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Myths and Bombs: War, State Popularity and the Collapse of National Mythology

Danilo Mandić

“Belgrade ‘Targets’ Find Unity ‘From Heaven,’” read the front-page headline of a somewhat staggered *New York Times*, only five days after NATO bombs began falling on Serbia.¹ Instead of hiding in bomb shelters or, as US officials had hoped,² rebelling against their government, Serbs were busy singing patriotic songs at public squares, throwing rocks at the Goethe Institute, wearing medieval Serbian military uniforms and carrying signs equating Bill Clinton to Ottoman emperors, Croatian fascists and Napoleon. Thus a population which had for years expressed nothing but discontent with its government suddenly became “unified from heaven—but by the bombs, not by God.” Uniting them “behind their soldiers, their Kosovo and even President Slobodan Milošević” was, Belgrade’s then-Mayor explained, a seemingly incomprehensible mélange of “myth and superstition.”³

Post-1945 US war planners have been acutely interested in the impact of military intervention on national unity and solidarity—the belief that bombing people will drive them into resisting their rulers often guided major military decisions.⁴ Nevertheless, in the Balkans (arguably the paragon of modern nationalist conflict and military intervention), that belief was complicated by another, more “mythological” phenomenon. Where mere military force and economic pressure failed to explain and predict the collective behavior of a nation’s people, another powerful mechanism of rallying the population against the attack seemed to be at work: the targeted nation’s self-definition as historical victim—the perception of the nation’s historical victimhood or, “national mythology.”⁵

The purpose of this research is to address two married questions: (1) “*How does a foreign military attack influence local sympathy towards the regime under attack?*” and (2) “*When and why does the attacked nation’s national mythology cease to be an adequate source of popularity for this regime?*” While the first question is ascertaining a specific relationship between the independent variable (the military attack) and the dependent variable (the regime’s popularity), the second question is more exploratory. Using the 1999 North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) as a case study, I (a) measure the influence of war on popular attitudes towards the state, as reflected in

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collective actions during the war, and (b) account for the eventual collapse of national mythology. I presuppose that national mythology acts as a source of popularity for the regime and that it eventually collapses; as discussed below, these assumptions may not be as warranted as the reviewed literature believes.

As modern military conflicts continue to be waged along national lines and increasingly affect civilian populations,⁶ misconstruing the relationship between national mythology and war is carrying an increasingly larger stake in matters of life and death. In this field, therefore, military commanders and “ordinary” citizens alike stand to gain considerable knowledge not only about the nature of war but also about their own understanding of themselves as citizens and soldiers, accomplices and spectators, perpetrators and victims.

National Mythology, Nationalism and War Sociology

National mythology, a central factor in the dissolution and formation of nation-states for centuries, is conceptually obscure in most scholarship, with a shortage of empirical data behind it and an abundance of speculation in front of it. Generally, the concept refers to a set of quasi-fictitious (“mythological,” if you will) interpretations of national history, which purport to “prove” that nation’s historical victimhood; inevitably, this involves a clear establishment of an “other,” from which the secondary establishment of the “us” as “victim” can occur.⁷ Out of this establishment, Parekh adds,⁸ a national imagination of relationships of domination among groups emerges, further promoting an ethos of victimhood. More specifically, in the context of today’s nation-state world order, national mythology works to undermine domestic national divisions (ideological, ethnic, religious, etc.) and to emphasize inter-national conflicts.⁹ Features of national mythology may include the extent to which national myths rely on symbols or representations of the state and its authority, the extent to which they rely on militaristic, bellicose, warmongering claims,¹⁰ and the extent to which they are called upon to symbolically explain and justify ethnic identity and group differences.¹¹ Overall, central tenets of national mythology are national historical narratives, perceived relations of domination and victimhood, the “us”/“them” dynamic and a focus on “external” as opposed to “internal” enemies.

Naturally, national mythology is related to nationalism. Though there is general consensus that national mythology is one aspect of the cultural sense of national identity, its exact status in relation to nationalism is very controversial.¹² Scholars are divided into two general categories: (1) those who connect nationalism to national mythology fundamentally, emphasizing the primacy of culture and symbolism, and (2) those who partially or completely separate nationalism from national mythology, emphasizing the primacy of politics and power relations. In the first grouping is Smith’s so-called “‘myth-symbol’ complex,”¹³ which aims to define nationalism as largely “mythical” and “symbolic,” finding it very difficult to separate nationalism

from national mythology in a practical way. Anderson's definition of the nation as "imagined community"¹⁴ does not deny political elements, but recognizes the profound impact of culture in senses of national belonging and "national consciousness," which encourages analyzing nationalism and national mythology jointly. The second grouping, conversely, offers an approach to nationalism as primarily a political phenomenon which has relatively little to do with questions of symbolism, identity, culture or myth, and much to do with basic questions of power.¹⁵ Breuilly's "typology of nationalism"¹⁶ dismisses accounts of nationalism as symbolism, mythology and other "non-political elements" as reductionist and removed from historical context. Generally, this second perspective prefers to reserve nationalism as a concept to non-mythological ingredients, while the first encourages approaching national mythology as an aspect (potentially a central one) of nationalism.

For the purpose of this study, national mythology will be understood in a sense closer to the first general trend. Serbian national mythology will be considered inevitably tied to Serbian nationalism, as the cultural, mythological and symbolic elements of the latter bind it too closely to the former for a "clean" analytic distinction. Nevertheless, to justify the focus on national mythology as opposed to its associate—nationalism—it is helpful to summarize some crucial differences between the two related concepts in Table 1. This study's focus on national mythology is an attempt to concentrate on the narrower of the two concepts, avoiding the much broader and analytically complicated facets of nationalism at large. Even so, the radical causal attachment of the two (the Weberian elective affinity between them, one might say) will not be ignored. In addition, Breuilly's and Gellner's emphasis on political elements is well taken: the political conditions and power relations of war themselves affect the use and abuse of national mythology, which is never a purely imaginary, politically insulated phenomenon. To its benefit, my case study provides a unique opportunity for measuring national mythology under visible changes in power relations and for seeing if and how it substantiates nationalism.

TABLE 1 National mythology versus nationalism

Dissimilarity	National mythology	Nationalism
Nature of perceived threat	Primarily external	Potentially internal
Source of claims about nation and its people	Interpretations of history	Interpretations of language, territory, religion, custom, etc., as well as history
Status of nation or its people	Necessarily one of "victim"	Not necessarily one of "victim"
"Us"/"them" differentiation	Necessarily implies a perceived relationship of domination	May not imply relationship of domination between "us" and "them"

An equally vital concern for this study is the association between war (in the broad sense of some kind of national military conflict) and strong national loyalty. The association is evident across cultures and historical periods, and is especially striking in cases of loyalty based on ethnicity.¹⁷ Social theory has a long history of tackling the mysterious relationship between the state and national identity and cohesion. Max Weber recognized the way war “creates a pathos and a sentiment of community [and] makes for an unconditionally devoted and sacrificial community among combatants.”¹⁸ What Shaw and Creighton call “the sociology of war”¹⁹ is focused primarily on the roots of social violence, the processes of total war and the influences of “militarism” on economic conditions. Several of these “sociology of war” approaches reveal sources of national loyalty and unity especially relevant to this study. Firstly, the support for a regime under military attack may be an expression of militarism’s often destructive interaction with economic conditions of ordinary people.²⁰ Thus national mythology and popular attitudes towards Milošević might oscillate according to the improving or deteriorating economic conditions of the population during the conflict. Secondly, militarism has been correlated with increasing reliance on repressive state apparatuses and government violence as devices of internal unity and perpetuation of elite stability.²¹ To the extent that this correlation applies, we may expect increases in militarism in FRY (especially increases in forced military recruitment) to make public manifestations against elite stability more difficult, or at least less visible. In addition, a potential collapse of national mythology must also be understood in terms of state repression levels and their effect on internal unity. Tilly makes the important point that nationalism’s boost for loyalty and support is linked to the state’s making greater demands on its subjects,²² demands which are most likely in national military emergencies. Finally, one might acknowledge the way the impossibility of proper resource management in wartime may cripple the success of social movements that oppose the status quo.²³ Thus the absence of visible anti-Milošević forces during the bombing might not reflect a lack of anti-Milošević attitude but merely a lack of proper resource management for oppositional collective action. In sum, paying attention to the specific phases of the bombing—and the major political, military or economic changes which define them—is crucial to understanding the sources of unity in war and to explain the “behavior” of national mythology.

Expressions of national loyalty can be measured indirectly through analysis of public gatherings. Political attitudes towards authority in general have been conceptualized by Tilly in his study of “contention,” that specific kind of collective action undertaken by actors in their own interest, which in turn affects others’ interests.²⁴ Thus the opposition to a regime (i.e. the lack of support for it) may be reflected in the levels of popular contention or other collective actions, as manifested by strikes, protests, demonstrations, riots, etc. The vulnerability of a regime to radical transfers of power does not, however, depend only on pervasiveness of popular contention, because intra-elite conflict, state capacity to provide public services, and the nature of civic responses to state performance are also crucial factors in regime

stability.²⁵ For FRY, state performance is surely a crucial consideration, as the government's failure to provide essential public services during the bombing eventually drove people into the streets. Though slightly less relevant, intra-elite conflict could also explain the vulnerability of Milošević's regime and popular attitudes towards it (especially in the first month of the bombing, as numerous officials were "purged").²⁶ Nevertheless, analysis of contentious politics—with due respect to other factors—is useful for investigating popular attitudes towards the state, since explicit popular action in the public sphere is a reasonably firm basis for empirical measurement.

What is Serbian National Mythology?

Serbian national mythology is a set of popular convictions about the historical victimhood of the Serbian people, or Serbia as a nation, at the hands of various perceived threats and external enemies. These external dangers are often constructed according to ethnic, religious, cultural as well as more generally "national" lines. The myth of Serbia's traditional martyrdom defined "national ideology" for at least half a millennium and its roots can be traced to perceived historical events in Kosovo (see Appendix A).²⁷ It emerged as a response to justifications of Ottoman domination over the Serbs and was one among numerous competing national myths in the Balkans.²⁸ It has produced various interpretations of historical instances of national defeat, humiliation and insecurity, which have been called on to rally people against external enemies since the notorious Kosovo Polje battle of 1389, and possibly earlier.²⁹ The historical validity of these interpretations has been hotly debated, with some arguing that nearly all of them are groundless,³⁰ others recognizing a bare minimum of truth in the highly vulgarized and simplified narratives that have come to represent national mythology,³¹ and still others denying the mythological character of those interpretations and upholding their historical legitimacy.³²

Several conceptual inaccuracies are important to avoid, especially given the massive propaganda surrounding the subject matter.³³ Firstly, despite being a fundamentally reactive force, this national mythology should not be thought of as inevitably anti-liberal, nor should it be interpreted as manifestly opposed to "multiculturalism."³⁴ Furthermore, the foundation of Serbian national mythology in Kosovo has often been reduced to a simple claim of Serbian first occupancy in Kosovo, which overlooks the profound complexity and breadth of cultural and symbolic meaning for Serbian identity which is at stake.³⁵ Although so-called "we came here first" scholarship³⁶ is important for Kosovo myths, it is hardly the sole factor and even pales in importance compared to other sources of Serbian attachment to the province. Accordingly, this study will adopt a broad interpretation of national mythology and will, in data analysis and coding, be sensitive not only to claims of first occupancy but religious, traditional, cultural and ethnic claims as well.

The Case Study: NATO Bombing of FRY and Popular Attitudes

Two general evaluations of the effect of NATO's campaign on popular attitudes towards Milošević's state have emerged. The first is that the demolition, fear, disruption of everyday life, and indirect economic pressure induced by the bombing turned the population of FRY against Milošević and his state in the long run, if not instantly.³⁷ The second, in contrast, maintains that the horrors of the war united the population in its opposition to NATO and thus in its support for their government.³⁸ Variations exist—for example, Crane speculates that, as the war-weariness increased, support for Milošević's surrender grew, but not necessarily support for his rule³⁹—but these two general positions are most popular. Differences aside, all of these authors treat the level of support for Milošević throughout the war as a relatively stable element, easily categorized as constantly “with him” or “against him.” Lacking is an account of the way support for Milošević's state oscillated *within* the 78-day war; the way the major political and military developments of the period changed the popularity of the state is largely unknown.

The fact that Milošević propagated national mythology concerning Kosovo to build opposition to NATO is clear,⁴⁰ but the dominance of mythology in popular sentiment is less so. Some argue that the dominance was real and pervasive in Serbian popular attitudes—Krstić found that the perception of NATO bombs as a “collective punishment of a [whole] nation” was pervasive during the war, awakening ancient paradigms of “nationalism VS. imperialism.”⁴¹ Government efforts at equating the 1941 Nazi bombardment of Belgrade with NATO's campaign have been assessed as relatively successful in turning people against NATO,⁴² further suggesting a significant presence of national mythology in the population. Ignatieff, furthermore, claims that popular support for Milošević was substantial for a long time before the bombing (which only emphasized it, he argues) precisely because of the intensity of national myths in his support base.⁴³ However, others have questioned the extent to which national mythology ever credibly subsisted among the Yugoslav population. The claim that Milošević's support relied primarily on national mythology is contested by evidence of widespread hatred of both the regime and the West before 1999.⁴⁴ Đukić, for example, emphasizes the disillusionment of anti-Milošević forces with the West and insists that NATO's actions were the primary source of pro-Milošević, anti-NATO opinion, not national mythology or FRY's rhetorical efforts at promoting it.⁴⁵ National mythology might very well have played a minor role in promoting Milošević's state, the argument goes, but it was relatively trivial compared to other causes. With a similar claim, Dragović-Soso traces the way a decade of international intervention in FRY (including harsh economic sanctions) consistently reinforced the regime's popularity vis-à-vis the West and undermined the democratic opposition by rallying people around the flag against outside threats.⁴⁶ In this context, NATO bombing merely represented an unprecedented climax in the national mythology's value for the regime, but national myths were not noteworthy factors in themselves.

Crucially, none of the literature empirically measures indicators of national mythology, relying often on impression and speculation. Furthermore, a prevalent assumption is that the relation between national mythology and supportive popular attitudes towards the state is a straightforwardly positive one—a claim that this study intends to put to the test.

The NATO bombing of FRY is a fitting case study for several reasons. Primarily, national mythology had flourished in the province during NATO's 1999 war and, according to most of the sources reviewed above, was a driving force behind historical developments. Secondly, it was a short historical episode—78 days of military violence, discreetly and precisely delineated in time, with known variances in violence across space. Thirdly, it was, in the words of the head of US Space Command Richard B. Myers, “a space-enabled war,”⁴⁷ consisting exclusively of US air strikes. It provides a unique historical case of a modern state in a war during which the entirety of its territory is under its sovereignty (with the exception of Kosovo, parts of which were under significant territorial dispute at the time). Hence, there is an automatic control for increasing/decreasing war territory because FRY's military control over its territory remained fairly constant. Furthermore, given the strictly sealed borders of FRY for the 78 days in question, the population being examined was subjected to the consequences of the war without much variability across groups. Nobody on FRY's territory, in other words, was exempt from the most basic, widespread effects of the bombing, nor had the option to escape them in a way that might radically tilt their political attitudes. Finally, it provides an opportunity to depart from traditional research into war by offering a single case of war as opposed to a “macrohistorical” or “macrosociological” methodology. Authors sometimes overlook the uniqueness of individual examples in their search for patterns which cover centuries of development of nationalism and its interaction with events in dozens of separate geographical entities.⁴⁸ Instead of analyzing a state's popularity throughout numerous wars, or the evolution of national mythology throughout centuries, I am able to focus exclusively on the circumstances of one case study, with maximal sensitivity to its specificity.

Data Analysis and Coding

In order to measure the popularity of Milošević's regime (the dependent variable of research question 1), as well as to determine the time and nature of national mythology's collapse (the subject of research question 2), I engage in content analysis of local media accounts of collective actions in FRY during the bombing period. Data are extracted from the following media: Radio Television of Serbia (RTS), Beta News Agency, *Politika*, *Danas* and beograd.com—sources which I select to minimize the unavoidable risk of ideological bias. I look at key features of the given medium from which the data are taken (including ownership, ideological disposition, and

estimated extent of censorship, to the best of our knowledge) to maximize diversity and objectivity (see Appendix B). Thus, my recording units are the individual accounts I select—reports, news wires, website postings, etc.—but my context units are the media themselves which produce these accounts—the newspapers, news agency, individual authors, etc.

Data are extracted from the recording units in three steps. Firstly, scanning the titles and headlines of all reports from 24 March to 9 June 1999, I select those that appear to pertain to collective actions which occurred during this time. This provides an exhaustive sample of reported accounts of collective action—the possibility of a significant collective action going unreported in *any* of the five media is negligible, as is the likelihood of collective actions being unspecified in the titles of reports about them. This sample includes accounts of protests, rallies, marches, riots, concerts, funerals, religious gatherings, etc., though these categories are not mutually exclusive. Aside from occurring under bombs, these events share only that they are public—they do not necessarily assume a visible position vis-à-vis the status quo, nor do they necessarily affect others' interests directly (e.g. those of NATO or Milošević's regime) in Tilly's sense of "contention."⁴⁹ When the sample is gathered, subsamples containing accounts related to the same instance of collective action are created. Each subsample thus contains at least one distinct media account of the collective action, and each collective action has its own subsample.

Secondly, within the selected accounts, I measure the frequency and typicality of signs of national mythology in each instance of collective action.⁵⁰ I proceed with a thematic coding procedure using the inductive method,⁵¹ with the unit of analysis being the instance of collective action and the unit of coding being the texts/video recordings of the news accounts which describe the same action. Operationalization of "national mythology" is guided by the tenets described above: national historical narratives, perceived relations of domination and victimhood, the "us"/"them" dynamic and a focus on "external" as opposed to "internal" enemies. Accordingly, the theme of national mythology includes the following indicators (verbal or otherwise):

- Mentions of the battle of Kosovo Polje of 1389 or its "Kosovo martyrs."
- Positive depictions of the house of Nemanjici or their medieval state.
- Positive depictions of Tsar Dusan the Mighty or his short-lived empire.
- Evocations of nineteenth-century Serbian uprisings against Ottoman rule.
- Appeals to ongoing threats to Serbian Orthodox Christianity from Islam, Albanians, NATO, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), or the West.
- Declarations of exclusively Serbian victimhood (denial of any Serbian aggression over others) in the Balkan Wars and in Kosovo's history.
- Appeals to the righteousness and victimhood of the Serbs in the two world wars.
- Appeals to Serbian right (particularly historical) of control over Kosovo.

The units of coding contain these thematic indicators of national mythology in textual descriptions (or audio/visual presentations, in the case of RTS) of one or more of the following: banners and other written signs, flyers, pamphlets, speeches, chants, recitals, songs, participants' clothing, targets of vandalism during collective action, and stated occasions of collective actions. Going through the texts and video archives, I record the *frequency* of discrete thematic indicators (a simple count) and the number of different accounts from which they all came.⁵² Furthermore, I judge the *typicality* of discrete thematic indicators—the degree to which the thematic indicator of national mythology is an aberration from (or a typical characteristic of) the nature of the collective action and the purpose of its participants.

Thirdly, the collective actions are based on the media accounts of them, evaluated as to their “attitude” towards Milošević’s regime. This is done by examining explicit political messages, original official purpose, and organizer(s) of the collective action. The explicit political messages (e.g. “Down with the government,” “We won’t give up Kosovo”) are determined either by consensus among different reports of the same event’s message or by the judgment of the most credible source (i.e. the source with the least censorship). The original official purpose (e.g. a demonstration against NATO bombing of bridges, an Easter gathering, a folk concert) is ascertained as accurately as possible, carefully distinguished from what the event’s eventual purpose might have become (e.g. a funeral becomes an unplanned protest). The organizers are determined by specific references to organizers or managers (e.g. the Ministry of Culture, the Orthodox Church, the military) in one or more accounts. Events with unknown or unmentioned organizers are assumed to be spontaneous. Based on these features, collective action will be categorized as generally supportive or generally opposed to Milošević, whenever determinable.

My data source is unavoidably incomplete, though a sufficiently observable trend in the presence of national mythology in the streets does emerge, as does an estimation of support/opposition to Milošević’s regime (assuming it is expressed in collective actions). This process allows for estimation of levels of national mythology and levels of support/opposition to the state in such a way that a potential correlation or divergence between the two should become apparent.

In order to measure the general impact of NATO’s military attack (the independent variable), I rely on the documentary records and archival materials of the Yugoslav Army General Staff’s Information and Morale Department, the Yugoslav Army’s Press Center, the beograd.com website, and the Beta News Agency. By far simpler than assessing levels of support for Milošević’s regime and levels of national mythology, measuring the bombing’s effects on Serbia’s population is simplified by extensive and meticulous Yugoslav Army documentation which kept track of all major developments that might have impacted the populace.⁵³ Not only was every single bomb explosion recorded, but everything from casualty numbers to air raid siren time intervals was counted and measured in detail. With these sources, firstly, I compile several trendline charts that illustrate major currents and patterns of the

TABLE 2 Categories of major developments for timeline (with examples)

Development category	Description	Specific examples
Military	• Changes in intensification of bombing or NATO strategy • Changes in frequency of bombing in major cities • Unexpected/shocking or unpopular bombing missions • Symbolic Serbian military “victories” over NATO	• NATO begins targeting civilians and intensifies bombing of populated sectors • Bombs hit refugee convoys, hospitals, schools, the Chinese embassy, etc. • NATO’s Stealth F-117 is shot down • Three US soldiers are captured by Serbian military
Economic	• Sudden increases in costs of living • Increases in scarcity of goods	• Medicine prices rise sharply following NATO bombing of key pharmaceutical factory • Food shortages hit urban centers • Pensions, salaries, benefits, etc. are suspended
State repression	• State assault on free media • State assault on opposition leaders • Increased military mobilization	• Journalist Slavko Curuvija is murdered • Radio B92 is shut down • Mass arrests of Otpor! activists take place. • Smear campaigns and threats are directed against opposition leaders • Unannounced, arbitrary military drafting becomes more common
Political/diplomatic	• Apparent changes in FRY government policy • Intra-elite conflicts • “Signs of hope” from the international community	• Milošević announces cease-fire in Kosovo • Opposition leader Vuk Draskovic publicly breaks ranks with the government and is fired • US House of Representatives refuses to endorse Clinton’s air war • Russia and China threaten NATO in public statements

(Table continued)

TABLE 2 Continued

Development category	Description	Specific examples
Everyday life “normalcy”	• General increases in daily stress and terror • Loss of public services • Increasing restrictions of movement	• Air raid sirens and curfews become more frequent • Local hospitals bombed • Electricity and water supplies are lost • Bridges are brought down, leaving citizens stranded on one side of the river

bombing’s impact across time. These include: estimated civilian deaths and injuries across three points in time (24 April, 5 May and 10 June—the only dates during the war on which estimates were made), frequency of bombing in selected cities and towns, frequency of bombing in entire FRY/in all major cities, NATO targeting of media in FRY and recorded numbers of civilian deaths and injuries/hospitalizations in FRY cities. Secondly, with supplementary information from beograd.com news postings and Beta’s chronology of the war, I compile a timeline of major and widely known military, political and economic developments during the period. Table 2 shows the way in which these developments are categorized. The purpose is to have as exhaustive a chronological list as possible of major events and developments that might have influenced levels of national mythology and/or levels of support for Milošević’s regime through collective action. The compiled timeline (not reproduced here, for the sake of brevity) provides a thorough collection of such potential events and developments, and acts as a supplement to the compiled trendlines of aspects of the war’s impact.

In summary, I engage in analytic history in my content analysis to the extent that I cover the media’s record and description of historical events during the period. In the primary three steps, I measure the level of popularity of Milošević’s state (as reflected by collective actions) and the general level of national mythology in these collective actions (including its eventual collapse). In the latter half of data analysis, I engage in analytic history based on military documentation by compiling (1) trendline charts of relevant features of the war’s effect and (2) a timeline of major events and developments during the war, in order to measure the general impact of NATO’s military attack. Research question 1 will be answered by a comparative assessment of the measurement of support for Milošević’s regime (or lack thereof) expressed in collective actions and the compilations of major effects and events of the war. The trendline charts and the timeline will allow for the discovery of correlations and patterns between the two variables. Research question 2 will be answered by an exploratory examination of potential events, developments or trends which coincide with or can reasonably explain national mythology’s collapse.

Results

The data on collective actions are summarized in Table 3. The trendlines that illustrate major currents and patterns of the bombing's impact are summarized in Table 4 and Figures 1–4. Several limitations of the data should be noted. The trendline for frequency of bombing in selected cities is partially misleading because it does not account for casualties per targeting. For instance, the small town of Surdulica was targeted only once (and hence excluded from the trendline), yet as many as 300 civilian houses and residential buildings were destroyed in the densely populated area. Aleksinac, on the other hand, was targeted as many as 11 times in late May, but suffered far fewer casualties and, by comparison, relatively minor damage. Furthermore, numerous towns excluded from the trendline, like Novi Pazar, suffered rare but completely devastating NATO strikes which left no room for future targets. The count of targetings, moreover, does not properly differentiate between civilian and non-civilian targets; bombings of hospitals are counted just as bombings of barracks are. Nevertheless, most of the targeting accounted for in the major cities is directly distressing non-combatant citizens, by virtue of taking place near (or, more often, within) areas populated by civilians. Finally, the trendline only includes NATO military strikes and does not, for instance, account for Albanian attacks on Priština in mid-April—actions that also surely impacted the population. In sum, the trendline of bombing frequency is an underestimate, and the impact of the war on the population was probably much greater.

Several observations can be made from comparative analysis of the data. Firstly, the popularity of Milošević's regime, as indicated by the category of "General Attitude of Collective Actions towards Milošević's Regime" in Table 3, was quite strong and pervasive throughout the period of the bombing. Occasional "waves" of oppositional indicators existed (and were correlated with events of state repression such as the murder of journalist Slavko Curuvija), but by and large the regime enjoyed popularity, or at least public manifestations of it. Although increasing state repression might have deterred and frightened organizers of collective actions from making explicit their opposition to the regime, the general trend of collective actions supportive of the government and directed against NATO and the West is apparent. Importantly, peacetime differences between cities and towns ruled by "opposition" local authorities and those ruled by "regime" local authorities did not reflect significant differences vis-à-vis their temporary, wartime support of the state. For example, Nis (under an explicitly anti-Milošević local authority) hosted collective actions supportive of the FRY government about as much as Pozarevac (a traditional Milošević "stronghold") did. The war, it seems, suspended internal divisions and encouraged unified support for the state, at least provisionally.

Secondly, the data indicate that the collapse of national mythology begins in mid-April, when the average number of daily indicators of national mythology begins to decline. After May 15, a decisive collapse begins to take place, along with a

TABLE 3 Recorded frequency and intensity of indicators of national mythology in collective actions

Date	Number of collective actions	Frequency of indicators of national mythology	Number of media accounts from which indicators are collected	Average typicality of indicators of national mythology	General attitude of collective actions towards Milošević's regime
24 March	3	5	3	Aberration	Generally supportive
25 March	1	1	2	Typical	Generally supportive
26 March	3	1	5	Typical	Generally supportive
27 March	6	6	5	Aberration	Unclear
28 March	7	15	3	Typical	Generally supportive
29 March	8	17	4	Typical	Generally supportive
30 March	10	15	5	Typical	Generally supportive
31 March	17	19	5	Typical	Unclear
1 April	19	17	5	Typical	Generally supportive
2 April	2	7	1	Aberration	Generally supportive
3 April	2	3	2	Unclear	Generally supportive
4 April	5	6	3	Aberration	Unclear
5 April	6	8	3	Typical	Generally opposed
6 April	7	16	4	Typical	Generally opposed
7 April	7	4	4	unclear	Unclear
8 April	6	8	4	Aberration	Generally supportive
9 April	1	3	2	Unclear	Generally supportive
10 April	6	9	5	Typical	Generally supportive
11 April	22	34	5	Typical	Generally supportive
12 April	2	2	3	Aberration	Generally supportive
13 April	5	13	2	Typical	Generally opposed
14 April	3	1	3	Aberration	Generally opposed
15 April	6	4	4	Aberration	Generally opposed
16 April	4	9	2	Typical	Generally supportive
17 April	7	6	4	Typical	Generally supportive
18 April	2	0	1	Unclear	Unclear
19 April	9	5	4	Typical	Unclear
20 April	2	1	3	Aberration	Generally opposed
21 April	2	1	1	Aberration	Generally opposed
22 April	7	2	5	Aberration	Unclear
23 April	2	0	3	Unclear	Generally opposed
24 April	3	4	4	Typical	Unclear
25 April	2	2	1	Aberration	Unclear
26 April	3	8	4	Typical	Generally supportive
27 April	7	14	2	Typical	Generally supportive
28 April	4	3	2	Aberration	Generally supportive
29 April	5	2	4	Aberration	Generally supportive
30 April	2	0	3	Unclear	Generally opposed

(Table continued)

TABLE 3 Continued

Date	Number of collective actions	Frequency of indicators of national mythology	Number of media accounts from which indicators are collected	Average typicality of indicators of national mythology	General attitude of collective actions towards Milošević's regime
1 May	3	1	2	Aberration	Generally supportive
2 May	2	2	2	Aberration	Unclear
3 May	2	2	1	Aberration	Generally supportive
4 May	4	1	2	Unclear	Unclear
5 May	2	1	1	Aberration	Unclear
6 May	5	4	5	Typical	Generally supportive
7 May	4	2	5	Aberration	Generally supportive
8 May	3	2	4	Aberration	Generally supportive
9 May	2	1	2	Unclear	Generally supportive
10 May	3	5	1	Typical	Generally supportive
11 May	3	17	2	Typical	Generally supportive
12 May	6	2	4	Aberration	Generally supportive
13 May	1	3	1	Aberration	Generally supportive
14 May	4	5	3	Typical	Generally supportive
15 May	0	0	0	Unclear	Unclear
16 May	2	2	1	Aberration	Generally supportive
17 May	3	1	2	Aberration	Generally supportive
18 May	8	3	3	Aberration	Generally supportive
19 May	2	1	1	Typical	Generally supportive
20 May	5	2	4	Aberration	Generally supportive
21 May	3	1	5	Aberration	Generally supportive
22 May	2	1	2	Aberration	Generally supportive
23 May	1	0	1	Unclear	Unclear
24 May	6	1	3	Aberration	Unclear
25 May	4	0	2	Unclear	Generally supportive
26 May	2	2	1	Aberration	Generally supportive
27 May	1	0	1	Unclear	Generally opposed
28 May	2	0	2	Unclear	Generally opposed
29 May	5	0	4	Unclear	Generally opposed
30 May	0	0	0	Unclear	Unclear
31 May	0	0	0	Unclear	Unclear
1 June	1	0	2	Unclear	Unclear
2 June	0	0	0	Unclear	Unclear
3 June	1	2	3	Aberration	Generally supportive
4 June	0	0	0	Unclear	Unclear
5 June	2	0	1	Unclear	Generally supportive
6 June	1	2	3	Aberration	Generally supportive
7 June	1	2	2	Aberration	Generally supportive
8 June	0	0	0	Unclear	Unclear
9 June	2	1	1	Aberration	Generally supportive
10 June	0	0	0	Unclear	Unclear

TABLE 4 Registered civilian casualties in cities and towns

City/town	Registered civilian deaths	Registered civilian injuries
Aleksinac	17	Unrecorded
Ariljaca	2	12
Belgrade	37	61
Bor	Unrecorded	6
Cacak	2	7
Cuprija	2	9
Djakovica	75	36
Gnjilane	36	Unrecorded
Grdelica	60	30
Gucevo	Unrecorded	1
Istok	100	11
Jagodina	1	2
Korisa	87	Unrecorded
Kosare	7	15
Kragujevac	Unrecorded	120
Kraljevo	1	35
Krusevac	Unrecorded	12
Kursumlija	20	45
Labane	2	1
Lipljan	1	2
Luzane	47	24
Merdare	3	2
Murino	4	8
Nis	18	84
Novi Sad	Unrecorded	100
Novi Pazar	24	26
Novi Varos	Unrecorded	4
Pancevo	2	24
Paracin	1	5
Priština	9	9
Prizren-Djakovica	75	100
Sabac	1	4
Savine Vode	20	43
Sremska Mitrovica	9	25
Subotica	2	15
Surdulica	36	Unrecorded
Trstenik	1	17
Urosevac	6	Unrecorded
Uzice	2	Unrecorded
Valjevo	12	10
Varvarin	11	0
Vranje	4	12

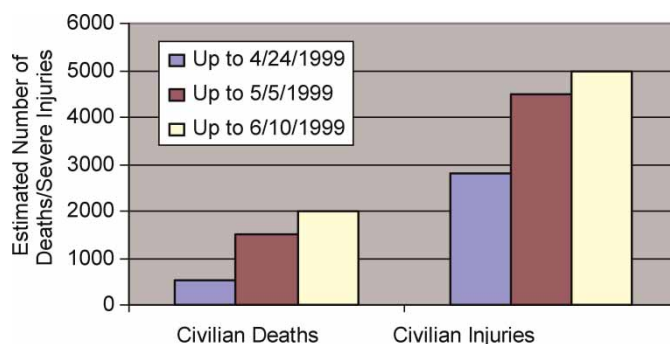


FIGURE 1 Major currents of bombing's impact over time: estimated civilian deaths across time

disappearance of indicators of national mythology which are “typical” of the collective action as a whole. Interestingly, in Table 3, observations of “aberrations” outnumber observations of “typical” in the average typicality of indicators of national mythology. In other words, most of the indicators of national mythology seem to be deviations from the general nature of the collective action, rather than characteristic of its purpose as a whole. Thus, it would be unfounded to attribute most of the expressions of national mythology to a majority of participants in the collective action. This suggests that national mythology is not as prevalent and widespread as it might appear superficially. Finally, it should be noted that the collapse of national mythology is strongly correlated with a decline in collective actions in general. Possibly, the collapse of national mythology in these data is merely a by-product of the collapse of collective actions in general, not an independent occasion.

Thirdly, the indicators of the general impact of NATO's military attack (the independent variable) can be interpreted from Table 4 and Figures 1–4. Strikingly, there is no clear correlation between casualty levels and numbers of collective actions according to cities and towns—small towns like Surdulica hold records in civilian casualties, but were not major sites of collective actions, while a city like Belgrade suffered comparatively few civilian casualties but was the epicenter of protests, concerts, rallies and other anti-NATO activity. Gamson's stress⁵⁴ on the importance of resources makes sense in this context—collective actions were more common in large urban areas with financial and logistical resources for organizing such events. Furthermore, the frequency of bombing in selected cities (see Figure 2) does not correlate either with numbers of collective actions or with numbers of indicators of national mythology. An exception to this would be the temporary upsurge in collective actions in Belgrade following the 23 April bombing of RTS television headquarters, but similar connections cannot be found in any other town or city. Finally, Figure 4 shows an interesting U-shaped pattern of targeting and eradicating local media outlets by NATO strategists, but the trend does not clearly correlate with any comparable ones.

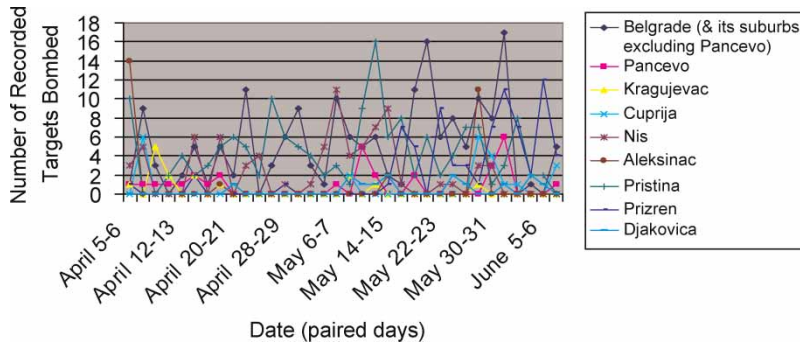


FIGURE 2 Major currents of bombing's impact over time: frequency of bombing in selected cities

Finally, the compiled timeline of major developments is worth discussing briefly according to the five categories outlined above: *military*, *economic*, *state repression*, *political/diplomatic* and *everyday normalcy of life*.

The *military* developments of the war seemed to have mixed effects. In the case of perceived victories of the Serbian state over the external threat, military developments appear to correlate with high numbers of collective action and somewhat with heightened national mythology. The downing of the American stealth bomber in late March was followed by the highest levels of collective action, most frequent and typical indicators of national mythology and support for Milošević's regime. Similarly, the publicized capture of three US soldiers on 1 April is correlated with supportive attitudes towards the government and an above-average number of collective actions against the bombing. However, military developments that represent failures or defeats

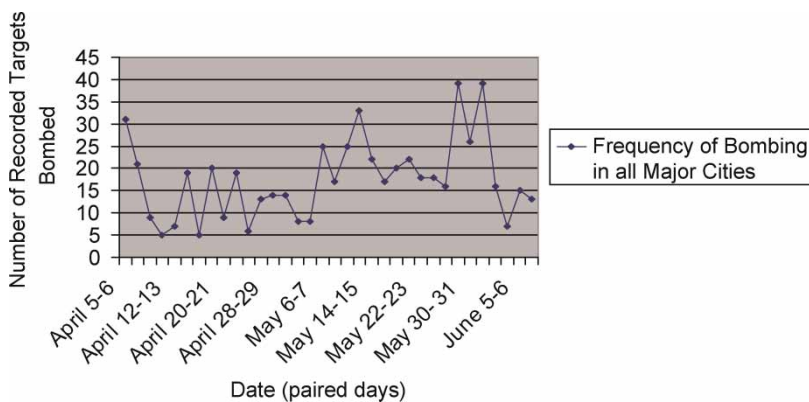


FIGURE 3 Major currents of bombing's impact over time: frequency of bombing in all major cities

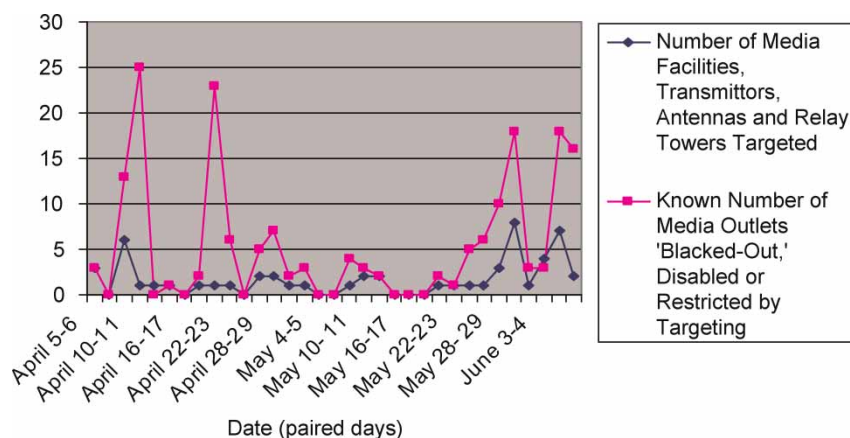


FIGURE 4 Major currents of bombing's impact over time: targeting of the media

seemed to have different effects. As NATO announces expanding targeting to civilians and “political” targets, significant gradual declines in collective action occur. Occasional reminders of NATO’s military superiority and invincibility (such as the bombing of Surdulica on 27 April) are not followed by increases in collective actions. Table 4 demonstrates that, as the general magnitude and intensity of the destruction increases, popular collective actions decrease. Probably out of fear or increased hopelessness, people were more hesitant to flood the streets when widespread military devastation took place. Within 20 days of the bombing, more Serbian property was destroyed than during the entire Second World War. As this magnitude becomes more apparent, public rebelliousness becomes rarer. As Đukić notes:

In all, NATO dropped five times more explosives on Serbia than had been used during the entire siege of Stalingrad. At first citizens endured their ordeal and were defiant, but as the raids continued and death became ever more present, defiance yielded to exhaustion and despair. Serbs just wanted the nightmare to end, no matter on what terms.⁵⁵

This “exhaustion” is especially visible in Table 3 after 30 May. Nevertheless, increasing military devastation of the country seemed to have no bearing on the steady levels of support for Milošević, even throughout the most ruinous phases of the war. Major military developments, therefore, tended to correlate with support for Milošević, regardless of which side’s temporary “successes” they represented. High numbers of collective actions, however, are only correlated with military developments that can be perceived as successful for FRY.

Major *economic* developments help to account for the decline in the number of collective actions. The US Defense Department claimed to have destroyed 100% of FRY’s petroleum-refining capacity and estimated the “Price tag for rebuilding

Kosovo” at \$1 billion and \$100 billion for the rest of Serbia.⁵⁶ As the Beta News Agency documented, 3,650 housing facilities and 82 enterprises were damaged or completely destroyed, leaving thousands homeless and tens of thousands without sources of income. By mid-April, over 55,000 workers were jobless and wageless, and the number of those “merely” financially pressured by the bombs was probably quadruple that. This segment of the population surely had an effect on the weakening of the numerous pricey cultural manifestations which constitute much of the list of collective actions, as well as the fact that collective actions began to be restricted to wealthier, urban centers as the economic pressure of the war amplified. In this regard, material conditions seem to prevail over more “imaginary” factors such as national mythology.

Major events marking *state repression* are correlated with increasing intensity and frequency of NATO assaults. The regime, it appears, resorted to repressive measures out of panic and reaction to increasing military helplessness. One aspect of the repression was an increasing military mobilization which, by mid-April, applied to men as young as 16. Although opposition to this is not superficially visible in collective actions, the alarm caused among the populace is noteworthy. Between the onset of the state of emergency and the withdrawal of Serbian troops from Kosovo, 4,300 men failed to appear for conscription, all of whom were indicted by the regime and risked harsh punishment.⁵⁷ Another major dimension of state repression was the crackdown on independent and oppositional media outlets in the country. Apparently in the shock of the war’s beginning, the government immediately shut down free radio B92 and a draconic press law was passed to stifle dissent in media discourse. The murder of Slavko Curuvija in April symbolized most powerfully the censorship and sent a loud message to citizens about what is expected of them. “The murder [of Curuvija],” noted a biography of Milošević, “sent shivers down the spines of regime critics.”⁵⁸ Although the murder was followed by a series of important oppositional collective actions—including Curuvija’s funeral and several commemorative gatherings—the message was heard loud and clear; most collective actions did not dare to assume an explicitly anti-government position. Even the brief “wave” of oppositional collective actions towards the end of May consisted mostly of indirect expressions of discontent with the regime (e.g. a concert by a notoriously pro-Western band). State terror was also promoted on the economic front. Strictly fixed prices were implemented by the government, and state media loudly and regularly reported on effective state raids and arrests on local “war profiteering” by small businesses and salesman struggling to survive. Daily stories of heroic police crackdowns on smugglers of oil and other scarcities were prevalent throughout April and May.

The decline in collective actions can partly be explained as a reaction to these kinds of repressive measures. By April, various opposition leaders began to condemn government-organized collective actions. An official from the city council of Cacak publicly denounced the organizing of protests and concerts as “an insult” to those

struggling for survival and losing loved ones, and called on resources to be redirected to more pressing needs.⁵⁹ Others were reluctant to bring the issue of the regime's corruption to public settings out of fear of being arrested or accused of treason. On 28 May a collective action organized by the independent union *Nezavisnost* intended to be entitled "Against the Aggression and War, For Peace, Bread and Democracy," but was thwarted by the police because it was deemed unsupportive of the nation's defensive cause in the war. All of these instances of state repression indicate, contrary to the hopes of various advocates of NATO intervention, that the war was a disaster for anti-Milošević forces.

Political and diplomatic developments only intensified the disillusionment, disapproval and hatred towards the West. As Figure 2 shows, and as Đukić notes, "towns governed by the [anti-Milošević] opposition, ironically, suffered the heaviest damage."⁶⁰ This not only elicited utter distrust of official pronouncements about the war being a "war for Serbia and the Serbian people"⁶¹ and against Milošević, but testified to NATO's disinterest in authentic democratic movements in the country. Serbian national myths saw Great Britain, France and even the US as traditional allies, and many were distraught to witness their animosity towards civilian casualties. "They were countries from whom democrats in Serbia expected assistance, not bombardment."⁶² News of Croatian refusal to investigate 1995's operation "Storm" (Oluja) at the end of May further fueled support for Milošević's regime:

Once the bombings of Serbia started on March 24th, ordinary Serbs also became increasingly defiant of NATO and supportive of their government. Their anger at the damage being done to their homeland was fueled by the belief that the West was selectively enforcing human rights standards, ignoring both the viciousness of UCK [KLA] attacks and the massive expulsions of the Croatian Serbs in 1995 [operation "Storm"].⁶³

Also encouraging for Milošević's popularity was perceived international support, especially from traditional allies such as Russia. Newspapers reported that as many as 50,000 Russian citizens volunteered to participate in military action in FRY against NATO, should the need arise.⁶⁴ Occasional anti-NATO gestures from Italy, China and the US Congress also probably helped maintain hope and confidence in the ability of the Milošević regime to protect the country against the attack. The sporadic hints at disunity and fracture within NATO (e.g. the debacle over the US bombing of the Chinese embassy in early May) also raised the prospects of an eventual halt to the strikes. Conversely, political/diplomatic developments that represented NATO inflexibility were not encouraging either to indicators of national mythology or numbers of collective actions as a whole. For example, the concessions of the partial withdrawal from Kosovo on 10 April and release of three American soldiers on 1 May were both followed by intensifications of the bombing, implying great hopelessness about the likelihood of NATO backing off.

Events that significantly altered the *normalcy of everyday life* were apparently very formative in people's decisions about participation in collective action and expression

of national mythology. Interestingly, not only did people *not* refrain from collective actions but they also seemed to actively pursue them more intensely than under “normal” conditions. Thus the stunning proliferation of public plays, poetry recitals, film screenings, sports matches and concerts reflects a seemingly illogical insistence on carrying on life “normally,” as if to stubbornly deny NATO the authority to disrupt the everyday lives of ordinary citizens. For instance, at the height of one of the most devastating “waves” of bombing we see widespread celebration of Orthodox Christian Easter in massive collective actions in cities and towns that have undergone tremendous casualties and damage (see Figures 2, 3). Similar “stubbornness” and refusal to acknowledge the dangerousness and gravity of the war were apparent in the numerous “live shield” protests and concerts, where people gathered to protect potential NATO targets with their own bodies. As one foreign commentator remarked:

A wave of stubborn patriotism swept through Serbia. For a time, political differences were forgotten. The country was under attack, and like Londoners during the Blitz, Serbs exhibited a stubborn pride. Each night thousands of demonstrators congregated on the bridges over the Danube, daring NATO to bomb the bridges and them too. Some even wore T-shirts emblazoned with a target. There was much talk of “inat” (spite, derived from a Turkish word) and “prkos” (defiance), two perceived Serbian characteristics. The way they saw it, Serbs had defied the Turks, the Habsburgs, Hitler and then Stalin. Now they would defy NATO.⁶⁵

Accordingly, indicators of national mythology correlate nicely with such stubbornly defiant collective actions. However, some effects of the war were not as easily ignorable and ultimately led to the decline of such “tongue-in-cheek” public happenings. An especially agonizing consequence of the air campaign as it progressed is that it increasingly restricted the freedom of movement of ordinary citizens. From 31 March onwards, 55 bridges were brought down by NATO missiles and an additional 20 or so were damaged. Thus, on average, one bridge was bombed every day for the period of the war. In addition, about 470 km of road across Serbia was disabled, as was 595 km of railroad track owing to the bombing of tunnels and viaducts. Five airports were paralyzed. All rail connections to Kosovo and Montenegro were destroyed, according to the Defense Department, as well as half of all rail and road bridges across the Danube.⁶⁶ Thus in the numerous cities and towns along the Danube, people were denied access to the other side of the river, on which they often had to work or purchase livelihood goods.

Normalcy was also disrupted as bombing of media objects intensified. The targeting of RTS in Belgrade, of RTV in Novi Sad, of several media houses in Usce, of the Avala tower transmitter and antenna, etc., as well as the destruction of various telecommunication infrastructure often restricted not only access to television and radio channels but also telephone, telegraph and postal services. Figure 4 shows the increase in the number of disabled media outlets towards the end of the war, which is somewhat correlated with the severe drop in collective actions towards the end of May/beginning of June. Presumably, the loss of media communication increasingly isolated

people and made organization and coordination of public events much more difficult. As many as 53 hospitals, clinics and other health institutions were targeted. By the end of May, Serbia's Republic Minister of Health reported that 50,000 patients were endangered owing to the lack of electricity as well as water shortages. This, on top of severe wage shortages, made day-to-day survival a priority and participation in creative street protests and anti-war poetry recitals a privilege. As life became increasingly "abnormal," collective actions became increasingly scarce.

Conclusions and Implications for Theory: Rethinking National Myths and War's Influence on Popular Attitudes towards the State

There are several remarkable conclusions about national mythology that the results of this study do *not* support. Firstly, they suggest some cause for rethinking dominant stereotypes about Serbian national mythology. The results do not lend credence to the notion that national mythology is an exclusive, primary and self-sufficient source of collective action for Serbs. As discussed, most indicators of national mythology were not representative or typical of most participants in collective actions during the conflict. Thus what Johnstone describes as a "caricature of archaic Serbs obsessed with the 1389 Battle of Kosovo"⁶⁷ would indeed be an unwarranted evaluation of the role of national mythology in Serbian collective behavior. The data suggest that national mythology did not have much motivating weight in social behavior—at best, the data show national mythology's presence as conditional on other factors (numbers and kinds of collective action, for instance).

Secondly, the relationship between national mythology and local sympathy towards the Milošević regime is by no means straightforward. The results suggest that support/opposition levels to government (as manifested in collective actions) may remain perfectly constant even as national mythology seems to collapse and disappear from public discourse. Furthermore, there are phases of the war during which indicators of national mythology are at their highest, yet levels of support for the state stagnate or even decline. Thus it would be equally misleading to conclude from these results that national mythology increases unavoidably as support for the government increases, as it would be to conclude that temporary support for the state disappears with national mythology.

Thirdly, and perhaps most imperative ethically, the data suggest that a foreign military attack does *not* drive the population enduring the attack into resisting their government. On the contrary (as shown above), major military developments of whatever nature tended to encourage support for the government. Incidentally, we might speculate that the perceived wickedness of that government had little to do with the effect of the foreign military attack on sympathy for this government; as indicators of state repression grew tremendously, public support for the Milošević regime remained relatively constant. Although people were probably more careful about expressing anti-Milošević sentiment in collective action because of increasing domestic

repression, the steady support for the government was primarily related to the external threat, not internal state policy. Support for the state seemed to remain strong simply as an opposition to the nation's external threat—a kind of protective measure. Thus, “hoping Serbs would turn against Milošević once the sacrifices become too great”⁶⁸ was not necessarily a warranted expectation, nor was the following validation of the war from a prominent NATO planner:

If you wake up in the morning and you have no power to your house and no gas to your stove and the bridge you take to work is down and will be lying in the Danube for the next 20 years, I think you begin to ask, “Hey, Sloba, what’s this all about? How much more of this do we have to withstand?” And at some point, you make the transition from applauding Serb machismo against the world to thinking what your country is going to look like if this continues.⁶⁹

The results suggest, to the contrary, that the “point” of “transition” comes at little cost for the regime's popularity. In times of external threat, the population's views on the state are temporarily subordinated to national solidarity while people, so to speak, “huddle” under the “umbrella of power” for protection and unity.

Besides these refuting implications, the results suggest several tentative answers to the two research questions.

Firstly, the data suggest that a foreign military attack significantly increases local support for the regime under attack. As discussed, military developments of any kind correlated with supportive collective actions. Even military events apparently devastating to FRY's war efforts (e.g. mass civilian casualties in various NATO attacks) seemed to have boosted unity and solidarity with the state. As Howard Clark suggests, the extensive targeting of innocents proved to most Serbs that “NATO's targeting strategy treated all Serbs as combatants” and that NATO was “punishing the innocent in order to express indignation at the guilty.”⁷⁰ The strong correlation between increasing frequency of the bombing as shown in Figure 3, the increasing rates of civilian casualties in Table 4 and the continual series of collective actions supportive of the regime further corroborate this hypothesis. There is little evidence to suggest a relation between the intensity and frequency of the NATO attack and the presence of national mythology in the streets. Although far too limited to imply patterns of causality, the results indicate that the state's failure to provide essential services and protection from prevalent violence is a better candidate for a cause of the collapse of national mythology.

Secondly, research question 2 is somewhat difficult to tackle, primarily because of the apparent lack of a clear correlation between national mythology and support for the state. Certainly, as discussed, Milošević's regime and the media it controlled purposely attempted to maneuver the public's sympathy with appeals to national mythology—from the very first newspaper headline of the war period on 24 March to Milošević's “victory speech” on 10 June. However, the regime also relied on more traditional methods of galvanizing popular support—media censorship, imprisonment, forced mobilization, propaganda about the efficiency of state protection, and political

murder. There is certainly no reason to believe that the steady support for the state is not attributable to any of these as much as to national mythology, if not more so. National mythology seemed to have, at best, secondarily intensified and supplemented more material developments during the period. As Doder and Branson note:

By May, the Serbs were growing weary [. . .]. Women demanded the return of their men from the Kosovo front. The already impoverished population was hit by the loss of water and electricity. War fatigue was setting in. Graffiti on a wall in the town of Pancevo expressed a mood of fatalism and despair: "NATO in the sky, Milosevic on the ground: Where is God?"⁷¹

The observation is informative not only because it recognizes the ambivalent attitude towards the state (one of official and public support against the enemy, but ultimate fear and dislike of domestic rule) but also because it emphasizes the importance of material social conditions in accounting for the collapse of collective action and the decline of prevalent national myths. Thus, research question 2 might very well be framed incorrectly: national mythology might not have been an extensive source of popularity for the regime in the first place. Rather, economic pressures, disruptions of everyday life, fear of NATO violence, perceived helplessness in the diplomatic and political course of the war—in a word, "weariness"—probably contributed to the eventual disappearance of national mythology.

As an escort for future research on the topic, the results of this study might be a warning against what Mahmood Mamdani calls "culture talk."⁷² All too often, students of national mythology (Western or otherwise) conflate ideological, political, ethnic and religious identities into intangible and highly politicized categories of "Serbian character," or "Serbian nature," or "Serbian national type." In such "culture talk," the manifestations of national mythology become defining features of the way in which "the Serbs" differ from "the Albanians," "the Americans," and so on. The danger is the unwarranted imposition of (often nationalist) judgments about the motives of certain groups and the imagination of artificial national agents who are in reality far from cohesive or coherent. The results of this study should recommend care about attributing a development like a mass popular upheaval simply to national mythology, and should advise against polluting our understanding of political and cultural categories with such "culture talk."

NOTES

1. Erlanger, "Belgrade 'Targets' Find Unity 'From Heaven.'"
2. Blum, *Rogue State*, 76.
3. Erlanger, "Belgrade 'Targets' Find Unity 'From Heaven.'"
4. Blum, *Rogue State*; LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945–2000*; McClintock, "American Doctrine and Counterinsurgency State Terror."
5. Judah, *The Serbs*; Mertus, *Kosovo*; Pavković, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia*; Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia*.
6. Peters, *Collateral Damage*.

7. Mertus, *Kosovo*; Cohen, *History in Three Keys*.
8. Parekh, "The Concept of National Identity."
9. Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites*; Calhoun, "Nationalism and Ethnicity."
10. Centeno, *Blood and Debt*.
11. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*.
12. Comaroff and Stern, "New Perspectives on Nationalism and War."
13. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*.
14. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
15. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*.
16. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*.
17. Smith, "War and Ethnicity."
18. Weber et al., *From Max Weber*, 335.
19. Shaw and Creighton, "Introduction."
20. Bullock and Firebaugh, "Guns and Butter?"
21. Mitchell and Russel, "Militarisation and the South African State"; Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*; Stein, *The Nation at War*.
22. Tilly, *Contention and Democracy in Europe, 1650–2000*.
23. Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest*.
24. Tilly, *The Contentious French*; idem, *From Mobilization to Revolution*; idem, *Contention and Democracy in Europe, 1650–2000*.
25. Skocpol, *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*; Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*.
26. Krstić, personal interview with Danilo Mandić.
27. Bataković, *The Kosovo Chronicles*.
28. Pavković, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia*.
29. Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*; Malcolm, *Kosovo*; Pavković, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia*.
30. Malcolm, *Kosovo*; Judah, *The Serbs*; Prifti, *Confrontation in Kosova*.
31. Pavlowitch, *Yugoslavia*; idem, *A History of the Balkans, 1804–1945*; idem, *Serbia*; Ćirković, *The Serbs*; Pavković, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia*; Hudson, *Breaking the South Slav Dream*.
32. Bataković, *The Kosovo Chronicles*; Mitrovich, *The Genocide of the Romans and Slavs*.
33. Gocic, "Symbolic Warfare."
34. Johnstone, *Fools' Crusade*.
35. Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*; Djilas and Bulatović, *Srpsko Pitanje*, 1991; Bataković, *The Kosovo Chronicles*.
36. Bogdanovic, *Knjiga o Kosovu*; Jevtic, *Bitka za Kosovo*.
37. International Crisis Group, *After Milošević*; Rupnik, *International Perspectives on the Balkans*; Grigor'ev et al., *Catastrophe in the Balkans*.
38. Logar, personal interview with Danilo Mandić; Strategic Marketing, "Threat Perception"; Đukić, *Milošević and Marković*; Cox, *The History of Serbia*; Parenti, *To Kill a Nation*.
39. Crane, "From Korea to Kosovo."
40. Doder and Branson, *Milosevic*; Ignatieff, *Virtual War*.
41. Krstić, *Kosovo Facing the Court of History*, 273.
42. Leuridijk and Zandee, *Kosovo*.
43. Ignatieff, *Virtual War*.
44. Pavlowitch, *Serbia*; Đukić, *Milošević and Marković*; Krstić, *Kosovo Facing the Court of History*.
45. Đukić, *Milošević and Marković*.
46. Dragovic-Soso, "The Impact of International Intervention on Domestic Political Outcomes."

47. Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire*, 79.
48. Tilly, *Contention and Democracy in Europe, 1650–2000*; idem, *Social Movements, 1768–2004*; Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*.
49. Tilly, *The Contentious French*.
50. This is to be sharply distinguished from measuring signs of national mythology in the media accounts themselves: my concern is what was happening in the streets, not in media discourse, which merely serves as a supply of information.
51. Boyatzis, *Transforming Qualitative Information*.
52. Similar indicators from several accounts of the same event are counted only once, as are combined thematic indicators (e.g. appeal to Kosovo Polje + appeal to threatened Orthodox monasteries in single banner).
53. Kelic and Jovanovic, *NATO Aggression in the Objective*.
54. Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest*.
55. Đukić, Milošević and Marković, 131, 136.
56. Cox, *The History of Serbia*, 170.
57. Đukić, Milošević and Marković, 136–37.
58. Doder and Branson, *Milosevic*, 267.
59. *Danas*, 29 April 1999, 6.
60. Đukić, Milošević and Marković, 135.
61. Grigor'ev et al., *Catastrophe in the Balkans*, 7.
62. Đukić, Milošević and Marković, 133.
63. Cox, *The History of Serbia*, 168.
64. *Danas*, 27 March 1999, 8.
65. LeBor, *Milosevic: A Biography* 2002, 289.
66. Cox, *The History of Serbia*, 170.
67. Johnstone, *Fools' Crusade*, 124.
68. Ignatieff, *Virtual War*, 150.
69. "Air Supremacy," *Daily Telegraph* (London), 25 May 1999.
70. Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, 185.
71. Doder and Branson, *Milosevic*, 268.
72. Mamdani, *Beyond Rights Talk and Culture Talk*; idem, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*.

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Appendix A: Notes on Terminology

Political quibbling has complicated the vocabulary of Balkan geopolitical entities. "Kosovo and Metohija" or "Kosmet" is the traditional Serbian name for Yugoslavia's province, reflecting historical claims from the time of the Slavic migration of the sixth and seventh centuries, while the Albanian term for the area is "Kosova," a word employed primarily by advocates of independence (itself a contested word, sometimes exchanged with "secession"). "Kosovars" is used to refer to Kosovo's Albanian population, though scholars object to the connotation of distinct identity it carries, pointing out that Albanians in Albania, Serbia proper and Macedonia are identical to those in Albania. Others believe "Kosovars" is not a misnomer but simply an Albanian word for a Kosovo Albanian with no strings attached. Furthermore, geopolitical dilemmas have been raised about the use of the term "border" to describe the boundaries between Kosovo and Serbia proper—Kosovo is officially and legally a Serbian *pokrajna* (province), though its effective autonomy makes its boundaries with Serbia proper as real as most international "boundaries" between states. Convinced that none of these terms is devoid of redundant connotation and ideological baggage, I will rely on standard international usage of the terms "Kosovo," "Kosovo Albanian(s)" and "border."

Appendix B: Notes on Media Sources

RTS was Yugoslavia's national television network. Under complete ownership and control of the state, it reported under total censorship, ideologically committed to Milošević's politics and unhampered by Western standards of objectivity. I accessed archived video recordings of each official daily news program (the *Dnevnik*) of the

78-day period—more than 40 hours of video footage. Helpfully, RTS obsessively reported on collective actions against the bombing (minor as they may have been) and took care to show elements of national mythology whenever possible in an effort to mobilize audiences. As a visual supplement to all the other media sources, RTS is a useful corroborator of uncertain or contradictory facts extracted from the others. In addition, its national jurisdiction allowed it to include reports on several instances of collective action in smaller, rural Serbian areas which the other four media sources missed.

Politika was the Serbian “agenda-setter” daily newspaper, dictating the structure and content for virtually all other print media. It suffered complete censorship from the Ministry of Information and never missed an opportunity to report and exaggerate anti-NATO activity in the streets. I went through all 78 editions covering the period of the war.

Danas was a quasi-independent daily newspaper, often merely reproducing *Politika*’s government-dictated material, but sometimes featuring independent reporting. Much less propagandistic than *Politika*, *Danas* had an especially rich “domestic affairs” section, in which non-government reports were occasionally allowed with a dose of anti-Milošević description of local collective actions. The newspaper was especially helpful in descriptions of elements of national mythology and other details of collective actions in larger urban areas. I examined all 78 editions covering the period of the war.

Beograd.com was, since the state repression of Radio B92 in late March, the only truly independent source of information in Serbia during the bombing. The website was privately owned, independently financed, uncensored and especially committed to news that state-controlled media ignored. The website received overwhelming contributions in content both nationally and internationally. It pioneered in reporting on collective actions with explicitly anti-Milošević messages. I accessed the entire archive of online postings which were available at any time during the NATO bombing.

Beta News Agency was officially independent and private, with near-total freedom to report on domestic developments freely. The state had not bothered censoring Beta because its work had no direct public exposure during the bombing—its reports could only be published through a newspaper or other media outlet which picked them up. Thus all news wires that could be “problematic” were filtered out at the level of that other outlet. Fortunately, I reviewed original reports of Beta itself, which provide an extensive, day-to-day chronology of the bombing with not only local collective actions but major political and military developments in Serbia and in the international arena as well.

In the surprisingly rare cases of contradictory accounts, I followed several common-sensical guidelines in arbitrating between sources: (1) primary sources (i.e. witnesses, journalists on the scene, protest participants, etc.) are given primacy over secondary sources (e.g. wires, reports or op-eds carrying primary source reports); (2) the less the known censorship of the medium, the more trustworthy its accounts; (3) the sooner the relevant account was produced after the actual event, the more credibility I assign to it.