Print media influence on the intervention decision
Case study of Kosovo

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17.478 Great Military Power Intervention
Research questions

- How does US media characterize the decision to intervene?
- Does it comport with public statements by government?
- Does it oversell the case for intervention, unrealistically?
- Case analysis of Kosovo conflict
Kosovo timeline

- 1980 Death of Tito, rise of Milosevic
- 1989 Constitutional changes removing Kosovar autonomy
- 1995 Dayton accords (Bosnia)
- 1997 open conflict between Serbs/KLA
- Feb. 1999 Rambouillet talks begin
- Mrach-June 1999 NATO bombing campaign
Many different voices, coherency is difficult

Several thousand *New York Times* articles in 1999 alone

Initial focus, NYT in 1998-1999:

- NYT Editorial Board (40)
- Steven Erlanger (64)
- Carlotta Gall (67)
- Chris Hedges (35)
- Mike O’Connor (30)
- Jane Perlez (68)
- Craig R. Whitney (25)
Early criticism of Milosevic for failure to uphold agreements
May 1998: push for NATO peacekeepers
Sep 1998: push NATO; “if necessary, American should act on its own”
Oct 1998: call for military force
Strong advocacy for bombing
Very little acknowledgement of the costs
Criticism once it starts
  “NATO is doing an uneven and unsatisfactory job “
March 1998 through Oct 1999 (68 news articles)
Datelined from Serbia (various), Rambouillet, and Washington
Practical pessimism on the ability to avoid bombing
Little analysis on the strategic.
Conclusions

- Media (at least, herein, the *Times*) is optimistic costs and strategies for success
- Hard reporting doesn’t tend to show much explicit bias, but functionally is biased towards the simple
- Complicated issues get underplayed
- Other voices can mitigate, but not consistently (op-ed pieces)
Work to do

- Shift from qualitative to quantitative
- Clear coding framework for articles:
  - Factual coverage
  - Forward-looking statements
  - Analysis of costs
  - Factual reversals
- Expand focus to other media outlets:
  - AP wire stories (by author!)
  - Washington Post
  - BBC
- Look at Albright/Clinton statements?