



Taking the Temperature of Public Opinion: U.S. Intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Abstract

The United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) initiated a military intervention in 1995 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, after years of indecisiveness regarding who was responsible for intervention and the American public's opposition to U.S. involvement. The pattern of U.S. intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina was guided by the nature of U.S. domestic political attitudes. Prior to the breakout of conflict in 1992, the American public was not primarily concerned with the situation in the former Yugoslavia and particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The administration of U.S. President George H.W. Bush was selectively engaged in the situation in Bosnia and preferred to defer from direct engagement in the initial months of the conflict. While under the leadership of President Clinton, the United States had a more engaged approach due to the CNN effect and the drastic shifts in public opinion leading up to the 1996 presidential election. The paper will analyze the motivation behind the U.S. intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We will assess the geostrategic and moral considerations of the United States relative to American public opinion during that time. In order to analyze the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we will continue to discuss the historical events and how public opinion shifted as a result of these events. I will conclude by discussing the public opinion trends and the political rationale for intervention that was ultimately driven by concerns over the upcoming presidential election.

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Introduction

The dissolution of Yugoslavia sparked a wave of humanitarian and military intervention in the region that served as a turning point in international relations. Throughout the mid-1990s, the conflicts in the Balkans shifted international and American public opinion which redefined America's role in Europe. The United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) initiated a military intervention in 1995, after years of indecisiveness regarding who was responsible for intervention and the American public's opposition to U.S. involvement. Following the Holbrooke mission in the summer of 1995, U.S. diplomacy in the Balkans was structured on multidimensional stability and activism. The choice of the Clinton administration to intervene in Bosnia and Herzegovina posed many questions on the domestic front within U.S. media and domestic public opinion. Following the Vietnam War, many Americans questioned and criticized the United States's involvement in a geographical region where intervention was not abundantly popular on the home front. However, the interest in the Western Balkans resulted from humanitarian and moral considerations and the desire of the United States to facilitate democratization within the region.

The paper will illustrate the timeline of historical events leading up to U.S. involvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and discuss the explanations and motivations of the United States intervention. It will assess the level of public support regarding whose responsibility it was to take action to stabilize the region, and support for air strikes, the implementation of the no-fly zone, and the favorability of military action. Finally, it will address the shift in public perception of presidential handling of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and conclude how the polling data contributed to the actions of the United States government in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Literature Review

CNN Effect

The phases of U.S. foreign policy in the post-Cold War Western Balkans were spread over two presidential administrations and divided into three phases: (1) an initial reluctance to interfere in a primarily European problem, (2) an attempt at diplomacy and (3) armed military intervention (Klemenčič, 2013). Scholars have asserted that there are two main factors that fueled U.S. motivation for intervention in the 1990s included: (1) the CNN effect, and (2) the moral indignation of the presidential administration, as both of these factors impact public

support for foreign interventions. The media “strongly influences public perceptions of contemporary political issues and may raise the salience of some issues over others” (Carey, 2001, 73). The CNN effect is the concept that violent or emotional imagery that is depicted on daily news in regard to international conflict sparks moral outrage. This outrage then translates to political pressure and a rise in political discourse whereby public support for humanitarian intervention rises (Western, 2002, 1).

Television indirectly influences political agendas where foreign interventions are concerned. The amount of television coverage during the intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina (in addition to interventions in Kosovo and Haiti) were tremendous and constituted the number one foreign policy story in the U.S. media throughout the Clinton presidency (Carey, 2001, 74). The moral indignation of the presidential administration related to the feelings of moral responsibility of the American administration to stop international human rights violations against the Bosnian Muslims and Croats. The constant depiction of news footage that streamed into the average American’s home helped to exaggerate the scheme of the events in Bosnia, and “contributed to a public consensus for action” (Carey, 2001, 74). Three years leading up to the intervention in Bosnia, television coverage highlighted the power behind depicting the atrocities occurring in Serb concentration camps. The use of media in this regard fueled American public opinion more fervently than the killings of Bosnian Muslims from 1991-93, “which hardly caught the attention of the U.S. public, in part because most of it had taken place in remote villages out of a camera’s eye” (Carey, 2001, 74). The spread of information and visual evidence of the atrocities that occurred affected public opinion in such a way that directly impacted the Clinton administration’s decision to intervene and to exhibit a strong foreign policy approach for moral and political purposes.

The Presidency and Public Opinion

During the end of the George H.W. Bush presidency, “in May 1992, 55% of those polled opposed U.S. air strikes against the Serbs, and 61% of women (the base of swing votes) opposed them” (Carey, 2001, 75). After this, public opinion on airstrikes declined, until the emergence of news regarding ethnic cleansing against Bosnian Muslims that occurred in the following month. By August 1992, 53% of registered voters favored U.S. participation in a UN-authorized intervention involving air strikes or ground troops” (Carey, 2001, 75). The then Presidential

candidate, Clinton, harshly criticized President Bush's policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina for choosing to stay out of the conflict, but public opinion on U.S. intervention during the first year of the Clinton presidency declined for several months.

In 1994, President Clinton's approval ratings dropped significantly, and the administration was concerned over the perception of incompetency in President Clinton's policies in the Western Balkans. On the domestic front, the public was generally satisfied with his presidency, but "the constant images of killings, and U.S. inaction, contributed heavily to low public perceptions of his performance as president" (Carey, 2002, 75). President Clinton catered to the results of public opinion polls in the years leading up to his reelection campaign to assess the public's view on how he was simultaneously handling multiple international crises. The motivation behind his actions during the war relates to public opinion and is reflected through polling approval rating data and their actions in foreign interventions. The variability of Clinton's position on the use of militarized force in Bosnia were in alignment in the gaps in public opinion polls during this time "Assistant Secretary of State, Richard Holbrooke argued that the situation in Bosnia had put President Clinton's reelection at risk and that decisive action was needed to resolve the conflict (Carey, 2001, 75). President Clinton and his cabinet felt that the only way to solve the Bosnia crisis and improve the chance of reelection would be to take decisive action and "to send a signal that the United States was seriously committed to forcing a negotiated solution" (Carey, 2001, 75). The American public was primarily concerned with the intervention but cared about limiting U.S. casualties and successfully achieving the foreign policy objectives of the United States. This subsequently led to the NATO bombings that coerced peace negotiations among the Bosnian Serbs, Muslims and Croats in 1995. Ultimately, the Dayton Peace agreement was viewed as one of President Clinton's greatest achievements in foreign policy during his two-term presidency.

Methodological Approach

Research Question

What was the motivation behind U.S.-led intervention and engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

Hypothesis

The rationale for conventional intervention in the 1990s were founded upon two explanations, the CNN Effect, and the morality behind intervention. Each of these explanations have an effect on public opinion which was one of the main drivers of action regarding international intervention in Bosnia. Therefore, if public opinion shifts in support of certain actions regarding the intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina, then action by the Clinton administration during the timeline of the intervention acted in alignment to meet the shift in the public views.

I will be assessing the considerations of military intervention of the United States relative to American public opinion during that time. I will be conducting a qualitative analysis in my comparison of why the United States decided to intervene and the relevant goals of the initiatives that were considered during U.S. action in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their eventual disengagement in the region. In order to analyze my case in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I will continue to discuss the actions that were outlined in my literature review and analyze U.S. presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina relative to public opinion polling data. I will look at polling data from several American news outlets and polling agencies spanning from 1992 – 1996. I will be discussing public opinion data on whether the United States and the United Nations had a responsibility to intervene in the Former Yugoslavia and polling data on whether the U.S. had an obligation to do more to stop the war in Bosnia. Lastly, I will discuss polling data trends of support for U.S. military action (with and without European support), the use of a no-fly zone, and air strikes against Bosnian Serbs. The conflict in Bosnia emerged during the end of the Bush administration and continued into the second Clinton administration, therefore I will also analyze the polling data on approval of the U.S. President's handling of the war in Bosnia.

Relevance

The impact of the United States and NATO allies, on troubled regions of the world has been substantial in terms of military intervention and humanitarian peacekeeping missions. The

actions taken by the United States during the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina left an impression on the development and stabilization of the region. The United States was heavily involved in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the mid-1990s, and the actions by the U.S. administration along with its European allies played a role given the views of the American public and visibility of the events that occurred. The violent events and genocide that occurred throughout the war played into the resolution of the conflict and the eventual U.S.-coordinated peace agreement.

Continually, the initial reluctance of the U.S. to intervene in Bosnia played a critical role of the engagement of multilateralism in the conflict within NATO. Multilateral action in Bosnia did not always go smoothly and was thought to harm the image of President Clinton in the eyes of Americans and as well as internationally. Overall, the multilateral approach was effective in stabilizing Bosnia and “the United States was able to link the alliance’s future credibility to success in Bosnia” (Recchia, 2015, 146).

Timeline Analysis

Phase One: Reluctance to Intervene

At the beginning of the Cold War, conflict arose between the Yugoslavian Communist Party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The leader of Yugoslavia, Josip Tito, adopted a foreign policy initiative in which he had a non-aligned approach to both the USSR and the United States for the duration of the Cold War. Until the 1980s, the United States and other Western democracies supported Yugoslavia economically and politically to serve as an alternative example of an Eastern European state breaking away from Moscow’s influence (Boyadjeva, 2002). After the death of Josip Tito in 1980, economic, political and ethnic crisis overtook Yugoslavia and a sharp rise in nationalism eventually led to the state’s demise. In a report released by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 1990, the agency predicted that Yugoslavia would cease to function within one year and would most likely dissolve within two years (Klemenčič, 2013, 1). Overall, Yugoslavia lost its role as a vital partner in the U.S. political strategy, a position which Belgrade held during the Cold War but actually lost in the early 1990s when the conflicts began.

In the beginning of the Yugoslav crisis, American law-makers were wary of publically offering their support for any group involved in the crisis. “The national energy and financial resources that had been spent on the Gulf Wars in the early 1990s made the United States give up a decisive role in an intrinsically European problem of the EU member states” (Boyadjeva, 2002). The European Union’s shortcomings in the Balkans raised concern for the development of a European foreign and security policy. The emergence of military conflict in the Yugoslavian federation was dealt with by western allies: The United States, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. This alliance initiated low risk actions such as economic sanctions and the implementation of an arms embargo by the western nations that were involved at that stage. In this initial stage, the United States had very little direct involvement in the Balkans. The main priority of the first Bush administration was to preserve of the integrity of Yugoslavia. The message given by the administration was that, “the Yugoslavian peoples should solve their internal problems themselves, but Washington preferred having a united Yugoslavia as a partner in the international arena” (Boyadjeva, 2002). The United States wanted a united Yugoslavia in order to have a stable partner. However, the eventual dissolution of Yugoslavia sent the relationship with the U.S. and the individual Yugoslav states into a state of uncertainty. The tensions in the region began with the declaration of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s sovereignty and escalated further on March 1st, 1992, when Muslim Bosniaks and Croats voted for independence in a referendum, which was heavily boycotted by the Bosnian Serbs.

The patterns of U.S. interventions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other UN peacekeeping missions were guided by the nature of U.S. domestic political attitudes. Prior to the breakout of conflict in 1992, Americans were not concerned with the situation in the former Yugoslavia and particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This in part was a result of lack of media attention at the breakout of the conflict and the lack of public awareness of the conflict. The administration of U.S. President George H.W. Bush became selectively engaged in Bosnia but preferred to abstain from direct engagement in the initial violent months of the conflict. The Bush administration heavily criticized the Serbian leadership in Belgrade for inciting violence in the region and sought to isolate the regime of Slobodan Milosevic through diplomatic action. The U.S. administration “nonetheless firmly believed and publicly emphasized that the conflict was the inevitable consequence of intractable and primordial hatreds unleashed with the collapse of the communist government's tight control” (Western, 2002). United States foreign policy

engagement during the early 1990s was to avoid intervening in a situation that would ultimately lead to a “Vietnam-style quagmire” in the Balkans. On the domestic front, public support was in line with the administration’s policies on Bosnia and Herzegovina. The public supported the limited policy initiatives in order to contain the conflict from spreading to areas of geostrategic interest to the United States--in particular Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania, Greece, Turkey, and Bulgaria (Western, 2002). The relationship between Belgrade and Washington and Moscow respectively, was significantly stifled during this time. After the fall of communism and violent ethnic conflicts in the Western Balkans, the media was expected to become active stakeholders in facilitating democracy by providing a forum for unbiased information to the general public (Andresen, 2017). The U.S. held this position with the rise in regional tensions in 1991, and only advocated for a solution through negotiations between the regions, without directly taking sides.

Phase Two: An Attempt at Diplomacy

The Siege of Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, began in April of 1992, after the European Union recognized Bosnia’s independence, which led to Bosnian Serbs laying siege to the city. Despite the engagement of US representatives and diplomats at various levels and the Congressional hearings on the need for action in the Balkans in 1992-1993, the U.S. did not initiate a plan for direct involvement in the conflict. In the meantime, it proved equally difficult for the European Community to reach a consensus on the breakup of Yugoslavia. The press and media establishment during the conflicts highlighted the inconsistencies on the perspectives of France, Great Britain and Germany in regard to how to conflict should be handled. From the point of view of those that favored a stronger international action, the ineffective initiatives of the European Community highlighted an even greater need for U.S. and NATO involvement.

In 1992, the UN Security Council outlined resolutions that established a system of sanctions against Yugoslavia. The U.S. proposed an oil embargo and the freezing of all Yugoslav assets to the United Nations that year, in which Moscow supported, in addition to other UN resolutions regarding the conflicts.

In the spring of 1993, the Clinton administration adopted a policy in order to “wait and see” how the conflict would unfold before the U.S. would pursue direct engagement. After U.S. President Bill Clinton took office, the U.S. administration made a conscious effort to balance the U.S. as an international leader on the world stage and the U.S. engagement in peripheral conflicts

like the ones that were present in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, and Haiti (Boyadjeva, 2002). In March 1993, President Clinton declared that the U.S. would support the principles of multilateralism alongside its NATO allies in the on-going conflicts in the Balkans. This led to the first multilateral effort of the U.S., Russia, the UK, France and Germany in 1994. The United States publically advocated for a peaceful solution and worked closely with Russia because of the links the latter had with the Serbs in Yugoslavia and other historical considerations (Boyadjeva, 2002).

Later that year, the administration implemented a new approach to contain the conflict in the Balkans known as the “lift and strike” strategy. It included the lifting of the arms embargo to Bosnia and Herzegovina thus giving the opportunity to the Bosnian government to defend itself. Nevertheless, public opinion and international opposition precluded the use of air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs as retaliation for their aggression. The new strategy went through strict deliberations and debate within the U.S. Congress and actively promoted U.S. diplomacy. However, this initiative was disapproved by some Western European allies. While supported by Germany, it was opposed by France and Great Britain, whose main concern was that the U.S-led action would spread violence to neighboring areas and the strategy pose risks to the safety of NATO troops. By contrast, the two European powers were in support of lifting the arms embargo that was debilitating for the Bosnian Muslims that were less readily armed.

Due to the active opposition of some key NATO allies, the lift and strike policy was halted. During this stage of the conflict, the goal of Washington was to facilitate a strategy of containment as an opportunity to end conflict in the territory outside Bosnia and Herzegovina. The U.S. attempted to lower the level of media attention to the conflict on the domestic news cycle by sending a small group of troops along with UN forces at the Serbian and Macedonian border, to symbolize strength and show strong American presence in the region.

The foreign intervention in the Western Balkans caused an increased interest in the role that American media can play in affecting U.S. involvement in peacemaking and peacebuilding. In February 1994, the first Markale attack on a market in Sarajevo occurred, in which 68 people were killed and 144 others were injured. This event led to renewed calls for multilateralism in the international approach to the Bosnian conflict. “After extensive debates NATO issued an ultimatum that reflected a compromise between the US and French position thus marking the return of France to a joint military operation, conducted by NATO” (Boyadjeva 2002). The

Washington Agreements and the establishment of the Muslim Croat Federation in March 1994 further impacted the progression of the Bosnian Conflict. The United States government pressured the Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats to join forces through these agreements. The Bosnian government “immediately accused Serbian secessionist forces of responsibility and Western governments and news outlets embraced the story with little or no skepticism” (Carpenter, 2011). Following the NATO ultimatum, the United States negotiated in order to facilitate the eventual settlement of the conflict through the implementation of a model that would halt all military actions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, deploy UN peacekeeping forces and force the withdrawal of all heavy weaponry from the area.

American diplomats attempted to convince the Bosnian Muslims that they would not succeed in their military campaign even if they increased their armament and attempted to attract more NATO troops. This led to a clear division among NATO allies. France, Germany and Belgium declared their preparedness for immediate airstrikes, while Great Britain, Spain and Greece strongly opposed them. The United Nation Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was established in 1992 as an arrangement to create the conditions of peace and security required for the negotiation of an overall settlement of the Yugoslavian crisis. The role of UN troops was to ensure that areas designated as “UN Protected Areas” (UNPA) became and “remained demilitarized and that all persons residing in these areas were protected from fear of armed attack” (National Defense and the Canadian Armed Forces, 2017). The Commander General for UNPROFOR, Michael Rose, insisted on reaching a cease fire agreement without issuing ultimatums that would exacerbate tensions in the region. Meanwhile, German diplomats tried to push the Croats to give up their claims to certain territories in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which led Russia to take the initiative to convince the Bosnian Serbs to agree to the status quo.

As a response to the Markale attacks, a new phase of engagement by the international community in the conflict occurred, with a heavier involvement of Washington and Moscow. The United States played a leading role as a mediator between Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims in government “aimed at the establishment of a federation between the two communities and an eventual future economic confederation between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina” (Boyadjeva, 2002). In parallel, Russia asserted its role as the mediator in negotiations between Bosnian Serbs and other ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The NATO ultimatum and the subsequent diplomatic negotiations represented a turning point of the

conflict. The U.S. and Russia led the negotiations and became leading international actors in the peace process, which was previously meant to be handled by EU member states.

The crisis that occurred in February 1994 led international institutions to avoid the option of military force as a means for solving the conflict. The multilateral actions led to the Washington Agreement, which established a Muslim-Croat Federation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and put an end to the Muslim/Croat conflict. “The agreements although incomplete undoubtedly added to the prestige of the United States and its right to mediate in the complicated Balkan affairs” (Boyadjeva, 2002). These actions led to the creation of a Contact Group made up of conflict mediators from Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States.

The Contact Group served as a balance of power structure to attempt to resolve the conflict. “The talks about finding a solution to the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina turned out to be more of an attempt to regulate the relations between the five powers themselves in the framework of the new international order rather than finding solutions to the complex relationships between the various ethnic and historical entities in the region” (Boyadjeva, 2002). The geostrategic interests of the United States and Western European countries were based upon the power position of the American hegemon and the United States’ determination for how intervention is framed and conducted.

In the Spring of 1994, the Clinton administration was criticized for its policies in Bosnia among members of Congress. Prominent representatives considered the strategies in Bosnia as too collaborative with Russia and raised concerns on the inclusion of Russian troops within UNPROFOR. The White House defended its positions by reiterating that Russian involvement during this Bosnian crisis was an effective strategy and an indispensable collaborative measure after the market attacks in Sarajevo earlier that year, as it led to the NATO ultimatum and events that followed.

Phase Three: Armed Military Intervention

In April 1994, after the bombing against the Muslim enclave in Gorazde, the international community began a more active approach to engagement in the Bosnian conflict. International actors had the upper hand engagement in the Balkans because they had the ability to threaten the use of air strikes. However, the use of these threats placed a rift between the countries that participated in the Contact Group. The threats put the interests of the United

Kingdom and France against the views of the United States on how to approach direct militarized engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Clinton administration refused to allow U.S. troops to be deployed to the area and attempted to secure diplomatic and military support for the reimplementation of the lift and strike policy, which would lift the arms embargo and then order air strikes. Subsequently, two American fighter bombers under NATO command bombed Serbian targets near Gorazhde, marking the first time that NATO warplane had been used to attack Serbian ground positions during the Bosnian conflict (Sudetic, 1994). The American media claimed that the U.S. and its NATO allies had taken all necessary measures to resume negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs, and that “force was the only existing argument that the Bosnian Serb soldiers understood” (Boyadjeva, 2002). Following the air strikes, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher publicly expressed his optimism for the possibility of a ceasefire agreement.

President Clinton announced to the public that the attack was in line with UN resolutions and demonstrated “the will of NATO and the will of the United Nations” as a function of UNPROFOR operations (Boyadjeva, 2002). President Clinton’s intention was to send a message to the Bosnian Serbs to withdraw from Gorazhde and restart the negotiation process. The airstrikes presented a threat to the newly achieved concurrence of action between the U.S. and Russia.

After the situation in Gorazhde worsened, the US and NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner called for additional airstrikes to prevent more attacks by the Bosnian Serbs. However, British diplomats categorically opposed the U.S. call for additional airstrikes citing that it was incompatible with UNPROFOR’s mandate. President Clinton had considerable freedom to act on the aggression of Bosnian Serbs by stating that they would not be allowed to continue their aggressions with impunity (Robbins and Rogers, 1999). The subsequent compromise was that NATO would begin immediate airstrikes if the Bosnian Serbs did not comply with the following criteria: (1) immediate halt of their air strikes, (2) withdrawal of troops within 3 kilometers from the center of Gorazhde, and the withdrawal of all heavy armory to an area 20 kilometers away from Gorazhde (Boyadjeva 2002). The Gorazhde crisis was a serious threat to joint actions of allies within NATO. “The United Kingdom and France warned that the continuing deployment of the lift and strike policy would lead to a withdrawal of their respected military units of ground forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina” (Boyadjeva 2002). While the crisis in Gorazhde ended in

April, it brought up issues of disagreement among NATO allies and put a rift between Russia and the United States within the context of the United Nations. Through the work of the Contact Group, the players involved wanted to make gains in ending the hostility in Bosnia within four months. The breakthrough in multilateral action in Bosnia did not occur until the following year, and “for more than two years, the US involvement there passed under the motto that it was not in the interest of the United States to interfere militarily and what it needed was protection of the humanitarian missions and UN peacekeeping forces” (Boyadjeva, 2002. 15).

In July 1995, Serb forces laid siege to the enclave in Srebrenica and slayed upwards of 7,000 Bosnian men and boys, expelling thousands more in one of the largest mass movements caused by ethnic cleansing. The Clinton administration previously held hesitations to act beyond the “lowest common multilateral” level which encouraged the Bosnian Serbs to react, culminating in the massacre (Recchia, 2015, 114). The inconsistency of the Clinton administration was progressively becoming a political liability after the Srebrenica massacre. “The events at Srebrenica in July 1995 provoked further condemnation of Clinton’s exceedingly timid approach in U.S. and international media” (Power, 2004, 430). After the massacre, U.S. diplomat Richard Holbrooke, and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Madeline Albright, initiated an effort to persuade officials in the Pentagon to push for “using military pressure to compel the Bosnian Serbs to negotiate a suitable peace settlement” (Recchia, 2015, 133). This led to significant disagreement among NATO allies on whether to initiate an active bombing campaign, until August 28, 1995 when a second attack occurred in a Sarajevo marketplace, which led France, Great Britain, Germany and the United States to call for NATO air strikes. The Clinton administration, which was in favor of intervention, began to see the air strike campaign, Operation Deliberate Force, as imminent: “President Clinton himself reportedly insisted, referring to the Bosnian Serbs, “we have to hit ‘em hard” (Recchia, 2015, 134).

On October 12, 1995, a formal ceasefire took effect in Bosnia. The ceasefire agreement was a part of a U.S. led effort to broker peace and stability in the region. In the hours leading up to the truce, the Serbs were continually moving to expel nearly 20,000 non-Serbs from the northern region of the country (Associated Press, 1995). The U.S. Defense Department preferred that the U.S. “hold its nose and accept most Serb territorial gains while at the same time seeking to persuade the Bosnian Muslims to sign a permanent cease-fire” (Recchia, 2015, 120). The U.S. effort to stabilize Bosnia and end the conflict was viewed differently among the American

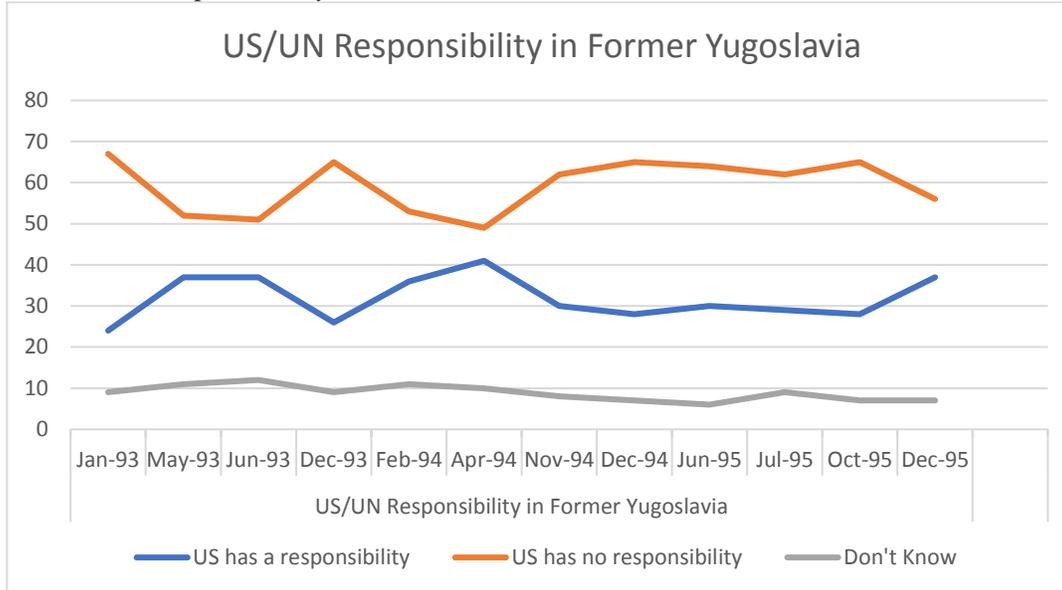
people. Those that wanted the U.S. to intervene to put an end to the conflicts felt that U.S. involvement, whether multilateral or unilateral, was the best course of action.

On November 21st, 1995 after three weeks of negotiations in Dayton, Ohio, the leaders of Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia formulated a peace agreement which was signed in Paris a month later. The Pentagon and the U.S. State Department “secured troop contributions from over thirty NATO and non-NATO countries” (Recchia, 2015, 138). However, while Western Europe was prepared to increase its own contributions, it was not prepared to do so without the help of the United States. The U.S. Defense Department conceded that immediate U.S. “withdrawal might have derailed the entire peace process, the U.S. joint chiefs reluctantly agreed to an extension of the U.S. deployment, and cooperated in securing congressional funding for the NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR). Overall, the U.S. contributed 8,500 troops to SFOR¹. The U.S. presence slightly decreased in Bosnia until 2004, when a “6,000 strong European Union peacekeeping force (EUFOR) took over from NATO” in the European Union’s attempt to show strength in the region and a renewed investment in the Western Balkans.

¹The United States contributed roughly one-third of the total NATO force of roughly 27,000.

Results

Figure 1: US/UN Responsibility



American public opinion impacted many components of the decisions taken by President Clinton in the war. In terms of whose responsibility it was to intervene in Bosnia in an attempt to put an end of the conflict, at the emergence of the conflict a majority of the American public viewed military action as a European responsibility. However, the American public's view on U.S. responsibility in Bosnia increased from the late months of 1993 and continued into the spring of 1994. In particular, public perception on U.S. responsibility changed after three significant events: it increased significantly after the Markale Massacre (February 1994), the Gorazhde enclave bombing (April 1994), and finally during the Dayton Peace Accord negotiations (December 1995). Ultimately, a plurality of Americans felt that American responsibility in the former Yugoslavia and more specifically in Bosnia was founded on the moral responsibility to stop ethnic cleansing, if Europe itself could not put an end to the conflict themselves. Each of these events were followed by critical and vocal action from President Clinton and his administration regarding the multilateral engagement of the U.S. and its allies to deter the aggression of the Bosnian Serbs. After these violent instances previously mentioned as well as the successful peace negotiations the American public shifted their views of responsibility in Bosnia through moral considerations as a result of these instances.

Figure 2: Favor/Oppose No Fly Zone

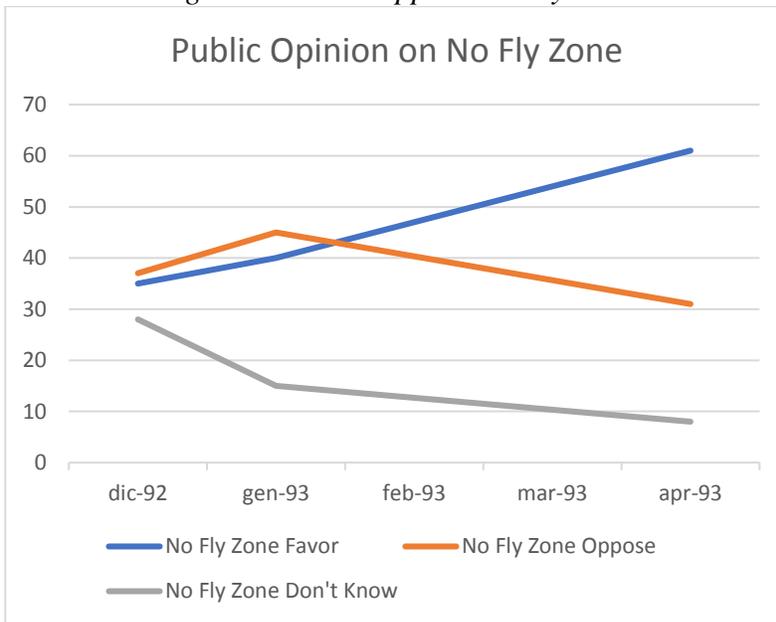


Figure 3: Favor/Oppose U.S. Military Action

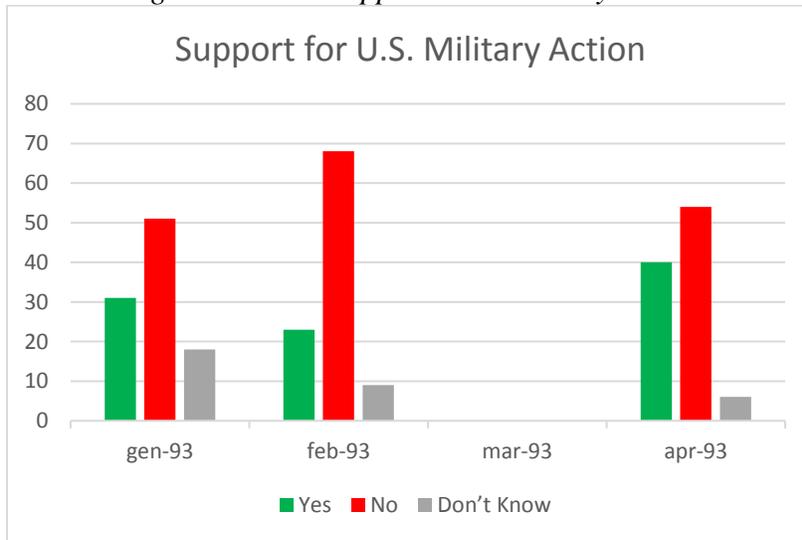
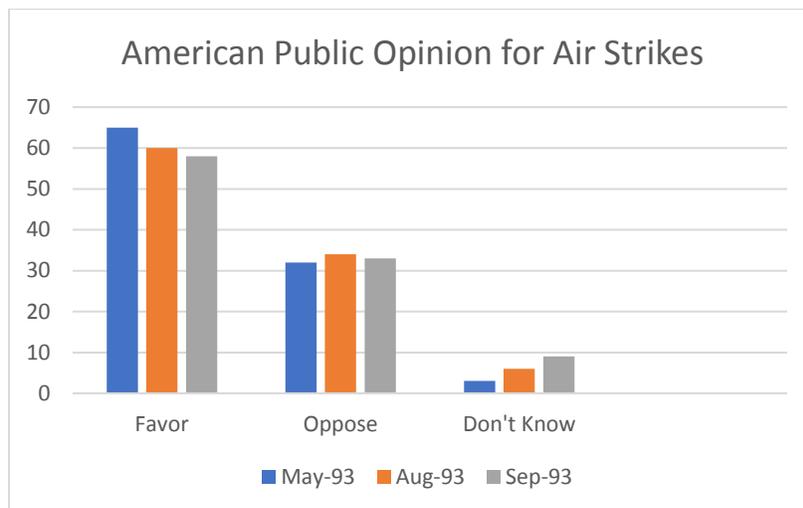


Figure 4: Favor/Oppose Air Strikes



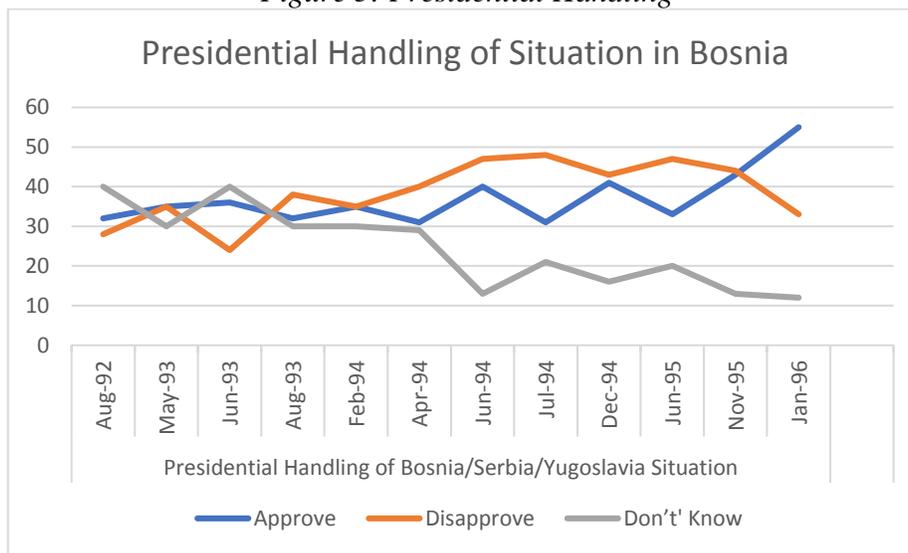
The level of public support regarding U.S. military action wavered in the first months of the conflict. When asked whether the U.S. should take military action against the Bosnian Serbs (Figure 3), support was generally low and increased as President Clinton's rhetoric became more critical on the events persisting in Bosnia in April. Overall, the support for the U.S. to act unilaterally in Bosnia was low; and the American public were only offering their support of military action if the U.S. acted multilaterally with its European allies.

In terms of early support of intervention in Bosnia (Figure 3), the American public generally were in support of enforcing the no-fly zone against Serbian aircrafts flying over Bosnia that was enacted by the United Nations in late 1992 and subsequently implemented in April of 1993. Public support in favor of the no-fly zone increased incrementally from the time it was first introduced until the policy was put in place accordingly. The level of public support for the implementation of the no-fly zone against Serb planes that entered restricted airspace generally increased between January and April 1993.

The levels of support for NATO air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs aggression (Figure 4) was relatively high in the summer of 1993, but slightly decreased over time. During this period, President Clinton threatened air strikes and publicly supported NATO airstrikes as a result of Bosnian Serbs attacking UN Peacekeepers in Sarajevo. As the conflict continued with the NATO ultimatum on air strikes in February 1994, the breakthrough with the Serbian pullback contributed to higher support among Americans for multilateral militarized action in Bosnia. The level of public support for airstrikes in the region did not significantly change between May and

September of 1993 with a majority of the public being in favor of carrying out airstrike attacks against the Bosnian Serbs if either UN troops or Bosnian safe havens were targeted.

Figure 5: Presidential Handling



Given the prevalence of media usage and the CNN effect in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war, the American public's attitudes on how the U.S. President was handling the situation either unilaterally or through NATO had a role in the decision to engage in military and humanitarian intervention. At the end of the Bush presidency in 1992, polls showed a majority or evenly split approval of the president's handling of Bosnia. However, the public tended to be more disapproving during periods of inaction by the United States while in Bosnia. This can be seen throughout the polling data during the summer of 1994. American public opinion shifted where more Americans approved of President Clinton's handling when he had a strong stance on certain events or participated in multilateral action in Bosnia. Public approval increased (and conversely disapproval dropped significantly) when President Clinton first mentioned intervening in Bosnia in June of 1993. In February of 1994, after the Markale Massacre and subsequent statement by President Clinton issuing an ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs, approval ratings increased considerably. There was another spike in approval in presidential handling in June of 1994, and although there was no significant action in this month, this spike was a result of the foreign policy shift of the Clinton administration after a previous spike in opposing attitudes in April of 1994. The subsequent trend in positive approval ratings of the president was

seen in December of 1994, when the Bosnian Serb ceasefire agreement with the Bosnian Muslims was decided after open peace negotiations held by former President Carter. This ceasefire lasted for roughly four months and prompted hope of further peacemaking negotiations, which allowed the American public to internalize the actions that were being taken to promote peace and stability in the region. Ultimately, the presidential approval ratings increased in January of 1996 after the U.S. agreed to contribute 8,500 troops to SFOR, showing a commitment to maintaining stability in the region post-Dayton.

Conclusion

After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the United States and European allies conducted humanitarian and military operations that served as a turning point in the ethnic conflicts that took place in the mid 1990s. The decision of the Clinton administration to initiate involvement in the war in Bosnia posed many questions on the domestic front regarding why the U.S. would choose to intervene in a region where there was not a clearly defined path to victory. The United States and other Western allies intervened in the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina to facilitate stabilization in the region and put an end to violent aggression by the Bosnian Serbs against the Bosnian Muslims and Croats. Although the United States did not immediately get involved in Bosnia and Herzegovina, their eventual engagement held a deep impact on the region and the legacy of the Western Balkans.

The phases of the U.S. involvement in Bosnia spanned over two presidencies with the initial reluctance to interfere in the Western Balkans due to the fact that the U.S. public viewed the conflicts as a primarily European problem. This resulted in low public support for intervention in the first months of the war in Bosnia. The primary factor that deterred the American public from support for intervention was the ambiguity of unilateral vs. multilateral action given the other international crises that the U.S. was involved in during the early 1990s. Both the Bush and Clinton presidencies attempted to achieve their goals through diplomacy but as the conflict escalated so did the necessity of multilateral military intervention. The motivations for U.S. involvement is characterized in a linear fashion that begins with the CNN effect. The CNN effect and the prevalence of media in regard to the Bosnian war was a direct factor that influenced the levels of public opinion regarding the conflict itself and the handling of

the situation by President Clinton. The levels of public opinion in favor or against the actions taken by the United States resulted from the visibility of the war through the media. As events were bigger and more publicized like a statement given by President Clinton or a high ranking member of his cabinet that also played into public view on responsibility and presidential approval. The moral indignation of the Clinton administration also played a role in the rationale for engagement, as the violent and abhorrent events unfolded in Bosnia, President Clinton exhibited signs of strength by giving public statements on aggressions by the Bosnian Serbs which positively affected his approval ratings.

Ultimately, as public opinion shifted, the actions and stance of President Clinton changed to offset the negative public perception of his foreign policy initiatives in Bosnia. President Clinton and his cabinet were somewhat obsessed with polling data throughout the entirety of the Bosnian war because the conflict occurred during a period where polling mattered significantly leading up to the 1996 presidential election. As Commander in Chief, President Clinton's desire to be reelected was a critical factor in how the actions of the United States unfolded. Therefore, intervention during the war in Bosnia was characterized by the moral perceptions of the American public which motivated the actions of President Clinton to peacefully end the conflict for moral reasons (to end the violence and practice of ethnic cleansing) and for political reasons (to successfully be reelected the following year).

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