

Kosova: A Note from the Wreckage of Anti-Imperialism

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“The US-NATO intervention in Kosova should not have occurred.” These are the words that radical intellectuals express to me without hesitation; words which, I assume, would be unfathomable to utter to survivors of any other war.

I was born in Peja, Kosova, as an ethnically Albanian Muslim under Serbian occupation. I came into consciousness knowing my neighbors wanted me dead. My childhood was a constant exercise in caution. I slept with my clothes on, ready to flee, my parents' eyes glued to the window, always expecting the enemy to burst through the door. I recall my mother rushing to turn down the TV volume when my sisters and I would play Albanian music (we could not provoke our Serbian neighbours); my sister returning home with her hair down, after my mother had painstakingly braided it for school (her hair had again been pulled by Serbian kids patrolling our streets); the depressed faces of my teachers as they neglected the lesson of the day, anxiously reading the news; and teachers being arrested and removed from class by Serbian police.

During times of “peace” we were allowed to play outside, but only under our parents' surveillance, as Serbian cars would speed up towards us with murderous intent. It was while playing in my neighborhood that I first witnessed the harrowing human capacity to shrink. From fear of death, groups of children and adults

occupying an entire street would, in a split second, cower together in a corner, reduced to a mere fistful. We shrank often. I recall my grandfather recounting a time when the Serbians drove him in a truck packed with Kosovar men to Belgrade. Upon arrival, the doors of the truck were flung open, and Serbian civilians were invited to beat them up. The once overcrowded truck was vacated in a flash, as each person jostled and trampled over others in a desperate bid to escape. The men, gripped with terror, crawled over each other and sought refuge in the walls of the truck itself. “We sought,” my grandfather would recount to me, “to eat the walls of the truck.”

The unprecedented US attention that our plight received during the war gave us the impression that Kosova was highly significant. But upon arriving in the US, the name “Kosova” elicited blank stares and indifference. It was the encounter with those familiar with Kosova, however, that proved most estranging. As a 17-year-old, I was unprepared for the callousness of those who regarded our tragedy as negligible; I was ill-equipped to face the unsettling reality that so many denied the genocide in Kosova. Never had I imagined that I would have to prove that Serbians persecuted and murdered us, to defend the US intervention, and to plead with academics to recognize our plight. Though I was prepared to discuss international politics and critique the international protectorate and neo-liberal impositions—indeed these debates were very much alive in Kosova—I was shocked to encounter categorical opposition to the intervention that granted us survival.

That Kosova’s fate concerns few people became evident to me during conversations I had in the US with ‘radicals’ of the anti-imperialist/anti-interventionist Left. This group of intellectual-activists keeps up with the news but views itself as outside the mainstream discourse and thus as operating with awakened consciousness. It finds guidance in the principle that “interventions are never justified” and thus insists that “the intervention should not have happened.” These well-informed radicals urged me to resist imperialism, stating with cruel bluntness that “the intervention did not happen for *you*! How naïve of you to think they cared to save *you*.” They insisted that Kosova was not “really free” because of the US-NATO intervention. That my country had not been “really free” for centuries prior to the intervention did not seem to bother them; that living under the Serbian occupation was so unbearable that many gave up their lives for its liberation appeared not to faze them; that the intervention paved the way for our independence did not concern them. As long as Kosovar suffering did not reach newsworthy proportions, they were perfectly happy in their adherence to the ideological vernacular.

I soon came to realize that the war in Kosova could not chip away at the ironclad perception of the US as an empire. In these conversations, such ‘radicals’ prioritized ideological consistency and a commitment to anti-imperialism over

human life. They dismissed that the US-NATO intervention brought even a measure of relief to persecuted Kosovars. For them, the intervention in Kosova was a mark of shame for their nation and my existence too inconsequential to cast doubt on their long-held anti-intervention principle. Thus, without hesitation they uttered, “the intervention was the real atrocity”—to someone whose life depended on it. Their anti-imperialist and socialist principles overshadowed any concerns or knowledge about Kosova. Many confused Albania with Kosova, were unfamiliar with the history of Yugoslavia, were oblivious to the fact that over 95% of Kosovars are Muslim, and appeared not to be concerned with who occupied whom.

Though they know nothing about Kosova, they are certain the intervention should not have happened. “Why not?” I ask, “Didn’t it save lives?” To the contrary, I would be told, the intervention was done in bad faith. The US never intended to save *me* but intervened for its own interests. That the intervention *did* save me seemed irrelevant—of no concern at all. Thus, our deaths became nothing more than collateral damage in the quest to condemn US imperialism. Even my insistences that “the intervention saved our lives!” were fiercely rejected as reactionary. In fact, they would respond, it caused *more* deaths. “But,” I would say, “Kosovars begged for the intervention.” “No,” they would argue, “the intervention killed Kosovars.” For these radicals, the strange fantasy is that Kosovars would have been spared if the intervention had not happened.

Kosova, its war, and the intervention seem to symbolize something else. They have little significance in themselves, though they serve to prove political commitments, principles, and arguments. For the radicals, Kosova is a mere example of US imperialism; one of the many badges of shame that the US has earned in its long and bloody history. They see in it what they see in every other war and conflict: the US. To them, Kosova is not a symbol of hope but of despair: a reminder that the powerful will always trample upon the weak, that economic interests always supersede humanitarian ones. For many liberals, by contrast, the Kosovar intervention is a sign that the world has not been deprived of its human soul: a beacon that shines through murky depths, reminding us that good politicians exist, that humanitarian interventions work, that there is progress in the face of setbacks and hiccups. It is a flicker of hope in the wreckage accumulated from Rwanda to Bosnia. Other intellectuals view Kosova as a milestone in the evolution of warfare. For them, it marks a new era, a series of ‘firsts’: the first “air war,” the first “virtual war,” the first “internet war,” the first “metaphor war,” the first “orbital space.”¹ Kosova allows them to grasp the moment humanity took a leap forward in its ability to wage war. They see in it the beginning of an era in which battlefields are not limited by geography or distance but defined instead by the reach of technology. The Kosova

war serves as a pivotal moment in human history, symbolizing a shift in warfare. How lucky the scholar who gets to coin it!

In the popular consciousness, Kosova and its past struggles have been reduced to the peak of the war in 1999, when it reached spectacle proportions worthy of international broadcast. In this way, Kosova has been subsumed by its own war; it has become interchangeable with the war that ravaged it. And the war itself has become a mere symbol of international intervention. In this process, Kosovars themselves have been buried under considerations of issues much larger than them, their plight and survival ignored in favor of debates over legitimacy, legality, and justification.

Thus, an important aspect of Kosova's tragedy, in the past decades, is that it has been reduced to a cautionary tale in the international consciousness, invoked whenever convenient and forgotten the rest of the time. Different iterations appear around the world, but its ability to be used as a moral tale only grows stronger. From Sudan, to Syria, and now Ukraine, "lessons from Kosova" are invoked. This is Kosova's significance.

Unlike the intervention, my survival is no moral tale to radicals. While survival poses central questions for the Second World War, fascism, the Holocaust, colonialism, and slavery, which are met with an acknowledgement of the complexity of the atrocities and a recognition that our ways of thinking are not adequate to capture the terror of the event, this is not so for Kosova. To the radical intellectual, survival is in this instance a display of foolishness in the face of political ideology. For them, the moral lesson of Kosova is not one of perseverance, but of betrayal of socialist ideals. You are a fool if you dare bring up your survival, which invokes not just naivete but the old trope of the savage Eastern European drooling for American Levi's.

For such radicals, the desire for freedom and national liberation, because it paved the way for capitalism, is anathema to the collective good, a betrayal of socialist ideals. In their eyes, Kosova's survival is not a triumph but a lamentable display of misguided priorities. Thus, perhaps the hatred directed at Kosova stems from a deep-seated resentment of its nationalism, viewed as the ultimate destruction of socialist Yugoslavia. Socialism was not good enough for us: we wanted capitalism so badly that we were willing to become pawns of the US and NATO. How despicable of us to want to consume in freedom instead of dying in defense of socialist Yugoslavia! How dreadful to seek nationalistic freedom instead of opposing imperialism!

The Anti-Interventionist Position

For the anti-interventionists and the anti-imperialist radicals, the intervention in Kosova was a cynical display of imperialist power, an unjustifiable and illegal act. Critics of the intervention, such as Chomsky, Ellen Meiksins Woods, Tariq Ali, Edward Herman, David Peterson, and Alan Wood, subsume Kosova under US history, reducing it to a mirror for US imperialism and casting a wary eye upon the atrocities that occurred there.² Why? What concerns these anti-imperialist, anti-interventionist thinkers? Do they oppose the Serbian occupation of Kosova? Are they outraged by the genocide, rape, and mass exodus of Kosovars? None of the above. They are concerned with the *intention, legality, and justification* of the intervention, the lack of *consistency* in US foreign policy, and with *Serbia's* sovereignty. They argue that the intervention was not in compliance with international law and dismiss human rights justifications for it as a mere pretext for the US' pursuit of its geopolitical and economic interests.³ Let us take a closer look at the anti-interventionist arguments.

1: The Justification for the Intervention

Serbian President Slobodan Milošević's ethnic cleansing campaign in Kosova resulted in 13,515 deaths and the displacement of over ninety percent of Kosovar Albanians.⁴ By the end of 1998, more than 300,000 Kosovars had been forced to flee their homes. This number quickly reached over a million.⁵ After more than a year of failed diplomatic efforts and ignored cease-fire agreements, in March 1999, NATO launched "Operation Allied Force" to stop the humanitarian crisis in Kosova. The operation ended on June 10, 1999, when the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia withdrew its military, police, and paramilitary forces. This marked not only the end of Serbia's occupation but the dissolution of the last remnant of Yugoslavia.⁶

US intervention was and remains a controversial topic. Its advocates claim it was justified, necessary, and legitimate, while critics aim to discredit the intervention's legitimacy by challenging its justification.⁷ Notable figures such as Chomsky, Wood, Ali, Herman, and Gilbert Achcar have questioned the intentions of the intervention by arguing that the invocation of human rights was false, hypocritical, and a mere pretense for US-NATO's geopolitical and economic interests.⁸ In Wood's words, human rights were a "disguise" for imperialism.⁹

Such arguments about justification raise critical questions. Who is obliged to provide a justification? Our radicals were not flabbergasted when Milošević, *without* legitimate justification, began his ethnic cleansing campaigns in Bosnia and Kosova. We thus have an appeal to a one-sided justification, where Milošević is not required

to justify his actions, but NATO and the US are. Moreover, to whom is the justification of the intervention aimed? Certainly not to Kosovars.

The anti-interventionist intellectuals strip away the veneer of humanitarianism to expose the ulterior motives driving the intervention: economic interests. The Kosova war, Ali writes, has little to do with “the people of the old Yugoslavia;” it is “a war for US hegemony in Europe and the world, the act of a triumphant imperialism designed to rub the face of its old enemy in mud enriched with depleted uranium.”¹⁰ This argument posits that self-interest, rather than a genuine concern for Kosova, motivated the intervention—“They didn’t intervene for *you, Kosovars*, but for *themselves!*” Such arguments are delivered in a tone that implies the discovery of a new “natural law,” a shocking revelation that can only be grasped by those with a nose for imperialism. They purport to reveal, as if for the first time, that nations pursuing their interests is a hidden secret that has long eluded the rest of us. Kosovars were too blinded by their own self-interest to see this truth, they suggest, for, had they known it, they would have elevated the anti-imperialist struggle above their own lives. Of course, these critics are blind to the fact that Kosovars understood these realities all too well. For them, their fight against the Serbian occupation was a fight against Serbia’s imperialism, nationalism, Islamophobia, and racism.

It was not the intervention in Kosova that first dirtied the waters with economic interests. The US did not introduce a new paradigm of economic incentives to the savage Balkans, nor can it be solely blamed for the complex web of causes underpinning the war. If states and wars are ultimately driven by economic interests, then we must acknowledge the economic incentives behind Serbia’s occupation of Kosova—especially the control of natural resources, such as coal and minerals—and condemn its expansionist goals. Indeed, self-determination struggles, in Kosova and places such as Algeria, have economic determinations. In essence, if everything is attributed to direct economic interests, then Kosova and the intervention are the norm, not the exception. This account, then, is unable to explain *this* war. Or, rather, it can explain it just as much as it can explain anything else.

A further problem arises in the argument that the intervention harboured a false justification. This argument obscures and endeavours to differentiate between economic and humanitarian concerns. It conflates the two by revealing that “humanitarian concerns,” once acted upon, really are economic concerns in disguise. What this insinuates for our critics is not that, in capitalism, humanitarian concerns and economic concerns are inevitably intertwined, but rather that one is a smokescreen for the other.

One wonders why we presume that economic interests are, or ought to be, inherently opposed to humanitarian ones. Is it not precisely because of their

economic nature that certain endeavors can be deemed humanitarian? Humanitarian crises, after all, are both caused and resolved by economic conditions. A glaring instance of the way in which economic concerns are intertwined with humanitarian ones is the phenomenon of economic migration. In many cases the impetus to seek asylum is economic devastation, while the state's ability to provide humanitarian aid in the form of residency and work authorization depends on its current economic situation. In a capitalist society, thus, humanitarian concerns, to be *humanitarian*, must also be economic. Their division is a false dichotomy. In fact, we already recognize the intertwinement of economic, moral, and human considerations in capitalism in other contexts: when discussing civil rights in the US, we insist that "making a living" is essential to human dignity; and in the case of colonial Algeria, we treat economic concerns in relation to self-determination and the creation of a new human.¹¹ Yet we recoil at the notion of providing economic support to Kosovars and framing it as a humanitarian intervention.

The radical anti-interventionist counterargument, of course, would be that the intervention in Kosova was motivated by the desire to foster US's and NATO's economic growth rather than Kosova's. However, Kosovars in Yugoslavia were second-class citizens and, under Milošević, non-citizens.¹² Thus, the very idea of economic development, let alone of securing mere bread and butter, was utterly inconceivable under the oppressive Serbian occupation and wartime conditions.

The scenes of Kosovars welcoming NATO peacekeeping forces stand to undermine suspicions about the real intentions behind the intervention. Radicals, however, neglect the fact that Kosovars wanted the intervention. Their focus on U.S. imperialism neglects the human cost of the war. The old "what is to be done question" has been replaced with concerns with the alignment of our principles with our action.

Moreover, even if the intervention in Kosova operated on a false pretext, I must ask: why must the burden of politicians' falsehoods be borne by Kosovars alone? That the US government is dishonest and uses hard-earned taxpayer dollars to wage war has not compelled Chomsky, for example, to flee his country. He remains comfortable within the US metropole. Yet Kosovars must sacrifice themselves, adopt a righteous path untainted by imperialist, American corruption? Chomsky, like many of our critics, tolerates US imperialism at home but condemns it overseas.

In decrying the fact that Kosovars were saved for economic rather than humanitarian motives, the critics reduce the Serbian-Kosovar war to the intervention, leaving aside a complex and long violent history between the two. But the war and the intervention in Kosova are senseless if we do not consider the Serbian occupation of Kosova, the myth that Kosova is the heartland of Serbia, the Greater

Serbia project, and Serbia's centuries-long anti-Muslim campaign—all of which pre-date Milošević's revocation of Kosova's autonomous status in 1989 and the persecution of Kosovar Albanians during his regime.¹³ It is likewise crucial to understand the status of Bosnia and Kosova in Europe. We are dealing here with a Europe that tolerated death camps in Bosnia in 1993, the first ones in Europe since the 1940s, as well as the mass execution of Bosnian civilians in 1995.¹⁴ The Kosova war occurred after these atrocities, after the shelling of Dubrovnik, after American policy-makers claimed that even without an intervention in Bosnia we could "rest assured, this would be the last thing that Milošević would be allowed to get away with...he would never be allowed to make war on Kosovo."¹⁵

In this context, the Kosova war did not matter to Europe and the intervention was a hard sell for the US. It was not, as Sontag rightly notes, in America's interests. If the US and NATO had been waiting, arms in hand, for their opportunity to conquer the Balkans, as the radicals often argue, why did Bosnia not serve as a pretext? Recall that, once Serbian war criminals were freely engaging in atrocities in Kosova immediately after the Bosnian genocide, Kosova struggled to find support. US and European diplomats continued to treat Milošević as a diplomatic partner; their "first stop was always Belgrade."¹⁶

The intervention was not the desired choice but resulted after more than a year of failed diplomatic efforts, punctuated by ignored cease-fire agreements, to convince Milošević to stop the atrocities.¹⁷ During the Dayton Peace talks, though Milošević's anti-Albanian project was well underway, Kosova was not mentioned.¹⁸ In 1998, despite a deal with Milošević, Serbians continued their atrocities, including the Raçak massacre, which resulted in an influx of journalists and human rights activists into Kosova, as well as the unarmed Kosovo Verification Mission lead by William Walker.¹⁹ The increased media attention and first-hand accounts of crimes against humanity from international reporters, politicians, and Kosovar refugees increased pressure on the US and European allies to take action.²⁰ It was only when Serbia, used to NATO's hollow threats, refused the international demands to remove its troops from Kosova, grant autonomy to Kosovars, and allow 25,000 armed peacekeepers, in Rambouillet in 1999, that the US-NATO intervention started. Even during the NATO campaign, there was significant reluctance about the bombing, despite the constant demands to accelerate the mission.²¹ Each decision was scrutinized, each target was tested against laws of war, and each step was hesitantly taken.²² The intervention thus involved small personnel, a small number of troops, and major reluctance. For this reason, many argue that Milošević was underestimated, and that the intervention arrived too late and was too weak.²³ The anti-interventionists, however, ignore the Western reluctance to intervene and

dismiss the negotiations and the Rambouillet talks. Ali compares them to “putting a revolver to the head of Milosevic.”²⁴

Anti-interventionist critics likewise dismiss all moral components at the heart of bourgeois society, thus reducing the intervention to “purely economic” concerns. It is not the case that the US and NATO had no geopolitical and economic interests in the region; moral components, however, are also central for understanding the intervention. The US could not overlook the Kosovar war after Rwanda and Bosnia, where Bosnians met their death under NATO and UN protection.²⁵ Additionally, US envoys’ requests for intervention were replete with moralistic language about the heinousness of crimes against humanity.²⁶ These moral components are already present in economic concerns and vice versa. It is not as if the history of human rights represents the height of civilization’s ability to perceive the human in a non-instrumental way. Are “human rights” even conceivable outside bourgeois morality? I do not deny that human rights can be invoked hypocritically and sanctimoniously. But they are not opposed to bourgeois principles or economic interests. The anti-interventionist stance, which laments the intervention’s economic rather than its human goals, raises the question of whether they seek a pure morality unencumbered by the corrupting influence of money? Such a quest is typically bourgeois. Once everything becomes exchangeable, and pockets brim with money, they cry foul and seek a pure moral realm. Perhaps, then, the history of human rights is the history of bourgeois society’s inability to cope with its own reality.

Using economics as a pretext to deny all humanitarian interventions is no better than using humanitarian concerns to conceal true class interests. After all, it is not in Chomsky’s interest that Kosovars are saved, just as it was not in Italy’s interest to be flooded with Albanian immigrants. Undoubtedly, those intellectuals preoccupied with the hypocrisy of US-NATO and its lack of genuine humanitarianism never seek to truly address these humanitarian concerns themselves.

A purely humanitarian intervention devoid of economic interests and concerns is an illusion. What would it even look like? Who would finance and supply it? How would such help be disseminated? An acknowledgment of humanity *sans* missiles and bread?

2: Imperialism

The Kosova intervention is denounced for being imperialist.²⁷ To the anti-interventionist left, all interventions are imperial, thus, anti-interventionism already implies anti-imperialism. As a bedrock principle for the Left, anti-imperialism informs all other aspects of the argument against intervention, including economic

dimensions. "Forget humanitarian motives," Wood writes; the Kosovar war "is about US global hegemony."²⁸ Capitalist imperialism, she claims, most adequately captures the Balkans.²⁹

Ali, an opponent of NATO's bombing campaign, calls the intervention a "war of conquest and subjugation" aimed at expanding Western influence in the Balkans and securing access to the region's resources.³⁰ But what resources did "the West" secure in the region? And who conquered and subjugated whom? Certainly, NATO bombings did not conquer Serbia. As for the Kosovars, they were already conquered and subjugated by Serbia. Did the U.S then conquer and subjugate Kosova? Only if Kosova's placement under international protectorate, its negotiations with Serbia, its independence, its failed attempts to join the EU, its economic struggles, and Bondsteel are considered "conquest and subjugation."

What does imperialism mean when invoked for Kosova? Some argue that US imperialism sought to break up Yugoslavia, as the last resistance to capitalism, in order to control new territory and resources.³¹ Others, like Wood, argue that imperialism is no longer about direct control over non-capitalist territories for resources but over the entire world and global market. "Imperialism," as she writes, is not "about the relation between a capitalist and a non-capitalist world" but about "the relations within a global capitalist system."³² Contemporary imperialism seeks to ensure that capitalism prevails globally and to manipulate capitalist market forces to benefit "powerful capitalist economies and the United States in particular."³³

While I acknowledge the importance of anti-imperialist critiques, it is worth considering who they are directed towards. The anti-imperialist left does not denounce Serbia as an imperial country, an occupier, and a colonial power in Kosova and Bosnia. They do not condemn Serbia's efforts to create a Greater Serbia cleansed of Muslims.³⁴ They split hairs about the severity of the atrocities in Kosova and Bosnia but fail to condemn Serbia for its ethnic cleansing campaigns.

One would expect a greater degree of concern for the plight of Kosovars from radical Leftists who espouse the high values of humanitarianism, justice, and lawfulness. But the radicals calling the US-NATO intervention an imperial conquest are not bothered by Serbia's subjugation of Kosovars nor preoccupied with Kosova's fight for self-determination and, after the war, nationhood. Indeed, the anti-imperialist left's concern about Kosova did not exist prior to 1999, and it remains transfixed there upon.

3: Consistency

The anti-interventionist argument insists that if we justify intervention in one case, we must do so in all cases. Because the US has not intervened in all conflicts, genocides, and wars, scholars such as Habermas, Wood, and Chomsky question the legitimacy of the Kosova intervention. “Why *them*?” and not the Kurds or Tutsis, they ask, “why *now*?” and not in Rwanda, Kurdistan, and Palestine?³⁵ Perhaps, however, the intervention occurred in Kosova precisely because it did not in Rwanda and Bosnia. The US foreign policy’s consistency may be a legitimate concern, but our radicals, who play at *realpolitik*, must surely know that not all conflicts, locations, or alliances make intervention a real possibility. The lack of consistency, moreover, does not negate the necessity of intervention in certain situations. Questions about consistency, thus, are a diversion rather than a genuine engagement with the complexities of intervention. The critique of consistency may appear as a call to help all in need; but it is not. It is not “If *them*, why not *others*?” but “Why *them*, not others?” It expresses a distrust, if not disgust, that *they* are saved— “Them? Really?”³⁶

It is important to note that Kosovars are no heroes in the popular imagination. To the international conscience, Kosova is no Vietnam or Iraq. Indeed, how people talk about Vietnam and Iraq preserves some concern about people on the ground. This is not extended to Kosovars. Kosova’s liberation struggle does not get the fetishistic love afforded to Algeria and Vietnam. We are either terrorists or traitors.³⁷

What determines which liberation struggles are endorsed and which are denounced? This apparent inconsistency is an expression of the radicals’ attempt to remain consistently anti-imperialist. Preoccupied with condemning anti-imperialism at any cost, they fail to recognize the plight of the weak. In their obsession with consistency as a moral good, radicals cannot draw a line between theory and the reality that confronts them. They fail to consider whether Kosova presents a limit case. As Hans Magnus Enzensberger writes, “they are so desperately consistent that they don’t know a dead end when they see one.”³⁸

“A radical should be radical. Opportunism is sinful. Consistency is good.”³⁹ This is the position of the radical, whom Enzensberger describes as the person full of principles, “the stern critic of monopoly state capitalism tucked away safely in a state-run university with tenure,”⁴⁰ the one who “cherish[es] a radical stance, untarnished by considerations arising out of their everyday existence.”⁴¹ Radicals embrace principles, he notes, not because they are considered true but because they serve to attack others as opportunistic, sellouts, careerists, and political renegades. “The only person beyond suspicion is the one who has got hold of the microphone and who represents, at the moment of speaking, a higher reality of which, alas, he himself is not a part.”⁴² To have principles and act on them to their utmost consequences becomes *good*.⁴³ In the attempt to acquire consistency at any cost, thus, radicals

render consistency itself an “ethical imperative.”⁴⁴ But, as Enzensberger notes, consistency is no moral safeguard for it can turn any good cause into a bad one—“attack the social system you live in by any means at your disposal, and you have terrorism”; “act out the fundamental tenants of capitalism to their ultimate consequences, and you will end up with civil war or fascism.”⁴⁵ And we can add: attack imperialism at any cost, and you have a new imperialism; attack human rights at any cost, and you have total disregard for human life. Enzensberger is thus right to claim that consistency “is a luxury which we can no longer afford.”⁴⁶

4: Legality and Sovereignty

The legality of the air campaign in Kosova is hotly debated as it was carried out without the United Nations Security Council's authorization.⁴⁷ Many NATO countries claimed that the intervention was necessary to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe.⁴⁸ This justification was criticized as a violation of international law, particularly by countries that did not support the intervention, such as Russia and China, who would have opposed a resolution seeking authorization for the use of force had it been proposed at the Security Council.⁴⁹ Alternative paths were thus pursued.

Though they have never condemned Milošević's unauthorized attacks on Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosova, Ali and Wood argue that the US-NATO intervention in Kosova was a violation of international law and thus sets a dangerous precedent for future uses of force by states outside of the UN Charter framework.⁵⁰ One is surprised how quickly theorists who bear Marxism's torch appeal to law as the word of God. “A violation of law? How unjust!” As if the world is encountering a law violation for the very first time. Not Milošević's slaughter, itself a violation of international law, but the humanitarian intervention, they claim, sets a “dangerous precedent.”⁵¹

Does mere adherence to legal frameworks, however, automatically warrant ethical or moral validation? Is critical thought restricted to legal conformity alone? If the US-NATO intervention had received the Council's approval, would it have been good, justified, bereft of imperialist intent, carried out for the sake of humanity?

Debates around the legality of the Kosova intervention are intertwined with concerns about sovereignty—specifically whether international law allows for humanitarian interventions to supersede state sovereignty. These debates tend to focus on Serbia's sovereignty, which is said to have been violated by the intervention. But what of Kosova's sovereignty, as it struggled for self-determination against Serbian occupation?⁵² That Kosovars unequivocally wanted the US-NATO to

intervene on their behalf is conveniently ignored. It is remarkable how little consideration is given to this side of the sovereignty debate.

Because many saw Kosova as belonging to Serbia, the West ignored the oppression of Kosovars for years.⁵³ Like Serbian forces, the anti-interventionists claimed that Kosova was a domestic issue and dismissed concerns over Kosova's status. Sontag pointedly captures this position: "Kosovo is, after all, part of the new Greater Serbia called Yugoslavia. Tough luck for the Kosovars that Milošević revoked their autonomous status in 1989. Inconvenient that 90 percent of Kosovars are Albanians."⁵⁴ But, she asks, "are national borders, which have been altered so many times in the last hundred years, really to be the ultimate criterion? You can murder your wife in your own house, but not outdoors on the street."⁵⁵ Should we refrain from responding to a state's violence against its people because it occurs within its own borders?

Is it acceptable that such slaughters be dismissed as civil wars, also known as "age-old ethnic hatreds"? (After all, anti-Semitism was an old tradition in Europe; indeed, a good deal older than ancient Balkan hatreds. Would this have justified letting Hitler kill all the Jews on German territory?) Is it true that war never solved anything?⁵⁶

Those who decry the intervention as a violation of sovereignty remain silent on the brutal Serbian occupation of Kosova and, moreover, on Kosova's struggle for self-determination. Their lack of support for Kosova's independence and failure to denounce imperialist powers like Russia, China, and Spain for not recognizing Kosova's sovereignty reveals the selectivity of the sovereignty argument.⁵⁷ We are told our fate is no concern to the West; yet it appears that Kosova is a matter of greater concern for the West than for the Left.

Take, for example, Chomsky's professed commitment to truth. He argues that the intervention in Kosova could not be credible given the dishonesty of American politics. Interestingly, he acknowledges the potential value of the principle that human rights may override sovereignty. That "sovereignty may be disregarded in the interest of defining human rights," he writes, has "merits" if "it were upheld in a way that honest people could take seriously."⁵⁸ Who are these honest people he speaks of? Presumably his fellow Americans, as Kosovars took the principle of human rights seriously, regardless of its veracity.

It is evident that these preoccupations with sovereignty violations place states above human life. In this unbounded respect for nation-states, what happens to self-determination struggles and conquered nations? The dominant ethos remains one

of “do it yourself” politics with no consideration for the struggles of others. The message is clear: fight your own battle; to each their own. This is the standpoint of those who sit on nuclear weapons and not of those who lack even a standing army. An easy standpoint from those who reside in the “imperial power,” whose violence they condemn but whose protection they enjoy. At stake is not merely lack of solidarity but a total disregard for the material conditions that make self-determination struggles possible.

5: Conflict or Genocide?

A 1992 *Time* magazine cover featured an emaciated Bosnian man in a Serbian concentration camp.



Time Magazine, August 17, 1992 (Vol. 140, No. 7).

The photograph of “the thin man behind the barb-wire,” Chomsky argues, is a fake, propaganda fabricated to argue that Bosnia was like Auschwitz: “[I]t was probably the reporters who were behind the barb-wire, and the place was ugly, but it was a refugee camp, I mean, people could leave if they wanted and, near the thin

man was a fat man and so on.”⁵⁹ The “thin man” in the photograph is Fikret Alić, a Muslim prisoner in the Serbian concentration camp, Trnopolje, who managed to escape the camp disguised as a Muslim woman. His family members were burned alive by Serbians.⁶⁰

Chomsky’s stance on the Bosnian genocide showcases some of the bleakest features of the anti-interventionist position. These include claims that atrocities in Kosova were exaggerated, that the intervention is the true cause of the atrocities, and that what occurred in Kosova does not merit the name “genocide.”

To understand these claims, let us recall that Serbia’s occupation of Kosova lasted for decades and was characterized by a pattern of atrocities, including massacres, rapes, arsons, and forced expulsions.⁶¹ When the war reached its peak in 1998 and 1999, it was extensively covered by global news networks. Journalists documented the war, shared footage of its horrors and impact on civilians, and reported that Serbian militia and police had forcibly evicted almost all Albanians at gunpoint and instigated the ethnic cleansing campaign called “Horseshoe.”⁶² It was common knowledge, as noted by Samantha Power, that 40,000 Serb troops and 300 tanks had occupied Kosova.⁶³ As massacres were being broadcast worldwide, however, anti-imperialist critics voiced suspicions about their reality.

Claims of alleged exaggerations emerged as evidence was being broadcast to our living rooms. Leftists insisted that the situation in Kosova was not that bad and certainly not bad enough to warrant intervention: “Even if the total number killed in Kosovo were doubled, the loss of life would still be smaller” than in “Sri Lanka or Turkey.”⁶⁴ Citing the fabricated death toll of 2,000 Kosovars, Chomsky similarly highlights its insignificance—a mere fraction of deaths in Turkey and Lebanon. He also points out that Kosovar refugees are only half the number of Palestinian refugees in 1948.⁶⁵ False figures circulate among anti-interventionists, who argue that reports of atrocities in Kosova were “grossly misleading” fabrications that employed a rhetoric of “ethnic cleansing” to justify the intervention and draw false comparisons with the Holocaust, where “six *million* defenseless Jews were killed by the Nazis” as compared “to an estimated two *thousand*’ deaths in Kosovo.”⁶⁶ Chomsky dismisses the atrocities in Kosova as a “hysterical exaggeration,” while Wood, equally skeptical, adopts “the premise,” for the sake of the argument, “that there was a ‘humanitarian’ disaster.”⁶⁷

As the same Serbians responsible for the Bosnian genocide executed Kosovars, the left dismissed the atrocities and condemned the supposed demonization of Serbians and Milošević.⁶⁸ Chomsky and Alan Wood, for example, attribute the start of the war to the KLA.⁶⁹ Wood maintains that arguments about defending Kosovars from Serbian aggression and “opposing the dictator Milosevic”

cannot “withstands the slightest scrutiny.”⁷⁰ Ali and Achcar, moreover, deny that Kosova was unjustly occupied by Serbia, arguing instead that Serbians and Kosovars were equally committing atrocities. They criticize western media for providing a simplistic narrative of “good guys” (Albanians) versus “bad guys (Serbs), of innocent victims versus barbarous aggressors, which ignored the complexities of the situation on the ground.⁷¹ Neither scholar recounts these complexities. For there is nothing to be recounted. To claim the “crimes on both sides” narrative is akin to asserting that crimes occurred on both sides during the Vietnam and Algerian wars. For although Kosova had a liberation army, it was Serbian police, military, and paramilitary groups, with ski masks and red berets, that ravaged villages and went door to door executing and raping Kosovars.⁷² For every KLA attack against the occupying Serbian military, Serbians retaliated by targeting innocent Kosovar civilians. Kosovar troops never set foot in Serbia.⁷³ The entirety of the Kosovar war occurred *in* Kosova.

The dominant position of the left is that the intervention caused more harm than good. Even more, anti-imperialists argue that the *rea*/atrocities in Kosova were the intervention.⁷⁴ Refusing to utter a word about Kosovar deaths, for example, Wood speaks of the “horrors perpetrated by the United States and its allies.”⁷⁵ Chomsky acknowledges that Milošević had a “truly evil proposal” for the Kosovars.⁷⁶ Yet he insists that there remains “a long step” between Milošević’s plan and its execution “unless the planner is subjected to military attack—eliciting the implementation of the plans, which retrospectively justifies the attack by an impressive feat of logic.”⁷⁷ For Kosovars, however, the interval separating the plan from its execution was vanishingly small. Indeed, one wonders whether a genocidal plan is ever *just* a plan. The reason for Chomsky’s discussion is to absolve Milošević of responsibility through the fantastic suggestion that he had been compelled to execute his plan because of NATO’s intervention. He thus exonerates Milošević and blames the US and NATO for the horrors in Kosova.

Critics aligned with Chomsky’s view argue that the war itself was initiated by the US-NATO bombings. For Kosovars, however, the war began before it became visible to the world. It reached its peak in 1998, when Albanians were being displaced, losing their jobs, and facing segregation.⁷⁸ When my mother returned home beaten after a protest, the war had already started; by the time Kosovars were denied access to education and massacres erupted, the war was well underway. The sleight of hand of the radical position is that it reduces everything to the intervention. The conflict between Kosova and Serbia that existed before the intervention and continues today, however, cannot be attributed to only this.

Even the displacement of Kosovars and widespread destruction has been falsely attributed to the intervention.⁷⁹ This displacement began before the NATO bombing, when the Serbian military and police forces carried out a campaign of ethnic cleansing, which involved expelling ethnic Albanians from their homes. I experienced this displacement when the Serbian military entered my neighborhood, armed and masked, and proceeded to empty out house after house. The displacement, murder, and slaughter of Kosovars surely continued after the NATO bombing campaign, but the intervention did not cause them. In contending that the displacement and murder of Kosovars by Serbians escalated after the intervention, these scholars do not condemn Serbia but only the US-NATO intervention.⁸⁰ They exonerate Milošević, the Butcher of the Balkans, of any responsibility for the atrocities committed against Kosovars.

In fact, Wood and Achcar even call the US-NATO intervention “inept” and “ineffective” in preventing ethnic cleansing.⁸¹ NATO’s actions would not help victims, Wood insisted in 1999, but only cause more harm; it would not weaken but only “strengthen” Milošević.⁸² But these assertions turned out to be false. Not only did NATO not *cause* the atrocities but it led to Serbia’s withdrawal, a *key* fact that anti-interventionist/anti-imperialist scholars fail to acknowledge. It was precisely because of this withdrawal that displaced Kosovars who had lost their homes, myself included, were able to return to Kosova. The genocide, which surely would have continued without the intervention, was interrupted and as Agon Maliqi writes, the intervention “was a success.”⁸³ After all, as a result, not all Albanian Kosovars were exterminated.

The anti-interventionist Left simultaneously blames NATO for the ethnic cleansing and denies it occurred. There is, in fact, a spectrum ranging from downplaying the atrocities in Kosova to outright denial. Some argue that the violence in Kosova was not as systematic as it was portrayed to be, others maintain that there was violence on both sides or blame the KLA for the brutality, while others claim that the numbers were exaggerated. But much of the controversy around the slaughter of Kosovars centers on whether it can be classified as genocide.

Leading scholars of the region and of genocide, such as Martin Shaw, Marko Attila Hoare, and Power, claim that what occurred in Kosova was genocide.⁸⁴ The anti-interventionists, however, promote the more palatable phrase “ethnic cleansing.” Ethnic cleansing does not upset their stomachs, while genocide does. Perhaps the deniers prefer “ethnic cleansing” as it preserves their delicate sensibilities—clinical, surgical—and bourgeois etiquette. But they recoil at the word “genocide,” which carries the stench of death.

The situation in Kosova, Chomsky writes, was not genocide but a political conflict wherein both sides committed atrocities: "The term 'genocide' has a very precise meaning under international law, and it does not apply to the situation in Kosovo."⁸⁵ He ridicules such claims as being advanced merely to justify an imperial intervention disguised as humanitarian. He dismisses the use of the term "genocide" as a "hysterical exaggeration" that is a "classic feature of propaganda," one akin to a "form of Holocaust revisionism" that is "a bitter insult to the memory of Hitler's victims."⁸⁶ Chomsky argues that claims such as Timothy Garton Ash's—that the Kosova intervention was "absolutely right" and passed the "very high...threshold for such humanitarian intervention"—have no plausible "relation to the facts."⁸⁷ In turn, he praises *The Wall Street Journal* for publishing a "rare exception" to war propaganda, which declared that the conflict in Kosova was cruel and bitter but not genocide.⁸⁸

Controversy surrounding the use of the term "genocide" in Kosova's case reached its peak in the late 1990s. Ambassador and international lawyer David Scheffer, who participated in the creation of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, reported that since WWII, with the exception of Rwanda and Cambodia, one would be "hard pressed to find a crime scene...where a defenceless civilian population have been assaulted with such ferocity and criminal intent and suffered so many multiple violations of international humanitarian law in such a short period of time as in Kosovo since mid-March 1999."⁸⁹ The conflict in Kosova, he noted, is a "government-planned campaign to eliminate" an "ethnic population" through forced deportation and killing.⁹⁰ He reported mass executions occurring in 75 towns and villages; mass graves and rapes; Serbian forces exhuming and then burning bodies from mass graves to destroy forensic evidence; roughly 225,000 unaccounted men ranging between 14 to 59 years old; roughly 550,000 internally displaced people, some of whom had been living in hills for weeks; and widespread starvation and disease.⁹¹ The number of people killed in mass executions had risen to 5,000, which Scheffer quoted as a conservative figure. In addition, he reported instances of Serbians using Kosovars as human shields, forced labor, and forcing as many as 700 ethnic Albanians to "stand in front of tanks in the rain for two days with their hands tied behind their backs as the Serbs exchanged fire with KLA forces."⁹² The war, he argued, is a "shell game of civilians manipulated by Serb forces" and "exposed" to "the risk of military conflict," which is "a war crime."⁹³ US officials were hesitant to provide figures as the conflict was ongoing and over ninety percent of Kosovars were displaced and many missing.⁹⁴ But despite these difficulties, Scheffer concluded that the events in Kosova were "*indicators* of genocide unfolding."⁹⁵



A Kosovar grandfather and grandchild look for the boy's father among the victims of Raçak massacre. January 17, 1999, *Reuters*.

Critics, however, were concerned with body count and not with Serbian illegal activities.⁹⁶ Accusations of exaggeration erupted when Clinton used the term “genocide” in 1999 and continued after the war with scholars and journalists circulating a figure of 2-4,000 deaths as proof that the US had lied.⁹⁷ As evidence of mass graves and missing persons emerged, however, it became clear that the numbers were not exaggerated. Bodies kept turning up, including those exhumed in mass graves in Serbia and 11,324 buried in 529 sites in Kosova alone.⁹⁸ Serbians had been making a living by transporting dead bodies to Serbia, as evidenced by the actions of the interior minister, Vlado Stojiljković, who, at Milošević’s behest, used refrigerator trucks to remove corpses from execution sites in Kosova just two days before the NATO bombing.⁹⁹

The predominant narrative about Serbian genocides in Bosnia and Kosova is, in Chomsky’s words, a “hysterical exaggeration of the enemy’s unfathomable evil.”¹⁰⁰ Scholars, however, were not preoccupied with said “evil” but instead with its alleged exaggeration. The scale of atrocities in Kosova, they argue, was “increased”;¹⁰¹ the reported casualties were an “exaggeration”;¹⁰² evidence was “manufactured”;¹⁰³ “Horseshoe” operation was a Western “fiction”;¹⁰⁴ “not a single mass grave” was found in Kosova;¹⁰⁵ numbers were “inflated” by “70 percent” without an explanation, as when “dealing with a demonized enemy anything goes.”¹⁰⁶ Dismissing, as Hoare

notes, the “corpses of murdered Albanians” as a “Western conspiracy,”¹⁰⁷ Michael Parenti jokingly asks: “how did the Serbs accomplish these mass-grave-disappearing acts?”¹⁰⁸

They insisted that the death toll was inadequate to meet the criteria of genocide. Such an assertion implies not that a few people died but that not *enough* people died. If, however, the issue is numbers, and the atrocities in Kosova were not bad enough, “how bad would they have to be” for leftists to “come out in favor of NATO air-strikes?”¹⁰⁹

The anti-interventionist position, thus, is not merely a condemnation of the intervention but amounts to genocide denial. This denial, as Hoare and Shaw show, is evidenced in the fixation on numbers, even though genocide is not defined by the quantity of slaughter.¹¹⁰ In Article II of the Genocide Convention, genocide is defined as several different “acts committed with *intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.*”¹¹¹ Acts that qualify, according to the Article, are “killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”¹¹² It follows that Milošević’s plan, exhibiting intent for ethnic cleansings and acts targeting Albanian Kosovars for death and displacement, constitutes genocide.

The definition of genocide does not invoke numbers.¹¹³ The primacy accorded numbers by the anti-interventionists reveals the capitalist character of their discourse. We live in an era of mechanized warfare, which instills an expectation that genocide should be commensurate with technological advancement. In the past, when the technology of war was still rudimentary, genocide existed, though not at the scale known to modern humanity. Modern expectations about mass production and mass murder thus overdetermine the conversation around genocide, making it possible to dismiss the genocide of minorities.

Chomsky, for whom the use of the word “genocide” is an insult, argues that our “most honorable course” of action would be to “expunge” the word “genocide” from our “vocabulary until the day, if it ever comes, when honesty and integrity can become an international norm.”¹¹⁴ By contrast, we can look to the words of Adorno, who was, incidentally, a Jewish intellectual displaced by Nazi Germany. Adorno famously notes that though what the Nazis did to the Jewish people was unspeakable and unable to be captured in language, a “term needed to be found if the victims...were to be spared the curse of having no thought turned unto them.”¹¹⁵ But Adorno also writes, with great foresight, that opening the debate about whether

or not there should be humanitarian intervention will already be an answer to that question: No. The genocide denial of scholars is best captured by him thus:

One day negotiations may take place in the forum of the United Nations on whether some new atrocity comes under the heading of genocide, whether nations have a right to intervene that they nonetheless do not want to exercise, and whether in view of the unforeseen difficulty of applying it in practice the whole concept of genocide should be removed from the statutes. Soon afterwards there are inside-page headlines in journalese: East Turkestan genocide programme nears completion..¹¹⁶

Propaganda and Genocide Denial

There is no consensus on whether the atrocities committed in Kosova meet the strict definition of genocide under international law. Interestingly, however, the arguments made by many radicals against the intervention and the use of the term “genocide” are identical to those made by Serbian and Russian government officials, Serbian nationalists, and Milošević apologists. This is unsurprising given that the lineage of the Left anti-imperialist critiques of the Kosova intervention are inexorably linked to Serbian anti-Albanian propaganda. Since at least the 1990s, these arguments have combined suspicions about the atrocities with critiques of US imperialism.

The anti-interventionists and anti-imperialists, whom Hoare correctly terms “left revisionists,” leverage pro-Serbian and Russian propaganda to deny atrocities in Kosova..¹¹⁷ The blasé dismissal of atrocities is merely genocide denial and propaganda. For instance, Chomsky’s assertions regarding “the thin man” rely on Phillip Knightly, the journalist embroiled in the controversy surrounding *Living Marxism* [LM], a British magazine that was sued by Independent Television News [ITN] after accusing the network of fabricating images of the Bosnian camps. Though LM lost, their propaganda—memorialized as “the picture that fooled the world”..¹¹⁸—circulated widely, even reaching the Hague, where it was used as evidence by the war criminal Radovan Karadžić..¹¹⁹

The anti-imperialist arguments against the Kosova intervention echo Serbian anti-Albanian propaganda, which started as early as the 1980s, when Milošević claimed that Kosovars were committing genocide against Serbians..¹²⁰ Greater Serbia fanatics, Milošević supporters, pro-Serbian/Russian, and anti-West/EU scholars invoked imperialism as an explanation for the Serbian genocide of

Bosnians and Kosovars. In the 1990s, Leftist decried the demonization of Milošević, arguing that he was a “thorn in the side of imperialist concerns.”¹²¹ Milošević, who was slaughtering Muslims in the Balkans, emerged as a Leftist hero challenging capitalist imperialism.

Those who had raised suspicion over Rwanda and Bosnia had now turned their attention to Kosova—Tariq Ali, Mick Hume, Michael Parenti, Edward Herman, David Peterson, Jared Israel, David N. Gibbs, Diana Johnstone, John Robles, Glenn Greenwald, Ken Klippenstein, Max Blumenthal, and Gareth Porter, to name a few. They denied the genocide, asserting that Western media fabricated the Serbian atrocities to vilify Serbs, which then became a pretext for Western military intervention. In turn, they blamed the West, NATO, Croats, Bosnians, and Kosovar Albanians for crimes committed by Serbian forces. Though the Greater Serbia project significantly contributed to Yugoslavia’s disintegration, left revisionists blamed countries fighting for self-determination, which they deemed nationalist, “reactionary,” and “murderous chauvinists.”¹²² The dissolution of Yugoslavia, in Wood’s words, was a “criminal act...against the interests of all peoples” committed by “western imperialism.”¹²³

Leftists were hard at work denying genocide. Herman, the co-author, with Chomsky, of *Manufacturing Consent* joins Radovan Karadžić in claiming that the Srebrenica death tolls were exaggerated and that massacres in Sarajevo were orchestrated by Bosnian Muslims.¹²⁴ The fixation with body count is also present in his *The Politics of Genocide*, co-authored with David Peterson, and endorsed by John Pilger with a forward by Chomsky, where he downplays and dismisses the genocide of Tutsis and Bosnians, arguing that the cause of deaths in Srebrenica remains undetermined.¹²⁵ Similarly, *Degraded Capability: The Media and the Kosovo Crisis*, edited by Herman and Philip Hammond, downplays Serbian atrocities in Kosova as Western exaggerations and criticizes “anti-Serbian” media conspiracies.¹²⁶

One of the most striking features of these denials is the systematic prohibition, censorship, and minimization of criticism against Serbia practiced by leading leftist journals. Take, for example, *Counterpunch’s* defense of LM;¹²⁷ the case of the *New Left Review*, which commissioned Hoare to travel to Serbia to report on the anti-Milošević rebellion, only to refuse his report’s publication due to its support of the Hague Tribunal;¹²⁸ and *Jacobin’s* avid evasion of the term “genocide” in relation to Bosnia and Kosova.¹²⁹ Consider also the 1990 article in *Praxis International*, in which Mihailo Marković, who went on to become a spokesman for Serbian nationalism and the vice-president of Milošević’s party, claims that Kosovar Albanians are backward, clannish people who could not lift themselves out of poverty despite Yugoslav help. Marković describes the presence of Muslims in the heart of Europe as a threat and

throws his unalloyed support behind Serbia as Yugoslavia's most progressive socialist republic.¹³⁰ Seyla Benhabib, the editor of *Praxis International* at the time, later expressed regret for having published a piece so blatantly racist and neofascist in its conceit.¹³¹ Note also, Diane Johnston's left-wing support of Milošević, who compares anti-Serbs with Nazis and claims that the genocide in Kosova was "imaginary";¹³² Harold Pinter's claim that "Milošević is brutal" but that "the brutality of Clinton (and of course Blair) is insidious, since it hides behind sanctimony and the rhetoric of moral outrage";¹³³ and Pilger, who calls pro-interventionists "war lovers" and maintains that assertions of genocide in Kosova were "all bullshit. Not a misinterpretation. Not a mistake. Not blunders. Bullshit."¹³⁴ These examples showcase the anti-imperialist rhetoric that spans from Belgrade to Boston.¹³⁵

One of the most noteworthy contributions to Leftist pro-Serbian propaganda is Michael Parenti's *To Kill A Nation: The Attack of Yugoslavia*, which was published by Verso, a subsidiary of the New Left Review. The book offers an apologia for Milošević and his regime, suggesting that the destruction of Yugoslavia was orchestrated by a conspiracy of the Western imperialist powers and that the Kosova war was waged to destroy Serbia's socialism. Tellingly, Parenti's book was later published in Serbian with a foreword authored by Milošević himself, praising Parenti as "an American to whom every genuinely truth-loving inhabitant of our planet owes gratitude for his great bravery and competence in seeing and understanding the events that have marked the last decade of the twentieth century."¹³⁶ In the foreword, Milošević agrees with Parenti that the Hague and the immoral attack on Yugoslavia are proof that we must resist "the new enslavers," citing Parenti as one who has "given this resistance an undoubtedly great personal contribution."¹³⁷

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that in 2001 these scholars formed the "International Committee to Defend Slobodan Milošević." The group is united by their opposition against NATO's supposed dismantling of Yugoslavia, "disgust" over the International Criminal Tribunal and the Milošević trial, and what they call the "unprecedented demonization of the Serbian people" in the name of a "spirit of brotherhood between peoples" and "the principle of sovereign equality of nations." The stated mission of the committee is to "actively support and publicize President Milošević's courageous and powerful self-defense" and to "honor" his "political legacy."¹³⁸

For this Left, one is either a pro-Serbian or a capitalist/imperialist.¹³⁹ There is thus a glorification of Milošević's so-called socialism and a blind belief that the intervention in Kosova was a Western conspiracy to destroy Yugoslavia. As Hoare argues, this discourse is dominated by two allegations of imperialist conspiracies—one to break up Yugoslavia and one to attack Milošević's utopia.¹⁴⁰ Consequently,

Parenti and Johnstone even support Serbia's revocation of Kosova's autonomy as a "necessary" and "legal" measure that left "intact the political rights of ethnic Albanians."¹⁴¹ Despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, "the left-revisionist campaign" holds on to the fiction of a Serb-led socialist utopia in the Balkans.¹⁴² To that end, all evidence of Serbian crimes is dismissed as Western propaganda and the Kosova war as having nothing to do with the people of Yugoslavia.¹⁴³ Thus, the history of former Yugoslavia, as Hoare writes, is reduced to "the history of Western intervention in the former Yugoslavia."¹⁴⁴ Hoare is correct that this left critique of imperialism is itself imperialist.¹⁴⁵

Indeed, the left anti-interventionist discourse is characterized by revisionism, refusal to condemn fascism, total disregard for the loss of Kosovar lives, and an obsession with the U.S, which is made to stand for "imperialism" and "capitalism." Like anti-imperialist scholars, Serbians too condemn the intervention in the same breath with which they chant "Kosovo is Serbia."

The anti-interventionist position is thus not merely a condemnation of the intervention but genocide denial. Faulting only the US and exonerating Serbian criminals, leftists join the ranks of Emir Kusturica and Peter Handke, experts and Nobel Prize winners, who do not blink at the actions of the Butcher of the Balkans. They cleanse Serbia of its dark history; omit mass rapes, civil terror, political imprisonment, massacres, and Islamophobia; and erase the memory of Chetniks, Mladić, Karadžić, and the Tigers, rendering Kosova a place that never needed saving.

Elites

Underpinning the anti-interventionist position is a conception of politics as a cabal of corrupt politicians: on the one hand, the US and NATO, formidable entities with immense power, capable of implementing ominous plans at will and, on the other, Milošević, a helpless figure unable to resist the US juggernaut. A handful of elites in D.C., London, and Brussels are portrayed as manipulating the course of history and exploiting honest taxpayers for their nefarious ends.

In this account, the US, contrasted to weak Europe, stands for "elites" and becomes interchangeable with "imperialism" and "capitalism." But, as Sontag points out, Europe is not weak; this is the "Europe that let Bosnia die" while presenting itself as a place where tragedies no longer occur. Genocide, in this view, occurs only in places that "are not 'really' Europe," that is to say, in the Balkans.¹⁴⁶ That this is indeed Europe's image of itself is clear from Habermas' recent comments that the Russian invasion of Ukraine marked the first instance of war on European soil since WWII.¹⁴⁷

The anti-interventionists render a few politicians and their intentions as primary causes of world events. "Motives do matter," writes Wood.¹⁴⁸ "[T]here it is" she claims after citing Clinton's stated intent for the intervention, "straight from the horse's mouth."¹⁴⁹ She cites his words as truth as if we are to be convinced of *her* thesis because Clinton simply said so. Meanwhile, Chomsky equally devotes his energy to Clinton, Blair, and Albright. They are dishonest and self-righteous, he tells us, as if we harbored illusions of their moral superiority. Note that Milošević is dismissed in their analyses in degrees of indictment, but never condemned in the same language as Clinton, Blair, and Albright. Perhaps our anti-imperialists do not expect honesty and sincerity from a Balkan savage.

Intentions, which are ignored by anti-interventionists in debates on genocide, are here invoked as wars are reduced to the machinations of a few actors. This is what E.P. Thompson calls "the anthropomorphic interpretation of political, economic, and military formations that attributes intentions and goals to them."¹⁵⁰ This is a simplistic approach that presents imperialism as having a rational intent and ignores the messy inertia of colliding formations and wills. Urging us to focus less on origin, Thompson argues that we must analyze "the consequences of consequences," as well as military technology and strategy, and see that events are in large part "collisions of wills" and thus that the future and the past are irrational. By doing so, he argues, we avoid reducing everything to an imperialism with rational intent, which can result in conspiracy theories of the ruling elites instead of an analysis of how elites make decisions and how political pressures influence their policies and ideology. Here Thompson follows C. Wright Mills, for whom the danger of wars does not arise from the conscious planning of elites but is the final, unforeseen link in a causal chain forged at each stage by the previous choices of ruling classes. Therefore, if another world war were to occur, it would not be the simple outcome of elites' decisions, but the result of competing configurations of social forces.¹⁵¹ If we place events into too tidy a logical formation, Thompson warns, we will be unprepared for their inevitable irrationality. This is precisely what has occurred with the Kosovar war. It has been reduced to a tidy logical formation of Western elite design.

The true causes of war do not lie within the intentions of politicians. No matter how many Clinton quotes one may amass, the true secret of war is not contained within his words. For the truth of war eludes him too. As Günther Anders writes, "We really don't know" what we are doing "nor do they who control the Apocalypse: for they are 'we', they too are fundamentally incompetent."¹⁵² While our ancestors believed that imagination exceeds reality, for us, Anders writes, "our

imagination...cannot compete with that of our *praxis*" for "our imagination cannot grasp the effect of that which we are producing."¹⁵³

This realization can guide us towards an alternative approach to humanitarian interventions, one which distinguishes between actors' intentions and the intentions and consequences of their actions.¹⁵⁴ It may well be true that human rights were hypocritically invoked for Kosova and that the justification and intention behind the intervention were inconsistent or even at odds with one another. But this does not imply that the intervention itself was wrong. The necessity for the action may have warranted justification, however weak. Let us then shift our attention from the intention of actors and evaluate, instead, the *action* apart from its stated justification and its intent. For what a humanitarian intervention is and what elites use it for are different, just as what a humanitarian intervention is intended to accomplish can be distinguished from what elites hope it accomplishes. In other words, that Clinton's primary goal was not to save Kosovars does not negate the fact that the intervention did save them.

In short, the justification of an action and the action itself are different. This is not a controversial point, for even anti-interventionists distinguish the two when they make claims about the inconsistency of the intent and the justification of the action. Thus, even if we accept the argument that US-NATO acted solely out of its own interests, it does not necessarily mean that its intervention was unjustified. If we separate the intention of the actor from the intention of the action, the discourse around the Kosovar war will cease to be about US imperialism, consistency, intent, and justification. Setting the intention and consequences of humanitarian intervention apart from those of the actors that led the operation, I believe, opens up the possibility of redeeming the action.

Redeeming Humanitarian Interventions

*For Peace. Against War. Who is not? But, how can you stop those bent on genocide without making war?—Susan Sontag*¹⁵⁵

Unable to demonstrate the worth of humanitarian interventions against the morally righteous anti-imperialist Left, I once confided to a dear friend that I felt like a weak philosopher without arguments. I *feel* that the intervention was right, I said, but I cannot prove it. What is one life worth in the anti-imperialist fight? Yet, all I have to show for the worth of interventions is myself. I, alongside thousands, am here because of the intervention.

My friend pointed me to a passage Adorno wrote shortly after escaping fascist Germany in response to critiques of capitalist democracies.¹⁵⁶ “We owe our life,” he wrote, “to the difference between the economic framework of late capitalism, and its political façade.”¹⁵⁷ While for the critic, who everywhere sees the “sham character” of “public opinion” and “the primacy of the economy in real decision,” “this discrepancy is slight...[f]or countless individuals, however, the thin, ephemeral veil is the basis of their entire existence.”¹⁵⁸ Countless individuals “are indebted for their existence to the inessential, illusion,” which, against “the great laws of historical development, amount to mere chance.”¹⁵⁹ This truth, Adorno notes, affects the entire construction of essence and appearance. “Measured by its concept, the individual has indeed become as null and void as Hegel’s philosophy anticipated: seen *sub specie individuationis*, however, absolute contingency, permitted to persist as a seemingly abnormal state, is itself the essential.”¹⁶⁰ If the world is “systematized horror,” he adds, it does “the world too much honour to think of it entirely as a system,” for it is rooted in division and it “reconciles” only by upholding “the irreconcilability of the general and the particular. Its essence is abomination; but its appearance, the lie by virtue of which it persists, is a stand-in for truth.”¹⁶¹

While Leftist radicals deny genocide and unveil hypocritical politicians, the thin veneer of human rights is the foundation of my existence. I too owe my life to a fragile appearance: the difference between late capitalism and its political façade, which, in my case, was the much condemned “human rights.”

I also owe my life to the appearance of a concern for humanity that is preserved in human rights. Perhaps human rights are just a thin veneer. But if we claim to remove the façade, as radicals do, we would merely sacrifice actually existing humans for an abstract humanity. We must rather acknowledge that the very construction of essence and appearance, as Adorno notes, showcases that the individual is insignificant and in a state of absolute contingency. The appearance of such a world makes possible the arbitrary saving of a few. Kosovars were not saved because they were the chosen ones; to say that we owe our life to the intervention is to say that we experienced a bit of unearned good luck.

I cannot begin to explain the experience of begging for intervention and being told that you are better off spared from imperialism. I cannot explain how sweet this so-called imperialism is in the face of the threat of death. It is with this in mind—with the image of the person who has no state, military, or power to turn to, who is not only cursed by the general insignificance of all individuals but also cursed to have been born in a country that is insignificant—that humanitarian intervention must be rethought. The ones who beg for it are desperate. The ones who are denied it are cursed. The ones who are granted it are lucky.

Thus, there is something to be redeemed in the so-called humanitarian intervention. But only when the dead and living Kosovars emerge from the shadow of genocide denial and US imperialism, which obstructs the truth of war; when humanitarian interventions are thought within the parameters of the world that both renders them necessary and scrutinizes their necessity; when we cease to displace the concern from human life to human rights and thus acknowledge the necessity of the veneer of human right for the sake of human life.

Radicals lament the betrayal of “humanity” in the hypocritical invocation of human rights for humanitarian interventions. Ali calls our survival “Nato’s Balkan Adventure,” while Sontag, herself so often dismissed as naïve, calls it a “just war.”¹⁶² Where survival is concerned, I will hedge my bets on her sensibility before I do on the radicals who are willing to put my head on a chopping block for their principles.¹⁶³ For, as Wood claims, “whatever happens in [the Kosovar] war” we must “confront” “human rights imperialism” “head on” or “the left is in danger of losing its one most consistent commitment, the resistance to imperialism, a commitment that many people have preserved long after giving up on things like class struggle.”¹⁶⁴ Enzensberger perfectly captures Wood’s position when he writes: “Those who pride themselves on their loyalty to ideas should remember that abstraction cannot be betrayed, only people.”¹⁶⁵

Radicals are outraged that “humanity” is used as a pretext for economic interests. While Wood argues that the “US interpretation of human rights violates any meaningful conception of human rights” by prioritizing its own particular interests over “the common interests of humanity,” in truth it is her stance that undermines human rights by placing an abstract notion of humanity with a common interest over the actual interests of human beings.¹⁶⁶ The anti-interventionists’ concern with *humanity* in its purest form does not extend to the economic needs of said humanity. Note that there is here a link between the idea of humanity and that of human rights as expressed also in the right to freely engage in relations of exchange.¹⁶⁷ The latter, which is essential for survival in capitalist society, is dismissed as *inessential*. While supporting humanity as such is said to be commendable and honest, feeding real human beings for ulterior motives is unacceptable. Our radicals will not stand for it.

To redeem humanitarian intervention, let us give serious consideration to those who worry that interventions are not *really* for humanity. In their critique, radicals posit abstract humanity against the veneer of human rights. In contrast, we must redeem humanitarian intervention from abstract humanity by examining it from the standpoint of human beings. We can begin, as Karl Marx puts it, with real premises: living human individuals.¹⁶⁸ A redemption of humanitarian intervention from abstract humanity for really existing human beings.

Such a redemption implies judging the validity of the intervention through and for human beings. Once we theorize from this standpoint, it becomes evident that today humanitarian interventions are always also economic ones. This is the tragedy. Perhaps our critics' desire for a purely humanitarian intervention is correct, but only in its utopian elements: that is, the desire to uphold a purely *humanitarian* intervention unmarred by corrupt politics, secret deals, and hidden agendas: an intervention truly for humans. It posits as the terrain for intervention a world in which humanitarian intervention would no longer be necessary; a world where humans come first, unmediated by economic motives.

This, however, is not the case in capitalist society. It is thus imperative for those grappling with interventions to critically analyze its socio-historical context; to think it in *our* society, which produces both mass murder and the appeal to end it. In such a society, what good could a non-economic, non-military, purely humanitarian intervention do for anyone?

Let us be brutally honest—the need for a humanitarian intervention arises out of economic concerns. And just as bellies cannot be filled with prayers, neither can humanitarian intervention be complete without the power of capital. A world that requires a humanitarian intervention is the very world that has caused it. The necessity of a humanitarian intervention in Kosova reveals the true nature of a world where human life is not the primary concern. That, by a combination of factors and interests, Kosovars were placed first does not mean they were the intended primary beneficiaries. Rather, it stands to showcase the glory of undeserved good luck.¹⁶⁹

Once we theorize from the standpoint of human beings, it becomes evident that humanitarian interventions—which claim to prioritize human life—are only necessary in a world where human beings are always second. In a world that treats human beings as ends in themselves—which a purely humanitarian intervention purports to do—there would be no genocide, thus rendering humanitarian intervention superfluous. The demand to *put people first* only makes sense in a world that always puts them last.

Lessons From Kosova

Though Kosova is sometimes mentioned, many fail to speak about Kosovars. Virilio ruminates on the air and sky, arguing that the Kosovar war happened in “aero-electro-magnetic space”; Wood, Ali, and Chomsky fixate on the US; Habermas still holds fast to WWII as his exclusive historical anchor; Italians scrutinize their own involvement; the French laud their disengagement; but no one truly writes about Kosova.¹⁷⁰

How would one write about Kosova? It is a more daunting task for me to write as a witness than it is for scholars to launch indictments from the US. The task proves burdensome as I feel impelled to prove that Kosova is more than a mere reflection of American imperialism. But to do so is to cast Kosova in the genocide denier's shadow. It becomes my task to persuade them. I am compelled to verify the facts of the war, to provide evidence that confirms the reality that I witnessed firsthand.

In attempting to write about Kosova, I find comfort reading about others' wars. In W.G. Sebald and Jean Améry, I find a human element striving to be preserved, one which is entirely exterminated in the discourse surrounding the Kosovar war. Even in the literature that makes it possible for me to confront the horrors of war, however, I am struck by the tendency to emphasize numbers. This is understandable given the enormity of mass murders, such as the Holocaust, that occurred on an unprecedented human scale, or Hiroshima, which, as Anders claims, altered morality and brought forth a new categorical imperative.¹⁷¹ But this tendency leaves me wary because I feel I cannot do the same. And yet, precisely because I feel that I cannot—as if I am ashamed that more people did not die—I am compelled to acknowledge the toll of even one life lost. Even one is too many.

But how should one account for such loss? Searching for war narratives by Kosovars proves futile, for I struggle to find first-hand accounts of the tragedy written by Kosovars themselves. Despite regularly telling war stories, Kosovars rarely put them into writing. Instead, we write about the war's aftermath: survival, transition, and living under the UN. Strikingly, we do not pen treatises justifying foreign intervention.

At first, I was perplexed by the Kosovars' lack of public defense of the foreign intervention. But then it dawned on me: why and for whom would they write such defenses? To whom would they justify their survival, sovereignty, and aid? Kosovars are right not to write treatises rationalizing the intervention. Their existence is proof enough for the necessity and outcome of the intervention. It is those who oppose the intervention that fixate on its legitimacy and justification; those who remain unconvinced; those for whom the existence of Kosovars proves nothing. They seek to cast Kosova as a cautionary tale: "How horrible the intervention. It must never happen again!" But, for Kosovars, their survival is justification enough. On death row, any justification will suffice; human rights are as good as any.

Perhaps this is the lesson from Kosova: the Kosovars' existence, a small insight that might hold the possibility of the redemption of humanitarian intervention. A provocative insight at a time when denouncing US hypocrisy carries more moral weight than condemning genocide.

I harbor no illusions that Kosova will become the philosopher's French Revolution or the activist's Vietnam. But this does not mean that there are no "lessons," to borrow Chomsky's term, to be gleaned from Kosova. The inadequacy of the discourse on Kosova reveals both the failure of thought to capture war and the insignificance of atrocities and genocide denial that haunt intellectual and activist minds. Those who have not experienced the terror of being a target of extermination, of living in a state without protection when any crime against you is *legitimate*, *justified*, and *legal*, cannot fully comprehend war. Such people do not have the slightest sense of a life on death row, waiting its turn trembling. They do not know what the word "intervention" conjures to the body that lives only for the sake of others, the soul that does not let go upon hearing "intervention," the sacred word that signals that a "thought" has "turned unto them."¹⁷²

The insights arising from war experiences may speak to the irreparable condition wrought by such atrocities. They may reveal the weight of surviving horrors only to have others deny that they ever occurred and the shock of hearing experts claim that it was simply a conflict between two sides. Their insights can shed light on the true nature of genocide—what it means to be marked a filthy target for extermination—and on the nature of intervention—what it means to be marked a victim to be saved.

That war cannot be endured as a memory remains a problem for thought. Thus, Kosovars stand between trying to remember and banishing what happened. How should one begin, as Sebald asks, "a natural history of destruction"?¹⁷³ Does it start with a technical breakdown of the prerequisites for large-scale air raids? Or with a scientific account of what ravaged our cities? Or with a "pathographical record of typical modes of death, or with behaviorist studies of the instincts of flight and homecoming?"¹⁷⁴

It certainly does not begin with Clinton, Blair, and Albright; it must begin with survivors, displaced people, and their search for home; with Kosovars who are compelled to revisit the scenes of war, to salvage something from past lives, to look for the lost loved ones. Survivors, in Sebald's words, are still living in the scenes of catastrophe.¹⁷⁵ We remain caught in a never-ending cycle of displacement, circling around the rubble, always searching but never quite finding what we are looking for. Chronically restless but always in search of home. This longing for home keeps the dream of peace alive. The displaced refugee harbors this dream, while the one who has never been yanked from their TV set condemns peace as mythic.

Peace may be ridiculed in the West and the West may praise itself for having the courage to ridicule peace. But in Kosova, we longed for it. Comfortable in the imperialist peace they ridicule, Leftists condemn the Kosovar intervention and deny

the genocide. The false, nasty, evil imperialism of the US that keeps radicals cushy in their universities, writing, eating, traveling, with the luxury to critique from afar—that is what we wanted. Nothing more, nothing less. Like the rest of the world, in moments of despair, we did not even want the “real deal,” we did not dream of utopia, but we too, like you, wanted the fake, hypocritical peace that your imperial US provides you. We too want freedom and peace—even as a sham, a bare set of civil liberties and the right to buy and consume. Once we get that, we can join you in talking about *real* peace. Until then, we simply ask not to be deprived of that to which you would desperately cling if it were remotely threatened.

Radical intellectuals spit on human rights with the assurance that they will never need to invoke them. The experience of hedging our bets on human rights as we longed for repose, rest, and breath marks the difference between Kosovars and the radicals who are suspicious of our pain. That longing will forever mark a truth in search of peace. Though not a reality, peace, for us, can never be dismissed as mere farce.¹⁷⁶

¹For “air war” see Samantha Power’s commentary in *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Perennial, 2002); Tariq Ali, “Introduction: After the War,” *Masters of the Universe? NATO’s Balkan Crusade* (London: Verso, 2000). For “virtual war,” see Michael Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (Canada: Viking, 2000). For “internet war,” see Manuel Castells, *The Internet Galaxy. Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Thomas Keenan, “Looking like Flames and Falling like Stars: Kosovo, ‘The First Internet War,’” *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation, and Culture* 7, no. 4 (2010): 539-550. For “metaphor war,” see Roland Paris, “Kosovo and the Metaphor War,” *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 3 (2002): 423-450. For “war in orbital space,” see Paulo Virilio, “The Kosovo War Took Place in Orbital Space,” interview by John Armitage, *CTheory* (2000).

² Ellen Meiksins Wood, “Kosovo and The New Imperialism,” *Monthly Review*, 51 no. 2 (1999): 1-18; Tariq Ali, “NATO’s Balkan Adventure,” *Monthly Review*, 51 no. 2 (1999): 9-14; Edward Herman and David Peterson, *The Politics of Genocide* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010); Alan Wood, “Kosovo and the bombing of Yugoslavia-A new crime of imperialism,” *In Defence of Marxism*, March 26, 1999.

³ See Chomsky, *A New Generation*; Chomsky, *The New Military Humanism: Lessons from Kosovo* (Maine: Common Courage Press, 2002); Wood, “Kosovo and The New Imperialism;” Tariq Ali, “NATO’s Balkan Adventure;” Ali, *Masters of the Universe?*; Herman and Peterson, *The Politics of Genocide*.

⁴ For the most recent statistics on the deaths and disappearances of Kosovar Albanians, see the Humanitarian Law Centre Kosovo. For statistics on refugees and internally displaced people, see also Human Rights War Report “Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo,” 2001; OSCE “Kosovo/Kosova: As Seen, As Told” Part III, Chapter 14.

⁵ According to a UN report on the Kosovar refugee crisis, in the course of only two weeks, half a million refugees from Kosova arrived in neighboring areas and only a few weeks later the total reached over 850,000. See Astri Suhrke et al., *The Kosovo Refugee Crisis: An Independent Evaluation of UNHCR's Emergency Preparedness and Response* (Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2000), <https://www.unhcr.org/research/evalreports/3ba0bbeb4/kosovo-refugee-crisis-independent-evaluation-unhcrs-emergency-preparedness.html>.

⁶ See, for example, Christopher Hitchens, "The Serbs' Self-Inflicted Wounds: With Kosovo independent, Yugoslavia is finally dead," *Slate*, February 22, 2008. <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2008/02/with-kosovo-independent-yugoslavia-is-finally-dead.html>.

⁷ Amongst those in support of the intervention, Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, and Madeleine Albright were the most vocal advocates. Additionally, scholars and journalists, such as Power, Hitchens, Martin Shaw, and Timothy Garton Ash, to name a few, also supported the intervention.

⁸ Wood, "Kosovo and The New Imperialism;" Ali, "NATO's Balkan Adventure;" Herman and Peterson, *The Politics of Genocide*; Gilbert Achac, *The Clash of Barbarisms: The Making of the New World Disorder* (Colorado: Paradigm Publishers, 2006).

⁹ Wood, "Kosovo and The New Imperialism," 5.

¹⁰ Ali, "NATO's Balkan Adventure," 9.

¹¹ See, for example, Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2021); Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 172.

¹² See Martin Shaw who notes that "Kosova remained a running sore: since Milosevic disbanded legitimate provincial institutions and expelled the 90 per cent Albanian majority of the population from schools, universities, and other public institutions, it was run as a quasi-colonial police state. For a decade the Albanian majority ran a parallel political and social system, or as classical Marxists would have called it, a system of 'dual power.'" Shaw, "The Kosovan War, 1998-99: Transformations of State, War and Genocide in the Global Revolution," *Sociological Research Online*, 4 no. 2 (1999): 33-43.

¹³ For a history of Kosova, see Noel Malcom, *Kosovo: A Short History* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1999). Christopher Hitchens has also noted how during the Balkan wars, the Kingdom of Serbia annexed formerly Ottoman territories, including one that had been the scene of a Serbian military defeat in 1389—Kosova. Hitchens writes that "Serbian monarchist and nationalist propaganda hailed the "liberation" of the ancestral land, but the shrewdest foreign correspondent of the day took a different line: Do not the facts, undeniable and irrefutable, force you to come to the conclusion that the Bulgars in Macedonia, the Serbs in old Serbia, in their national endeavor to correct data in the ethnological statistics that are not quite favorable to them, are engaged quite simply in systematic extermination of the Muslim population in the villages, towns and districts?" Hitchens cites an open letter from Leon Trotsky who in 1913 was addressing the "liberal" Russian chauvinist politician Pavel Miliukov, to show that Russian support for Orthodox Christian ethnic cleansing in the Balkans is not a new problem. See Christopher Hitchens, "Why Kosovo still matters," *National Post*, July 27, 2010, <https://nationalpost.com/full-comment/christopher-hitchens-why-kosovo-still-matters>; See also Shaw, "The Kosovan War, 1998-99."

¹⁴ Susan Sontag, "Why Are We in Kosovo?," *The New York Times*, May 2, 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/05/02/magazine/why-are-we-in-kosovo.html>.

¹⁵ Sontag, "Why Are We in Kosovo?"

¹⁶ Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 444.

¹⁷ See, Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 445. Shaw also argues that NATO was not “thrusting to impose its domination on Kosova, let alone on Serbia, and thus violate Yugoslav ‘sovereignty,’” rather it “avoided this course for too long and is still clinging to the remnants of this policy even today... After open war broke out early in 1998, the West prevaricated, and even in the autumn still preferred an illusory accommodation with Milosevic. Even when this agreement was clearly broken, the West looked for non-military means of intervention.” See Shaw, “The Kosovan War, 1998-99.”

¹⁸ It is significant to note that Wesley C. Clark, the military liaison to the Dayton talks, was one of the few voices urging the arrest of Serbian war criminals after the Bosnian genocide.

¹⁹ To avoid NATO airstrikes, in 1998, Richard Holbrooke negotiated a deal with Milošević. However, the terms of the deal were ignored by Serbian troops who continued their atrocities, including the famous case of the Raçak massacre.

²⁰ See, for example, William Walker, “Ambassador William Walker,” *Frontline*, PBS, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/interviews/walker.html>; Jamie Shea and David Scheffer, “Morning Briefing,” *NATO’s Role in Kosovo*, May 18, 1999, <https://www.nato.int/kosovo/press/b990518a.htm>.

²¹ General Wesley Clark, witnessing the situation on the ground, attempted to accelerate the operation but his requests were repeatedly denied. German General Klaus Naumann, former chair of NATO’s military committee, and Holly Burkhalter, with Physicians for Human Rights, echoed the call for ground troops. Eventually, and reluctantly, NATO entered phase two of the operation—increasing its number of planes and targets—and phase three by the third of April—when it attacked Belgrade. Clark was in constant tension with the US and NATO and never received the backing he requested nor permission to use all the available planes.

²² As Power notes, “Lawyers from the Pentagon’s Judge Advocate General Office tested each potential target against the laws of war, which greatly restricted what ended up on Clark’s target list.” *A Problem from Hell*, 457.

²³ Michael Ignatieff, “Counting Bodies in Kosovo,” *The New York Times*, November 21, 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/11/21/opinion/counting-bodies-in-kosovo.html>; Hitchens, “Why Kosovo still matters;” Sontag, “Why are we in Kosovo?” Shaw, moreover, argues that ruling out ground troops was a mistake as it signaled to Milošević that he “could act with great impunity in Kosova.” The West’s *reluctance* to intervene in Yugoslavia, Shaw argues, allowed the Serbian military aggression against civilians, leading thus to a one-sided massive aerial bombardment as a last resort. Had the West reacted earlier and in a more decisive manner, the outcome would have been different.

“If the West had not condoned Serbian genocide in Bosnia, even at Dayton, Milosevic would have less reason to believe that he could get away with it in Kosova. If NATO had actually arrested Karadzic and sent him to The Hague, Milosevic might have taken the War Crimes Tribunal more seriously. If even last autumn Clinton had been less keen for diplomatic fudge, or if this spring there had been a determination to impose a just political settlement, coupled with the threat of serious forces on the ground in Kosova, Serbian forces would have been much more likely to withdraw. It is precisely because NATO did not prepare to intervene seriously, but preferred demonstrative ‘air strikes’ that Milosevic was able to escalate his war against Albanian civilians from a partial campaign to a far more extensively murderous expulsion of the majority, in late March and April 1999. This was clearly genocide on the international legal definition and could have been largely successful had NATO not in turn escalated its campaign—it could have amounted to a permanent destruction of the Kosova Albanians as a people.” See Shaw, “The Kosovan War, 1998-99.”

In short, for Shaw, NATO woefully underestimated Milošević. See Martin Shaw, "The Kosovo war: Between Two Eras," *openDemocracy*, April 1, 2009, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/the-kosovo-war-between-two-eras-2/>.

²⁴ Ali, "Nato's Balkan Adventure," 10.

²⁵ Many scholars and politicians have noted that it was difficult, if not impossible, for the US to ignore the war in Kosova given previous atrocities in the region and due to the many failed negotiations with Milošević. See, Power, *A Problem from Hell*; Madeleine Albright, moreover, claimed "we learned a lot of lessons in Bosnia, where we waited too long to do something—that, as foreign ministers, we would be judged very harshly if we allowed something like this to happen again." See "Madeleine Albright," *Frontline*, PBS, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/interviews/albright.html>. See also Noel Malcom, who argues that "Western governments, which had spent more than \$20bn coping with the previous war in Bosnia and its tide of refugees, had both genuine humanitarian concerns and a real interest in preventing the spread of instability in the wider region. When Nato started bombing, it was to make Yugoslav forces withdraw from Kosovo; when they agreed to do so, it stopped." See Noel Malcolm, "Noel Malcolm Warns Kosovo is Not South Ossetia and Abkhazia," *Standpoint Magazine*, October 2008, <https://bosniak.org/2008/10/04/noel-malcolm-warns-kosovo-is-not-south-ossetia-and-abkhazia/>.

²⁶ See, "Albright," *Frontline*, PBS; See Walker, "William Walker," *Frontline*, PBS; Scheffer, "Morning Briefing," *NATO's Role in Kosova*; Wesley Clarke, "General Wesley Clark," *Frontline*, PBS. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/interviews/clark.html>.

²⁷ Wood, "Kosovo and The New Imperialism"; Ali, "NATO's Balkan Adventure;" Jean Bricmont, *Humanitarian Imperialism: Using Human Rights to Sell War* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2006).

²⁸ Wood, "Kosovo and the New Imperialism," 2.

²⁹ Wood, "Kosovo and the New Imperialism," 2.

³⁰ Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity* (London: Verso, 2003).

³¹ See for example Alan Wood, "Kosovo and the bombing of Yugoslavia."

³² Wood, "Kosovo and the New Imperialism," 3.

³³ Wood, "Kosovo and the New Imperialism," 3.

³⁴ Islamophobia is a central feature of the Greater Serbia ideology and project. See, Admir Mulaosmanović, "Islam and Muslims in Greater Serbian Ideology: The Origins of an Antagonism and the Misuse of the Past," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 39 no. 3 (2019): 300-316; Pirro Rexhepi, "Unmapping Islam in Eastern Europe Periodization and Muslim Subjectivities in the Balkans," in *Eastern Europe Unmapped: Beyond Borders and Peripheries* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 53-78; Adnan Delalic and Patricia Zhubi, who recount islamophobia in the work of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts and in Radovan Karažić's and Ratko Mladić's propaganda. Mladić, as they note, justified war crimes against Bosnian Muslims claiming that the Islamic world possesses, if not an atomic bomb, then a "demographic bomb." Karažić similarly maintained that he was working against a "toxic, all-destructive Islamic octopus." See Adnan Delalic and Patricia Zhubi, "Der Balkan als Projektion," *WOZ die Wochenzeitung*, 2019. <https://www.woz.ch/1915/rechtsterrorismus/der-balkan-als-projektion>.

³⁵ Wood, "Kosovo and the New Imperialism," 6; Noam Chomsky, "Stop U.S. Intervention," interviewed by Michael Lerner, *Tikkun*, April 5, 1999, <https://chomsky.info/19990405/>; see also Jürgen Habermas who stresses that NATO intervened in Kosova but not for the "Kurds, Chechians, or Tibetians." See Habermas, "Bestiality and Humanity: A War on the Border Between Legality and Morality," *Constellations*, 6, no. 3 (1999): 269.

³⁶ Hoare has also critiqued how left revisionists employ this consistency argument. Hoare turns the question to the left revisionists and asks:

“What about Albanians?...If the left-wing revisionists are concerned with the suffering of oppressed nationalities, as they claim to be regarding the Kurds, Palestinians, and others, it needs to be explained why did they not speak out against Milosevic’s persecution of the Kosovo Albanians, or of the Bosnian Muslims, or of the Croats. It needs to be explained why Serbian or Yugoslav military intervention was less objectionable to them than American military intervention, even when it was incomparably more bloody. It needs to be asked why the six hundred or so Yugoslav civilian deaths during the Kosovo War were ‘worthy’ victims in a way that the tens if not hundreds of thousands of Bosnians killed by Serbian forces were not.”

See Marko Attila Hoare, “Genocide in the Former Yugoslavia: A Critique of Left Revisionism’s Denial,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 5, no. 4 (2003): 543-563.

³⁷ Kosova’s Liberation Army [KLA] received much criticism and was often referred to as a terrorist organization or a violent group. See, for example, Noam Chomsky, *A New Generation Draws the Line: Kosovo, East Timor, and the Standards of the West* (London: Verso, 2000), 104-111; Neil Clark, “Kosovo and the Myth of Liberal Intervention,” *The Guardian*, December 15, 2010.

³⁸ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, “Second Thoughts on Consistency,” *Political Crumbs* (London: Verso, 1990), 12.

³⁹ Enzensberger, “Second Thoughts on Consistency,” 2.

⁴⁰ Enzensberger, “Second Thoughts on Consistency,” 2.

⁴¹ Enzensberger, “Second Thoughts on Consistency,” 3.

⁴² Enzensberger, “Second Thoughts on Consistency,” 3.

⁴³ It is important to note that there may be significant differences between the radical, as described by Enzensberger, and the intellectual radical addressed in this article. Enzensberger’s radical is presented as the one who is willing to put their body on the line for their principles. However, contemporary radical intellectuals are public intellectuals who operate as the enlightened individuals standing on a higher moral ground but who do not exhibit the kind of militancy Enzensberger stresses.

⁴⁴ Enzensberger, “Second Thoughts on Consistency,” 4.

⁴⁵ Enzensberger, “Second Thoughts on Consistency,” 7.

⁴⁶ Enzensberger, “Second Thoughts on Consistency,” 8.

⁴⁷ See Flamur Krasniqi, “Was NATO’s decision to militarily intervene in the Kosovo War a ‘last resort’?,” *E-International Relations*, February 11, 2017, <https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/67855>.

⁴⁸ Shaw notes that “The West had throughout, however, the support of a large majority of both the Council and the General Assembly, unanimous backing from the European Union including its neutral members, and considerable worldwide political support.” See Shaw, “The Kosovan War, 1998-99.”

⁴⁹ Shaw argues that NATO’s failure to secure the approval of the Council resulted from “the perception that Russia and China would use their anachronistic vetoes in the Security Council to prevent any real intervention.” Shaw “The Kosovan War, 1998-99.” Like him, Louis Henkin also argues that the reason was the anticipated Russian and Chinese veto. See Louis Henkin, “Kosovo and the Law of ‘Humanitarian Intervention,’” *The American Journal of International Law* 93, no. 4 (1999), 825.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Wood, “Kosovo and The New Imperialism,” 1. Habermas, amongst many others, emphasizes that the NATO intervention was illegal as it did not receive the approval of the UN Security Council. See Habermas, “Bestiality and Humanity,” 266. It is important to note, as Power does,

that the American Association of Jurists and a group of Western and Russian law experts submitted a report to the UN war crimes tribunal at the Hague claiming that NATO bombings violated international law by killing civilians. These charges were dismissed. See Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 462.

⁵¹ See, for example, Chomsky, *A New Generation Draws the Line*, 93-95; Wood, "Kosovo and the New Imperialism," 4.

⁵² Kosova, as scholars and journalists, such as Malcom, Shaw, and Hitchens, note, was never part of Serbia but rather Yugoslavia. Hitchens writes that with the Balkan wars, Kosova may have become part of Serbia by right of conquest but Serbia did not adjust its own laws to make it a legal province *de jure* and this was in any case moot because all future treaties and agreements were signed between Yugoslavia and the no-less-new state concept calling itself republican Turkey. Legal instruments agreed between these two entities recognized Belgrade's sovereignty over Kosovo, but solely in the sense that they recognized Belgrade as the capital of Yugoslavia." See Hitchens, "Why Kosovo still matters." Similarly, Malcom writes:

"The territory of Kosovo was part of the Ottoman Empire for just over 450 years, until it was conquered by Serb and Montenegrin forces in 1912. (Serbs would say that it was "liberated"; but they formed less than 25 per cent of the Kosovo population at that time.) After the conquest, it remained occupied territory; it was not legally incorporated into Serbia. It was then conquered again in the First World War, and finally absorbed into a Yugoslav kingdom in 1918. For the rest of the 20th century, with one major interruption (the Second World War), it was always part of a Yugoslav state. It was never simply part of a Serbian state – until the summer of 2006, when it was treated, for the first time in modern history, as part of a sovereign Serbia. (When Kosovo gained its independence in February of this year, it had been treated as simply part of Serbia for less than 20 months)."

See Malcolm, "Noel Malcolm Warns Kosovo is Not South Ossetia and Abkhazia." See also, Malcom, *Kosovo: A Short History*.

⁵³ See Shaw, "The Kosovan War, 1998-99"; Malcolm, "Noel Malcolm Warns Kosovo is Not South Ossetia and Abkhazia."

⁵⁴ Sontag, "Why Are We in Kosovo?"

⁵⁵ Sontag, "Why Are We in Kosovo?"

⁵⁶ Sontag, "Why Are We in Kosovo?"

⁵⁷ It is worth noting that the international community did not accept Kosova's claim to independence even though it had already recognized Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia as autonomous states.

⁵⁸ Chomsky, *A New Generation Draws the Line*, 25.

⁵⁹ Noam Chomsky, "On the NATO Bombing of Yugoslavia," Interviewed by Danilo Mandic, *RTS Online*, April 25, 2006, <https://chomsky.info/20060425/>.

⁶⁰ Tara John, "The Story of This Shocking Image from a Prison Camp in Bosnia Continues 25 Years Later," *Time*, November 22, 2017, <https://time.com/5034826/fikret-alic-time-cover-bosnia/>.

⁶¹ Since at least the early 1980s there was ongoing conflict between Kosovar Albanians and Serbians, including mass protests against the Serbian occupation. See, for example, Power, *A problem from Hell*, 450-452. Besides the ongoing murders and persecutions, it is also important to highlight the sexual violence experienced that Kosovar women were subjected to. Rape camps were established and around 10-40,000 women were affected. See Farnsworth, N. (2008). Exploratory research on the extent of gender-based violence in Kosova and its impact on women's reproductive health. Prishtina:

The Kosova Women's Network; Vjollca Krasniqi, Ivor Sokolic, and Denisa Kostovicova, "Skirts as Flags: Transitional Justice, Gender and Everyday Nationalism in Kosovo" *Nations and Nationalism*, 26 (2002): 461-476.

⁶² See Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 450-452. For another account of the documentation of Serbian-committed atrocities in Kosova, see Carla Del Ponte, *Madame Prosecutor: Confrontations with Humanity's Worst Criminals and the Culture of Impunity* (New York: Other Press, 2011).

⁶³ Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 452.

⁶⁴ Editorial Board of World Socialist Website, "Why is NATO at war with Yugoslavia? World power, oil and gold," *World Socialist Web Site*, May 24, 1999, <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/1999/05/stat-m24.html>.

⁶⁵ Chomsky, "Stop U.S. Intervention,"

https://www.democracynow.org/1999/4/12/noam_chomsky_and_edward_said_on

For other places where Chomsky downplays the atrocities of Kosovars in comparison to Kurds and people in Lebanon, see Chomsky, *A New Generation Draws the Line*, 11-23, 110. See also David Gibbs, "Was Kosovo the Good War?," *Tikkun* 24, no. 4 (2009): 51-73.

⁶⁶ Editorial Board of World Socialist Website, "Why is NATO at war With Yugoslavia?"

⁶⁷ Chomsky, *A New Generation*, 94-95; Wood, "Kosovo and The New Imperialism," 6.

⁶⁸ Editorial Board of World Socialist Website, "Why is NATO at war With Yugoslavia?"

⁶⁹ For Chomsky's claims that the KLA attacks started the war, see *A New Generation*, 104. For Wood's comments, see Wood, "Kosovo and the bombing of Yugoslavia."

⁷⁰ Wood, "Kosovo and the bombing of Yugoslavia."

⁷¹ See Achcar, *The Clash of Barbarisms*; Ali, *Masters of the Universe?*

⁷² For an example of the demonization of KLA, see Alan Wood who writes that "the militants of the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army, impatient at the lack of results obtained by the moderate nationalist tendency of Rugova, began a campaign of individual terror which we predicted at the time would bring the most catastrophic results." Wood, "Kosovo and the Bombing of Yugoslavia—A New Crime of Imperialism," In *Defense of Marxism*, March 26, 1999, <https://www.marxist.com/bombing-yugoslavia-crime-imperialism.htm>. See also Neil Clark, who blames the KLA for starting the war in Kosova. Clark, "Kosovo and the myth of liberal intervention," *The Guardian*, December 15, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/dec/15/balkans-report-blairs-liberal-intervention>.

⁷³ Power notes that the KLA rebels were "scattered" on "hillsides" but that the Serbian soldiers and police "controlled all of Kosovo's towns and main roads," *A Problem from Hell*, 452.

⁷⁴ See Chomsky, *A New Generation*; Ali, "NATO's Balkan Adventure"; Wood, "Kosovo and the New Imperialism"; Herman, *The Politics of Genocide*; Wood "Kosovo and the bombing of Yugoslavia."

⁷⁵ Wood, "Kosovo and the New Imperialism," 7-8.

⁷⁶ Chomsky, *A New Generation*, 33.

⁷⁷ Chomsky, *A New Generation*, 33.

⁷⁸ See, Denisa Kostovica, *Kosovo: The Politics of Identity and Space* (Routledge, 20005); Nita Luci, *Seeking Independence: Making Nation, Memory, and Manhood in Kosova*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2014; Elife Krasniqi, "Same Goal, Different Paths, Different Class: Women's Feminist Political Engagements in Kosovo from the Mid-1970s until the Mid-1990s," *Comparative Southeast European Studies*, 69 no. 2-3 (2021): 313-334; Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 445.

⁷⁹ See, for example, Chomsky, "Stop U.S. Intervention."

⁸⁰ Agon Maliqi, "Remembering the U.S. intervention that worked," *The Washington Post*, June 8, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/06/08/remembering-us-intervention-that-worked/>.

⁸¹ See, Wood, "Kosovo and the New Imperialism" and Achcar, *The Clash of Barbarisms*.

⁸² Wood, "Kosovo and the New Imperialism," 7.

⁸³ Maliqi, "Remembering the U.S. intervention that worked."

⁸⁴ See Hoare, "Genocide in the former Yugoslavia;" Shaw, "War, Hunger, and Displacement/The Kosovo Report," *The Journal of Development Studies*; Power, *A Problem from Hell*.

⁸⁵ Noam Chomsky and Edward Said, "Noam Chomsky and Edward Said on Kosovo," by Amy Goodman, *Democracy Now!*, April 12, 1999,

https://www.democracynow.org/1999/4/12/noam_chomsky_and_edward_said_on.

⁸⁶ Chomsky, *A New Generation Draws the Line*, 95.

⁸⁷ Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001), 55. See Timothy Garton Ash, "Imagine No America," *The Guardian*, September 19, 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/sep/19/usa.comment>.

⁸⁸ Chomsky, *A New Generation Draws the Line*, 94. See Daniel Pearl and Robert Block, "Despite Tales, the War in Kosovo Was Savage, but Wasn't Genocide," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 27, 2001, <https://www.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/pearl123199.htm>.

⁸⁹ Shea and Scheffer, "Morning Briefing."

⁹⁰ Shea and Scheffer, "Morning Briefing."

⁹¹ The sources Scheffer cited included reports, thousands of eyewitness accounts, refugee reports, diplomatic reporting, and aerial photography. All these sources, he noted, were already being mobilized in the case being built against Milošević at the Hague. Witnesses would also provide key evidence in the courtroom, he added, explaining that "what they have seen are extremely crucial evidence so no-one should underestimate the importance of the refugee accounts." Shea and Scheffer, "Morning Briefing."

⁹² Shea and Scheffer, "Morning Briefing."

⁹³ Shea and Scheffer, "Morning Briefing."

⁹⁴ Shea and Scheffer, "Morning Briefing."

⁹⁵ Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 468.

⁹⁶ Scheffer reported a large number of Serbian illegal activities, such as the holding of civilians in the vicinity of military targets, placing non-combatants around military objectives, the use of human shields, the use of KLA to insulate military targets, which are prohibited under Articles 3, 27, 28 of the Geneva Convention, as well as protocol 1 of 1977, Article 51, sub-paragraph 7. Shea and Scheffer, "Morning Briefing."

⁹⁷ Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 468.

⁹⁸ Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 472.

⁹⁹ Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 472.

¹⁰⁰ Chomsky, *A New Generation Draws the Line*, 94.

¹⁰¹ Gibbs, "Was Kosovo the Good War?" 73.

¹⁰² Herman and Peterson, *The Politics of Genocide*, 43.

¹⁰³ Tariq Ali, *Masters of the Universe?*, xvii.

¹⁰⁴ Herman and Peterson, *The Politics of Genocide*, 74.

¹⁰⁵ John Pilger, "The War Lovers," *Mail & Guardian*, April 10, 2006, <https://mg.co.za/article/2006-04-10-the-war-lovers/>; Ali, *Masters of the Universe?*, xvi.

¹⁰⁶ Edward S. Herman and David Peterson, "Milošević's Death in the Propaganda System," *International Committee to Defend Slobodan Milošević*, 2006, <https://milosevic.co/253/edward-s-herman-and-david-peterson-milosevics-death-in-the-propaganda-system/>.

¹⁰⁷ Hoare, "Genocide in the former Yugoslavia," 554.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Parenti, *To Kill a Nation: The Attack on Yugoslavia* (London: Verso Books, 2002), 150.

¹⁰⁹ Marko Attila Hoare, "Nothing Is Left," *Bosnia Report* (Bosnia: The Bosnian Institute, 2003).

¹¹⁰ See, Martin Shaw, "The Politics of Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research*, 13 no. 3 (2011): 353-358; Hoare, "Genocide in the Former Yugoslavia," Hoare, "Nothing Is Left."

¹¹¹ This is the definition of genocide as it appears in Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948. My emphasis.

¹¹² Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948.

¹¹³ For a brief history of the term genocide, see Power, *A Problem from Hell*; Jean-Paul Sartre, "Genocide" *New Left Review* 48 (March/April 1968), <https://newleftreview.org/issues/i48/articles/jean-paul-sartre-genocide>.

¹¹⁴ Noam Chomsky, "Forward," in Edward Herman and David Peterson, *The Politics of Genocide* (London: Verso, 2011), 12.

¹¹⁵ Theodor Adorno, "Message in a Bottle," *New Left Review* 200 (1993), 6.

¹¹⁶ Adorno, "Message in a Bottle," 7.

¹¹⁷ Hoare, "Nothing Is Left."

¹¹⁸ In a famous article called "The Picture that Fooled the World," published in *Living Marxism* in February 1997, Thomas Deichmann argues that "Fikret Alic and his fellow Bosnian Muslims were not imprisoned behind a barbed wire fence. There was no barbed wire fence surrounding Trnopolje camp. It was not a prison, and certainly not a 'concentration camp,' but a collection centre for refugees, many of whom went there seeking safety and could leave again if they wished." Citing people he interviewed, who claim to have supported and helped Bosnian Muslims, he argues that what has been called a concentration camp was in fact a "collection centre" that was "spontaneously created by refugees when the civil war escalated in the Prijedor region." He adds to this story that "In May 1992 Bosnian Serb forces took the town of Kozarac and drove its Bosnian Muslim occupants out, just as Serb and Croat civilians had been driven out of their homes elsewhere in the war zone." Quoting Paddy Ashdown, he further describes Trnopolje as a place where people gathered because they have to go somewhere. "Their houses have been burnt and their lives threatened. Muslim extremists pressurise the men to join up with the guerrillas, so they have come here for safety. But on most recent nights the unprotected camp has been raided by Serbian extremists who beat them, rob them of what little they have left and, it is claimed, rape the women. Things are better now." Deichmann, "The Picture that Fooled the World," *Living Marxism* 97 (February 1977), http://www.srpska-mreza.com/guest/LM/lm-f97/LM97_Bosnia.html.

¹¹⁹ Deichmann, "The Picture that Fooled the World;" For Karadžić's use of this propaganda, see Ed Vulliamy, "I am waiting. No one has ever said sorry," *The Guardian*, July 26, 2000, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/27/radovankaradzic.warcrimes2>.

¹²⁰ Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 445.

¹²¹ Editorial Board of World Socialist Web Site, "Why is NATO at war with Yugoslavia?"

¹²² Wood, "Kosovo and the bombing of Yugoslavia." By contrast, Shaw argues that it was Milošević's attempt to create a greater Serbia provoked the wars, see Shaw, "The Kosovan War, 1998-99." Slavoj Žižek also argues that Yugoslavia did not disintegrate with Slovenia's declaration of independence but rather that the disintegration was already underway when Milošević deprived Kosova and Vojvodina

of their autonomy. See Žižek, "Against the Double Blackmail," *New Left Review* 234, (May/April 1999), <https://newleftreview.org/issues/i234/articles/slavoj-zizek-against-the-double-blackmail.pdf>.

¹²³ Wood, "Kosovo and the Bombing of Yugoslavia."

¹²⁴ Edward Herman, *The Srebrenica Massacre: Evidence, Context, Politics* (Australia: Alphabet Soup, 2011).

¹²⁵ In this book, they critique the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia for claiming that "genocide could occur in one 'small geographical area' (the town of Srebrenica), even where the villainous party had taken the trouble to bus all the women, children and elderly men to safety – that is, incontestably had not killed any but 'Bosnian Muslim men of military age.'" Herman and Peterson, *The Politics of Genocide*, 47. For a critique of *The Politics of Genocide*, see Shaw, "The Politics of Genocide."

¹²⁶ See, for example, Peter Gowan, "The War and its Aftermath," in *Degraded Capability*.

¹²⁷ Alexander Cockburn, "Storm Over Brockes' Fakery," *Counterpunch*, November 5, 2005, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2005/11/05/storm-over-brockes-fakery/>.

¹²⁸ For more information see:

https://web.archive.org/web/20190426090811/http://www.bosnia.org.uk/bosrep/report_format.cfm?articleid=1041&reportid=162.

¹²⁹ For an example of the denial of the Bosnian genocide, see David N. Gibbs, "The Srebrenica Precedent," *Jacobin*, July 6th, 2015. For an example of mentions of Kosova only in relation to anti-imperialism or as a passing remark that equates it with Syria and Iraq, see Greg Afinogenov, "When Humanitarianism Became Imperialism," *Jacobin*, September 17th, 2016; Nick Turse, "The War on Terror Has Been Very Successful at Creating New Terrorists," *Jacobin*, January 8th, 2022.

¹³⁰ In 1989, *Praxis International* published an article by Marković, where he complained about Kosova's birth rate and called for measures to prevent the overcrowding of Kosova with Albanians. See Mihailo Marković, "Tragedy of National Conflicts in 'Real Socialism.' The Case of Kosovo," *Praxis International*, 9 no. 4 (1989): 408-424. Marković co-authored the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts [SANU] in 1986 that is said to have incited Serbian nationalism. The Memorandum speaks of the "physical, political, legal, and cultural genocide of the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija" (128) via the "Albanianization of Kosovo" (128). In 1986, Marković and other *Praxis* intellectuals, including Ljubomir Tadić and Zagorka Golubović signed a petition against the supposed Albanian takeover of Kosova and for the abolition of Kosova's autonomy. The petition addressed the need to defend "Serbian national culture." In 1987, Golubović, Marković and Tadić were spreading propaganda about Kosova's supposed project to create an ethnically pure Kosova. See Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, *Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts: Answers to Criticism* (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1995). In 1992, Marković argues that EU's recognition of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia's independence led to war. For more on this, see Kinzer, Stephen, 1992. A sort of 'super Serb' defends Serbian policy. *New York Times*. August 26, 1992. For an account of Marković's nationalism, Christian Fuchs, "The Praxis School's Marxist Humanism and Mihailo Marković's Theory of Communication," *Critique* 45 no. 1-2 (2017): 159-182.

¹³¹ Seyla Benhabib, "The Strange Silence of Political Theory: Response," *Political Theory* 23, no. 4 (1995): 674-681.

¹³² For Johnstone's comparison of anti-Serbs with Nazis, see her book, *Fool's Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002). For her claims that the genocide was imaginary, see her November 5 letter to the editors of *The Guardian*, quoted in full in

Alexander Cockburn, "Storm Over Brockes' Fakery," *Counterpunch*, November 5, 2005, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2005/11/05/storm-over-brockes-fakery/>.

¹³³ Harold Pinter, "Foreward," *Degraded Capability*.

¹³⁴ John Pilger, "The War Lovers."

¹³⁵ It is interesting to note that Milošević himself employed an anti-imperialist rhetoric toward the U.S. and NATO. For example, when asked about his massacres and the torching of Albanian villages, he states "individual houses yes, but not whole villages as we saw on TV in Vietnam when American forces torched villages suspected of hiding Viet Cong." See Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 453.

¹³⁶ Slobodan Milošević, "Preface to Yugoslav Edition," *Mediagraf*, October 17, 2002, <http://www.slobodan-milosevic.org/news/parenti.htm>.

¹³⁷ Milošević, "Preface to Yugoslav Edition."

¹³⁸ Slobodan Milošević International Committee, "About Us," *Slobodan Milošević International Committee*, <https://milosevic.co/about-us/>.

¹³⁹ Hoare, "Nothing Is Left."

¹⁴⁰ Hoare, "Genocide in the Former Yugoslavia."

¹⁴¹ Diana Johnstone, "Notes on the Kosovo Problem and the International Community," *Dialogue*, no. 25 (1998).

¹⁴² Hoare, "Genocide in the Former Yugoslavia."

¹⁴³ Ali, "Nato's Balkan Adventure," 9.

¹⁴⁴ Hoare, "Nothing Is Left."

¹⁴⁵ Hoare, "Nothing Is Left."

¹⁴⁶ Sontag, "Why Are We in Kosovo?"

¹⁴⁷ Jürgen Habermas, "Krieg und Empörung," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, April 29, 2022.

¹⁴⁸ Wood, "Kosovo and the New Imperialism," 6.

¹⁴⁹ Wood, "Kosovo and the New Imperialism," 2.

¹⁵⁰ E.P. Thompson, "Notes on Exterminism, the Last Stage of Civilization," *The New Left Review* 121 (May/June 1980), <https://newleftreview.org/issues/i121/articles/edward-thompson-notes-on-extermism-the-last-stage-of-civilization>.

¹⁵¹ Thompson, "Notes on Exterminism."

¹⁵² Günther Anders, "Commandments in the Atomic Age," in Claude Eatherly and Günther Anders, *Burning Conscience: The Case of the Hiroshima Pilot Claude Eatherly* (New York: Monthly Review Press, [1957] 1961), 12.

¹⁵³ Anders, "Commandments in the Atomic Age," 12.

¹⁵⁴ It of course sounds idiosyncratic to state that actions have their own intentions, and I do not mean to hypostasize actions as agents. Rather, I want to point out a difference between the intentions of the actors that order the intervention and the litany of discrete actions that are intrinsic to interventions themselves. For example, we can say that Clinton's goal truly was to secure control over the Balkans for economic interests. And yet, in order to do so, it was necessary to take actions for the sake of saving Kosovar lives and attacking the Serbian forces. These latter actions are not reducible to Clinton's intentions and far exceeded his expectations.

¹⁵⁵ Sontag, "Why Are We in Kosovo?"

¹⁵⁶ I am thankful to my friend, William Meyrowitz, for this insight and for the countless conversations on this topic.

¹⁵⁷ Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflection from Damaged Life* (London: Verso, 2005), 112-113.

¹⁵⁸ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 112-113.

¹⁵⁹ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 112-113.

¹⁶⁰ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 112-113.

¹⁶¹ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 112-113.

¹⁶² Ali, "Nato's Balkan Adventure;" Wood, "Kosovo and the New Imperialism," 6.

¹⁶³ Sontag, it is important to note, wrote this piece when she was living in Bari, Italy, just across from Albania, from where she could see the refugees pouring in daily.

¹⁶⁴ Wood, "Kosovo and the New Imperialism," 5.

¹⁶⁵ Enzensberger, "Second Thoughts on Consistency," 5.

¹⁶⁶ Wood, "Kosovo and the New Imperialism," 5.

¹⁶⁷ I am thankful to Lucien Ferguson for this insight.

¹⁶⁸ Karl Marx, "The German Ideology," in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 149.

¹⁶⁹ In *Dawn and Decline*, Max Horkheimer writes: "Undeserved Good Luck: Someone inherits a great deal of money. How nice that without having 'deserved' it, he can live without working, without pain. That's when people start screaming 'how unjust!' Don't you realize that this is the tiny bit of justice still left in this world? Good luck that wasn't deserved?" Horkheimer, *Dawn and Decline: Notes 1926-1931 and 1950-1969*, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 141. Similarly, Agon Maliqi writes: "Unlike the Syrians, we were lucky. Someone stood up for us before it was too late. Those who wanted to kill or deport us were thwarted, and we were able to return to rebuild our homes," Maliqi, "Remembering the intervention that worked."

¹⁷⁰ Virilio, "The Kosovo War Took Place in Orbital Space."

¹⁷¹ Anders, "Commandments in the Atomic Age."

¹⁷² Adorno, "Message in a Bottle," 6.

¹⁷³ W. G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction* (Canada: Vintage Canada, 2004), 33.

¹⁷⁴ Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*, 33.

¹⁷⁵ Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*, 3-5.

¹⁷⁶ I am thankful to Lucien Ferguson, Daniel Cunningham, and Deniza Mulaj for reading drafts of this article, discussing the Kosova war with me, and providing invaluable feedback and comments.