existence in 2003, with a stipulation for a referendum on its status in 2006.

The coverage of this referendum by *The New York Times* illustrated the need for more in-depth reporting as well as the need for informed, local correspondents. Relying on one correspondent from Belgrade provided little in-depth reporting, since the referendum was held hundreds of miles away from the Serbian capital.

In the two articles written by Nicholas Wood after the referendum, neither mentioned widespread reports of fraud that was reported in articles by both *The Seattle Times* and *Wall Street Journal*.

"Political parties opposed to independence demanded a recount. Serbia, though, seemed to grudgingly accept the vote," wrote Nicholas Wood in his article "Slim Margin Seems to Signal Montenegro's Independence." (May 23)

However, the Serbian President Boris Tadic had already recognized the results of the referendum, less than one day after it was held and before the results were deemed official.

The use of the word "grudgingly" seems out of place, as do Wood's assertions that Serbia could choose to make Montenegro's separation difficult "out of spite." Without evidence to support this claim, he relied on an unnamed Western diplomat. While anonymous sources can provide a wealth of information, in this case a Western diplomat would not necessarily give an unbiased opinion.

Wood's articles failed to mention the reports of fraud by pro-independence parties, which were verified through independent monitors.

*The Seattle Times* published two articles entitled "Montenegrins Approve Independence" and "Results still uncertain in vote on Montenegro independence." Both of these articles were co-authored by Alissa Rubin and Zoran Cirjakovic.

Their articles shed light on the problems in the election reported by other newspapers in the United States and Europe.

"Local media reported numerous allegations of coercion by the independence party, as well as allegations that anti-independence voters were threatened with losing their jobs unless they agreed not to cast a ballot," they wrote.

Without mentioning the allegations of fraud, Wood put his readers in the dark about possible problems with an election seen by many as the final "breakup of Yugoslavia."

In fact, both articles by Wood and an editorial piece by *The Wall Street Journal* praised the election results as the final "breaking up" of Yugoslavia.

This is a misleading statement since Yugoslavia failed to officially exist since 2003. While *The Wall Street Journal's* article was an editorial, Wood's articles were purely hard news. To include opinion's about the final "breakup" of Yugoslavia seemed out of place and misleading.

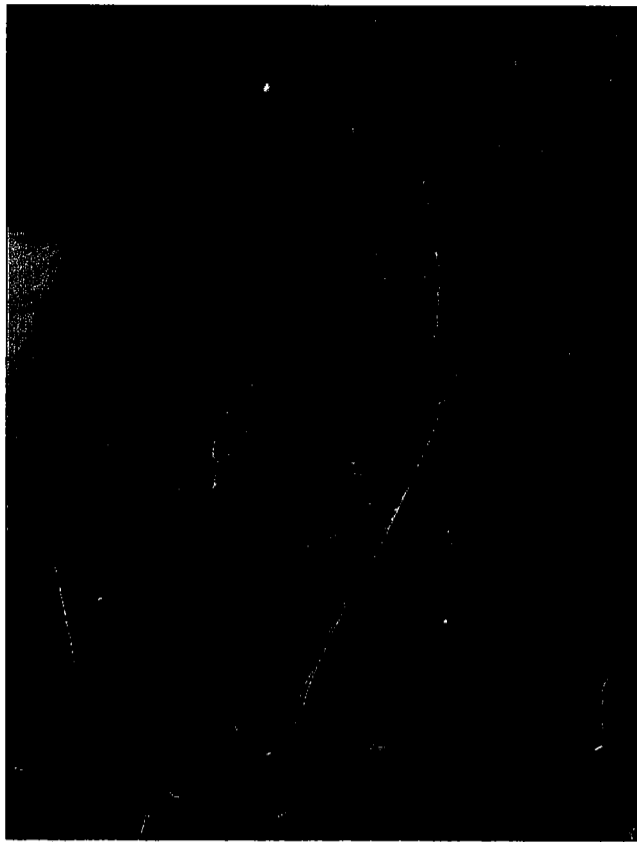
Wood also misled readers by announcing the results as seemingly official, while the Electoral Commission of Montenegro only released preliminary results, which showed 55.4 percent in favor of independence.

"Voters in this small Balkan state decided in a referendum on Sunday to end their union with Serbia, according to results released by independent monitoring groups," wrote Wood in his lead sentence in "Pro-Independence Movement Leading Montenegro Vote."

Wood never mentioned which independent monitoring groups released these. Without naming, there is no way to cross-reference his claims.

The vote needed a 55 percent approval to grant independence, meaning that there was only a .4 percent margin of error with 420,000 votes cast. With those numbers, it is a difference of only around 1,680 votes.

While the title did include the mention of a slim margin, the characterization of Serbs as grudgingly accepting the results with them chanting "liars, liars" showed a biased attitude toward the Serb population in Montenegro.



Courtesy: Associated Press

**A crowd gathers in support of the upcoming referendum on May 22. The vote decided the future of Serbia & Montenegro, with 55.4 percent approving of independence. Montenegro's split left Serbia as the successor state to the union.**

In both articles, Wood failed to interview any sources which corroborated the fraud allegations, supported the continued union with Serbia or were associated with pro-union political parties. The only sources Wood used in articles were Western diplomats, pro-independence politicians and citizens and media colleagues in Belgrade, Wood's city of residence.

On the contrary, *The Seattle Times* was able to provide its reader with a more balanced and socially responsible accounting of the Montenegrin referendum.

With two writers covering the story, an American and Serbian, *The Seattle Times* allowed for a more in-depth article which provided both an international and American perspective. This is key, especially when describing a referendum with far reaching consequences.

The referendum is widely seen as opening the way for other separatist movements to declare independence or hold referendums through Europe and the Near East. The Basque region in Spain, Kosovo and Vojvodina in Serbia, South Ossetia in Georgia and Transnistria in Moldova are all affected by this vote.

The only article to mention these widespread effects was an editorial in *The Wall Street Journal*, which advocated the "balkanization" of Europe. The editorial attempted to use the term in a positive light.

"Balkanization doesn't always deserve its bad name. Throughout history, Europe's microstates have tended to be less bellicose (shrimps don't pick fights), more democratic (government is closer to the people) and, with fewer resources to waste, economic savvier," wrote *The Wall Street Journal* in "The End of Yugoslavia."

By not mentioning the consequences of the referendum beyond Serbia's province of Kosovo, showed a failure to provide adequate context. Both the New York Times and Seattle Times failed to do this.

However, *The Seattle Times* succeeded in their overall coverage of the event. By using a combination of both local and American correspondents, *The Associated Press* provided *The Seattle Times* with articles that were more in-depth and included a variety of perspectives.

The general coverage by *The New York Times* was socially responsible, but Wood's allegations that Serbia could make it "harder" on Montenegro seemed unfounded. He used an anonymous source, but could not corroborate this with any official statements or sources (named or anonymous) within the Serbian government. Wood's dismissal of fraud allegations also misinformed his readers, because it made the vote seem as if it were free of any allegations of corruption or fraud.

*The New York Times* did cover the referendum in a mostly even-handed manner, but dismissed any dispute of the election which *The Associated Press* at least reported. *The New York Times* also failed to publish the official results of the vote, which were released on May 31. This report was reported in newspapers and wire services throughout the United States and Europe.

This referendum is vitally important towards understanding the nations of both Serbia and Montenegro, *The New York Times* should have provided its readers with full coverage of this important event and wider range of writers and perspectives.

## Stereotypes (continued from page one)

"Letters flooded in from Serbs all over the world thanking me for finally concentrating on something other than the war and war criminals in Serbia," said Seth Sherwood, freelance writer for *The New York Times*. "Many said it was the only positive thing they'd ever read about Serbia in the foreign press."

The unfortunate fact is that Sherwood is not a correspondent of the New York Times, but rather a freelance writer. His article was well received by Serbs, but the American public remained mixed in its reaction to a positive article on the art and music scene in Belgrade.

"A few people wrote to *The [New York] Times* with 'how dare you' letters, accusing the paper (and me) of glorifying a country that was implicated for genocide," said Sherwood. "These kinds of response fell prone to the typical stereotypes and unsophisticated generalizations about Serbs. All of them came from Americans, and none of them intimated any first-hand familiarity!"

While 52 out of 53 articles written on the nation of Serbia & Montenegro focused on negative aspects of the country, two in particular prolonged the stereotype of Serbs as uncivilized and criminal people. These two articles were both written by Nicholas Wood, *The New York Times* main correspondent for the region.

On March 5, *The New York Times* published "In Serbia, Deaths Set off a Lucrative Race for Profit." The headline alone equates the nation with death and profit.

In the article, Wood described a supposed issue among ambulance drivers, funeral homes and the deaths of patients. However, the article used only one source, a local family whose husband was assumed dead but was later revived. The hospitals, funeral homes and ambulance drivers all denied the accusations.

Wood made his case by comparing it to a Polish death profit scandal, but no links truly existed between the two cases, except for the similar circumstances.

However, in Serbia's case, the claims were unfounded.

This article served no purpose for the readers besides prolonging a stereotype that Serbs profit from death and are a struggling, uncivilized people. This article remained a glaring example of socially irresponsibility, because it lacked multiple sources confirming the premise and relied on circumstantial evidence to prove its point.

Another article, "Rubens and Rembrandt, a Day's Loot for Balkan Gangs" was published on Feb. 19. It described the theft of art from a museum in Novi Sad, a city near the Hungarian border in northern Serbia. Instead of focusing on the art taken, Wood connected this crime with art theft throughout Western Europe.

"According to Julian Radcliffe, chairman of the Art Loss Register, an organization in London that records art thefts and helps to retrieve paintings, Balkan gangs have an established reputation for art theft in Western Europe," Wood wrote.

By connecting the Serbian theft with "Balkan gangs," Wood is again making Serbia the culprit for a crime ring which has been merely traced back to the "Balkans," a region comprising up to 9 different nations and millions of people.

By relying on one source to connect the crime with a larger Western European theft ring, Wood proved irresponsible to his readership.

He made a judgement on the Serbian people as criminals. The headline suggested that each day, Serbian gangs are out looting the galleries of Europe, acting in criminal and un-Western ways.

Overall, with the exception of "Belgrade Rocks," *The New York Times* continued the age-old stereotypes of Serbia as a nation to be feared. This fear is not because of military, economic or political prowess, but a fear of the "other," an uncivilized, un-Western people.

The two examples shown above, displayed the Serbian people as art thieves and death profiteers. Both articles used substantial leaps of logic and were by no means worthy of print.

"There is a tragic, worldwide prejudice against Serbs given the troubled history of the Balkans," said Sherwood. "Between the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, and the conflicts in Kosovo, Serbia has gotten a very bad reputation."

*The New York Times* through its continued coverage of purely negative aspects of Serbia & Montenegro showed an unwillingness to perceive the nation in a way which would show a wider perspective.

In order for *The New York Times* to become truly socially responsible in its coverage of Serbia & Montenegro, the newspaper must present well-rounded, unbiased articles. The newspaper must not use stereotypes to describe the nation, but rather present the events and context in a clear way.