

Pack Journalism can be Lethal

Instead of checking facts, the media prefer to follow what others are saying

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Some call it pack journalism. It is also lazy journalism.

Instead of checking facts, the media prefer to follow what others are saying. And what others are saying is often inspired by establishment hardliners seeking to impose their agendas with the help of bogus news agencies, subsidized research outfits and hired scribblers.

Beijing is a frequent victim. One example is the pack journalistic myth of a Tiananmen Square massacre of students in 1989. All one needs to do to get the true story is insert "Tiananmen" into Google and read the reports at the time from none other than the U.S. Embassy in Beijing.

You will discover that the so-called massacre was in fact a mini civil war as irate Beijing citizens sought to stop initially unarmed soldiers sent to remove students who had been demonstrating freely in the square for weeks. When the soldiers finally reached the square there was no massacre. There were in fact almost no students.

As evidence of its alleged heavy-handed approach to Taiwan we are often told how Beijing labels that territory as a "renegade province." We are never told the source of the term, because it almost certainly does not exist (I read and speak Chinese and have never come across it). What Beijing does say is that there is only one China, and that Taiwan is part of that China. But the fact that all the major powers, including the United States, have agreed to or acknowledged that claim finds little mention in the international media. Beijing is almost always portrayed as unilaterally and forcefully laying claim to the island.

The death of former Yugoslav and Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic saw pack journalism at its worst. "Butcher of Belgrade" was the favorite accusation. Few were interested in the background, which begins with the fact that during the wartime German occupation of the former Yugoslavia, up to one million resisting Serbs were butchered by the Nazis and their fascist Muslim and Croatian allies — the Ustashi — whose brutalities were said to have shocked even the Nazis.

The post-1945 communist regime did all it could to dampen the resulting ethnic hatreds. Even so, sporadic attacks on Serbs by Ustashi fanatics continued. Then came the premature recognition by the West of Croatia and Bosnia as independent states in 1991/92. This meant the large Serbian minorities in both regions would have to accept the rule of their former oppressors. Bitter hostilities were inevitable, with the Serbian so-called "ethnic cleansing" in many cases being part of an effort to recover the towns and villages from which they were so cruelly expelled before 1945.

True, there were also atrocities by not only the Serbs. One of the worst was the brutal expulsion of some 500,000 Serbs from the Krajina region of Croatia — an act of genuine ethnic cleansing that attracts little attention from anti-Serb critics, as does the fact that prior to the much-mentioned expulsion of 7,000 Bosnian Muslims from the former Serbian town of Srebrenica, with some massacred, there had been systematic massacres of Serbs in the surrounding villages.

The true “butchers” in Yugoslavia were the U.S., British and German planners who orchestrated the break-up of this once ethnically stable nation. Their aim: to weaken Serbia, seen as pro-Moscow, and to extend Western influence into a formerly neutral area of Eastern Europe. The planners must have known how past ethnic hatreds would surface. For as we see in Iraq and Dafur today, when deep-seated ethnic or religious differences within a nation are triggered, atrocities and even mass exterminations are inevitable.

Every civilian, on the other side, has to be seen as a real or potential enemy. Atrocities can only be ended by forceful separation of the rival groups. But in Bosnia, the U.S. opposed separation through till 1995, claiming remarkably that it might create a precedent for ethnic division in the U.S. The U.S., incidentally, was the first to practice Dafur-style scorched-earth policies with its free-fire-zone policies during the Vietnam conflict.

The attempts to blame Milosevic for the Kosovo conflict were even more biased. We now know that as early as the 1980s, the U.S. and Britain were encouraging and training ethnic Albanian extremists of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) to undertake guerrilla war against the Serbian presence. Somehow the legitimate Serbian military resistance to these attacks was supposed to be yet another form of “ethnic cleansing.” We were supposed to believe that the Serbian 10 percent minority was determined to cleanse Kosovo of its 90 percent ethnic Albanian majority.

Ironically “ethnic cleansing” was a term originally invented by the KLA to describe its goal of driving all Serbs out of Kosovo — a goal it has now largely achieved with the help of the West. The trigger for much of the anti-Serbian demonization was a speech Milosevic made in Kosovo in 1989. It is described repeatedly as a racist manifesto calling for a Greater Serbia state. No one seems to have bothered to read the speech. If they did they would see that in fact Milosevic was calling for racial tolerance to cope with the tense situation created originally by deep-rooted and long-standing ethnic Albanian hostility to the Serbian presence in Kosovo — a presence that had once been strong in this former Serbian homeland but had been greatly reduced by pro-Nazi Albanian wartime rampages against Serbian villages.

Worse was to follow. Forced to move out of Kosovo or have his country bombed, Milosevic agreed to move provided the respected ethnic Albanian moderate Ibrahim Rugova was put in charge. But the U.S., in the shape of feisty Secretary of State Madeline Albright, insisted on the young, vigorous KLA leader Hashim Thaci. When Milosevic objected to what in effect would be a death or expulsion sentence for any Serbs remaining in Kosovo, NATO launched its vandalistic bombing attacks on Serbia to force compliance. The KLA under Thaci then went on expel more Serbs, Jews and other minorities from Kosovo and to launch attacks into southern Serbia and Macedonia as part of its campaign to create a Greater Albania.

Today Thaci rejects even the role of the United Nations in Kosovo. Meanwhile Serbia, which has seen much of its economy destroyed and has had to absorb close to one million refugees from Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo, still suffers demonization. Pack journalism is a

powerful weapon.

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