

# Visualizing Conflict: Analyzing Visual Narratives of Photojournalistic Images of Balkan War Refugees

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## Abstract

As part of a larger research program on media coverage and representation of the conflicts in the Balkans, we examine humanizing visualizations of armed conflict. The study focuses, in particular, on photojournalistic accounts of the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo at the 25th anniversary of the Kosovo war. Drawing, in particular, on Ariella Aïsha Azoulay's (2008) concept of the civil contract of photography, this study analyses how victims of humanitarian catastrophes are represented and what images communicate in terms of family, gender, international communication, and conflict. We interrogate visual signifiers in conflict and global narrative constructions of refugees fleeing from conflict and how the visual rhetoric of war and conflict aims to elicit affective responses. Finally, the study highlights the work of women photojournalists in Kosovo and the Balkans and the impact of their work twenty-five years onward.

**Keywords:** humanitarian crises, Kosovo, photojournalism, refugees, visual narratives, visual rhetoric

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Overview of the Humanitarian Crisis

Kosovars experienced tremendous socio-cultural, economic and political repression in the late twentieth century (Jones, 1994; Maliqi, 1998; Poulton & Vickers, 1997). This repression was exacerbated by the armed conflict by Serbian forces in the 1990s, particularly in 1998 and 1999, which led to approximately one million Kosovo Albanians fleeing the country as refugees.

While Western media organizations paid little attention to the Kosovo humanitarian crisis in its early years after the split of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s (Sofos, 1996). Reporting increased as tensions between the Serbian government, led by Slobodan Milosevic, and the ethnic Albanian majority in Kosovo intensified as multiple republics sought independence, one of which was Kosovo, which was a part of the Republic of Serbia with a large Albanian population. Before the armed conflict, the persecution of Kosovo Albanians took many different forms. Albanians in Kosovo had cultural limitations on their ability to pursue their religion, language, and education. Policies were implemented by the Serbian government with the intention of stifling Albanian identity and advancing Serbian domination in the area. Aside from being sidelined in governmental institutions, Albanians also saw the closure of media outlets that published in their own tongue.

Western media coverage of the Kosovo War was at its peak in April 1999. At this time, U.S. and western European media organizations reported extensively on the 78-day North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military effort led by the United States to force the regime of Slobodan Milosevic to end the oppression of Kosovo Albanians who had been peacefully living in the formerly autonomous region of Kosovo. The NATO bombings in Serbia and Kosovo lead to tens of thousands of citizens fleeing their homes.

Elsewhere (Newsom et al., 2020), members of our broader research team have analyzed how photojournalistic imagery contribute to the discursive production of publics, citizenship, and democracy. Similarly, in their work, "Visual Rhetoric, Photojournalism, and Democratic Public Culture," Lucaites and Hariman (2001) suggest that photojournalistic imagery is often "guided by an emotional rather than a programmatic logic" in which photographs work "to activate and manage feelings of both vulnerability and obligation" (p. 40).

### 1.2 Importance of the Problem

Given that the number of Kosovo Albanian refugees is the largest population displacement in Europe since World War II (Iacopino et al., 2001), we argue that it is imperative to continue analyzing the Kosovo war and its impact 25 years since. Thus, our study centers on understanding the possibilities of ideological implications of mediated imagery, and the multiple interpretations of visual rhetoric of geopolitical conflict and its effects on family and citizenship. Given “rhetoric’s own investments in facilitating discourses of citizenship” (Bruce & Finnegan, 2021, p. 99), we examine images of families as they frame notions of citizenship in East Central and Southeastern Europe in times of intense conflict.

## 2. Literature Review

The analysis of iconic images provide scope to “position virality, spreadability, appropriation, and the like simply as examples of circulation” (Bruce & Finnegan, 2021, p. 99). Visual rhetoric employs images to influence, persuade, and / or create a “connection between a photography oriented toward citizenship and liberal democracy” (Finnegan, cited in Bruce & Finnegan, 2021, p. 99; See, also, Azoulay, 2001; Camp, 2017; Gržinić, 2000; Hariman & Lucaites, 2016; Olson et al., 2008). Visual rhetoric also has the capacity to promote hegemonic and ideological positions. Following Stuart Hall (1977), Ferruh Yilmazny (2014), in his study, “Ideology at Work in (the Production of) the News on Ethnic Minorities,” argues “any utterance—be it a news report or simple eyewitness accounts—is inherently ideological, i.e., it is a description of the world that is constructed against other (potentially alternative) descriptions of the same reality” (p. 1).

### 2.1 Azoulay’s Civic Gaze

Unpacking hegemonic and ideological positions in imagery requires attentiveness to ethics. Following Ariella Aïsha Azoulay’s (2008) concept of the civil contract of photography, Jean Boyd (2019) argues:

photography is always an event between people. It implies an ethical relation: however, participants may have unequal power, a pattern of inequality which determines what is included and excluded within the frame, and in turn how the meaning, uses of and access to the image is framed. These patterns leave traces which are ongoing, legible in the image, and it is these traces that can be detected and responded to by an alert and civic gaze: one that sees itself addressed by another, in a shared and civil space, and is called to respond. (p. 148)

Azoulay (2012) invites those who look upon photography, particularly images of oppression, to see connections between the political and photography, and to engage in “a space of relations between people who are exposed to one another in public” (p. 52). Photographic image is “one of the manifestations of this space” (p. 52). The civic gaze is a “model of political ‘being with others’” (Alvarado Saggese, 2013, p. 198), allowing those who view photography, particularly that of victims of violence and oppression “to achieve political visibility on a global scale” (Fardy, 2017, p. 181).

### 2.2 Ethnonationalist Oppression of Kosovo Albanians and the Kosovo War

Applying Azoulay’s concept of being with others to the ethnonationalist oppression of Kosovo Albanians, photographic representation of the refugees fleeing their homeland provides scope for empathy. Her work also aligns with scholars who interrogate how media shape public opinion about refugees (See, for instance, Chappuis, 2018; Fair & Parks, 2001; Figenschou & Thorbjørnsrud, 2015; Gale, 2004; Galikhuzina et al., 2016; Mummery & Rodan, 2007; Proitz, 2018; Thorbjørnsrud, 2015; Van Gorp, 2005), and on scholarship on migration and identity (Benmayor & Skotnes, 1994; Kostovicova, 2005).

Our study also builds on previous work on the oppression of Kosovo Albanians from interdisciplinary perspectives (Bringa, 1995; Dahinden, 2008; Desai & Perry, 2004; Donev, Onèeva & Gligorov, 2002; Duijzings, 2000; European Stability Initiative, 2006; Fowler et al., 2005; Mora, 2020) and, more broadly, on the impact of ethnoationalist conflict in East Central and South Eastern European citizens (Chao & Landaluze, 2022; Newsom & Lengel, 2020; 2022; Selimi & Zejnullahu, 2023; Ziberi, 2012; Ziberi et al., 2013).

While there is a large body of research on the Kosovo War (Bartolini, 2006; Bieber & Daskalovski, 2003; Crawford, 2001; Daadler & O’Hanlon, 2000; Degenhardt, 2020; Greenhill, 2003; Independent International Commission in Kosovo, 2002; Judah, 2002; 2008; Kostovicova, 2005; Kostovicova & Prestreshi, 2003; Mertus, 2000; Malcolm, 2006; Vulaj, 2019), the human rights abuses that occurred (de Oliveria Araujo et al., 2019; Jones, 1994; Krasniqi, 2021; UNFPA—Prishtina, Kosovo, 2005; Vann, 2002; Ward & Marsh, 2006; Wareham, 2000), and the humanitarian and refugee crisis (European Stability Initiative; 2006; Gligorov et al., 2000; Iacopino et al., 2001; Indra, 1993; UNHCR—Skopje, Macedonia, 2000; United Nations, 1999) there is only a modest amount of work on the role of media in the Kosovo War and associated humanitarian crisis.

### 2.3 Analyses of Media Coverage of the Kosovo War

In his article, “The Kosovo War in Media: Between War Journalism and Foreign policy of NATO Members,” Festim

Rizanaj (2018) argues, “Significant links between the media and war have been identified for well over a century. Media often plays a key role in today’s conflict” (p. 72). Rizanaj (2018) argues that media played a central role in the Kosovo conflict, noting the tightly controlled media in Yugoslavia then the former Yugoslav states, “which came under increasing pressure in the months before the Kosovo war,” as well as and “the Western media, largely unaware of the background to the conflict” (p. 72).

Several researchers have analyzed media coverage of the Kosovo war (Brown, 1999; Goff, 1999; Hammond, 2000; Ignatieff, 2000; Luci & Gusia, 2014; Shea, 1999; Wolfgram, 2008) and the reporting on and the mediated images emerging from the associated humanitarian and refugee crises (Kosovar Women’s Initiative, 2002; Krasniqi, 2007; Saavala, 2010; Stables, 2003; Termkolli, 2008). For instance, in a study focusing on the British press coverage, Kristina Riegert (2003) found that British media organizations focused, as did many Western media, on the action associated with the conflict, including NATO entering the conflict, the flight of Kosovo Albanian refugees, and reactions to the conflict in Belgrade (See, also, Nohrstedt et al., 2000).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Methodological Overview

In order to analyze media coverage and photojournalistic representation of the Kosovo war and, in our broader research program, media coverage of conflicts in South Eastern and East Central Europe, we have followed a methodological framework that includes an intersection of visual rhetoric, visual culture, and historical context (Bruce & Finnegan, 2021), this study draws upon visual rhetoric to analyze what images communicate in terms of gender, international communication, and conflict, and on the human toll of and nature of the visualization of armed conflict and its impact on displacement of families.

#### 3.2 Operational Definitions

As a methodological practice, visual rhetoric is the practice of analyzing how images communicate meaning. It has also been termed rhetorical analysis as it employs the theoretical underpinnings of rhetorical theory including, but not limited to, *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, as well as concepts unique to visual analysis such as iconography, color, graphic design, and image framing, among many other visual elements (Hill & Helmers, 2004).

First written about extensively by Pál Miklós in 1976 in his monumental work, *Vizuális Kultúra* [Visual Culture], visual culture is an interdisciplinary concept that situates images and other visual artefacts as vital to representing and making meaning (Dikovitskaya, 2006). In their work, “Visual Cultures of Islam: The Seen, Unseen and the in Between,” Sanaz Fotouhi and Esmaeil Zeiny (2018) suggest that visual culture(s) emerge from our broader social cultures. Visual culture not only shapes “how certain images should be read and understood but they also influence and affect our opinions, beliefs and values in powerful ways” (p. 1). Fotouhi and Zeiny (2018) argue that in contemporary society, “where the visual image in its various forms has become the most powerful tool of communication, it is difficult to separate the two. Our social cultures and visual cultures are continuously and seamlessly feeding off each other in extraordinary ways to help us make sense of our changing world” (p. 1).

#### 3.3 Key Scholars and Key Questions Guiding Visual Rhetoric

We engage in a visual rhetoric of photography and photojournalism, drawing from the early work of Roland Barthes (1964/1977; 1980/1981), Susan Sontag (1977) and, more recently, that of Ariella Aïsha Azoulay (2008; 2015), Susan B. Barnes (2009), Robert Hariman and John Lucaites (2007), Cara Finnegan (2001; 2003; 2017), and Finnegan’s collaborative work with Caitlin Frances Bruce (2021).

For this rhetorical visual analysis, we utilize Roland Barthes ’(1964/1977) theoretical frameworks to systematically analyze the persuasive elements of photographic journalistic imagery. Barthes ’seminal work, “Rhetoric of the Image” (1964) forms the foundation our analysis by drawing on concepts, such as the three messages in an image (linguistic message, coded iconic message, and non-coded iconic message), and anchorage, relay, and punctum. Our methodological approach follows key questions that these scholars have asked, such as: Do visual images carry more affective impact than words? Do photographic images, particularly in the field of photojournalism, provide a higher level of trustworthiness than other types of rhetorical artefacts? Barthes (1964/1977) notes that the term image stems from a Latin term meaning imitation. Reflecting on the Latin origins of the term, he poses a crucial question: Given images are imitations, albeit direct analogical representations, can images function to convey authentic meaning? In order to answer this important question, Barthes presents an analytical process of signification that consists of three elements: the linguistic message, the coded iconic message, and the noncoded iconic message.

#### 3.4 Visual Rhetoric and Affect

We also follow the methodological approach of our previous work on visual rhetoric of the body and affect (Newsom et

al., 2018). The affective nature of images is what makes visual rhetoric powerful as it has the capacity to communicate directly and instantaneously as well as touch deep emotions. Sara Ahmed's (2014) groundbreaking book, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, and her other work on affective economies (Ahmed, 2004) are useful as methodological strategies for interpreting what she calls the emotionality of texts about immigration, refugees, and asylum seekers.

### 3.5 Procedures

For this study, we carefully selected a photo that aligns with our research objective and possesses multiple layers of interpretative and persuasive elements. A detailed description of the photo's objects, subjects, and textual components was meticulously documented. Furthermore, the color scheme, composition, and other salient visual attributes were scrutinized for their potential impact on interpretation.

To begin our analysis, we thoroughly examined the photo's linguistic message, such as captions or labels, to understand its interplay with the image and its role in reinforcing or altering the intended meaning. Drawing from Barthes' (1964/1877) concept of the coded iconic message, we endeavored to decipher the culturally constructed meanings and symbols within the photo, investigating signs and symbols that evoke specific cultural references. Simultaneously, we identified the non-coded iconic message, focusing on the photo's literal, denoted meaning.

Next, we applied Barthes' concepts of anchorage and relay to explore how any textual elements anchor or direct the interpretation of the image, influencing the overall meaning conveyed. Subsequently, employing Barthes' (1964/1977) notion of punctum, we identified elements in the photo that evoke emotional responses or resonate deeply with viewers, transcending the objective elements of the image.

A crucial component of our analysis was contextualizing the photo within its broader historical and cultural framework. By investigating the photographer's intentions, relevant historical events, and cultural background, we gained valuable insights into the photo's rhetorical power and its potential influence on the audience.

## 4. Analysis: The Impact of Media Representation of Kosovo Albanian Refugees

### 4.1 Visualization and Narrative

Powerful photojournalism has the capacity to articulate profound narratives, without necessarily referencing stories of persons depicted within those images. The lack of direct references to individuals captioned in many photographs disseminated in media reports simultaneously removes agency from those in the images, and opens up the narrative capacity to include wider publics.

Unlike other photojournalistic work that does not name the refugees pictures, the image under analysis in this study does name the tiny boy being passed through the barbed wire fence. The original caption printed under the photograph in the 14 May 1999 report in *The Washington Post* read as follows: "Agim Shala, 2, is passed through a barbed wire fence as members of his family are reunited at a refugee camp in Kukes, Albania." It is a powerful and poignant image that encapsulates the human toll and the urgency of the Kosovo War and its impact on the civilian population. This photograph has been widely published and shown as an iconic representation of the Kosovo War, increasing awareness and encouraging empathy among viewers. It urges compassion and action in the midst of such situations by serving as a testament to the adverse effects military conflicts have on people.



Figure 1. “The Baby and The Fence”

(Guzy, 1999, May 14).

#### 4.2 Analysis of the Artefact

“The Baby and The Fence” is compelling and, at first glance, heartbreaking. An infant is passed through a barbed wire fence. Wearing an aqua blue long sleeved top and matching trousers, and dark green gripper socks,<sup>1</sup> he is held securely by three men, two on the left side of the fence, and one on the right, as they pass him through the barbed wire. On the right and lower right of the image, two young women are poised to receive the tiny boy. In the distance, the mountains of the northern Albanian border town of Kukës, Albania are situated under a partly cloudy sky. In terms of composition, the picture concentrates on a significant meeting and parting time. The main scene features two-year-old Agim Shala being passed through a barbed wire fence. He conveys a sense of despair and need for security and comfort with his spread arms, vulnerable expression on his face, and clinging to the adult's hands. The barbed wire fence itself serves as a metaphor for the actual barriers and challenges that the refugees had to face while looking for safety and security.

A chaotic and packed atmosphere can be seen in the background of the image, which highlights the massive scope of the refugee problem. In the northern Albanian border town of Kukës, nearly 150,000 Kosovar refugees were sheltering. The Kosovo Albanians feel a sense of shared sorrow and collective displacement that is exacerbated by the presence of other people, both openly present and partially concealed. The faces of individuals whose faces are visible in the backdrop display a mixture of fatigue, worry, and hope. The image's natural, slightly subdued lighting has a soft, diffused aspect that adds to the picture's overall gloomy tone. The scene's emotional impact is further heightened by the subdued color scheme, which is dominated by earth tones and grayscale colors.

#### 4.3 Humanizing Imagery

“The Baby and The Fence” is illustrative of the imagery of the Kosovo war and associated humanitarian and refugee crises. Imagery humanized the conflict and the plight of the those fleeing their homes. Thus, Kosovo Albanians found sympathetic reception in neighboring nations as well as further afield (Säävälä, 2010). By contrast, acceptance of refugees after the rise of anti-Muslim racism post-9/11 The work of these authors, as well as scholars in the area of affect studies also informs intercultural rhetoric, particularly the manner in which “the Other” is visualized in media texts (Betlemidze,

<sup>1</sup> Gripper socks are socks that have rubber patches, often, in a design, at the footbed to assist with infants and toddlers learning to walk and to keep them from slipping and falling down on smooth surfaces.

2015; Lengel & Smidi, 2019; Smidi & Lengel, 2017) and, in particular, during the Syrian humanitarian crisis and Putin's annexation of Crimea, has been infused with religio-ethnonationalism (Montenegro et al., 2022; Newsom & Lengel, 2020). This has not been the case with Ukrainians fleeing their country after the invasion by the Russian military from 24 February 2022 until the present (see, for instance, Newsom & Lengel, 2022).

The image was taken by accomplished photojournalist, Carol Guzy, who has witnessed and shared images of death and destruction during her four decade long career. At the time she took the photo, tens of thousands of people were leaving their homes in the Kosovo region of Serbia. Guzy, then a photojournalist with *The Washington Post*, took the 3 May 1999 photo of a 2-year-old Kosovo refugee, Agim Shala, as the tiny child is passed through the barbed-wire fence into the hands of grandparents at the refugee camp run by United Arab Emirates in Kukës.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Impact of "The Baby and The Fence"

Carol Guzy has irrevocably impacted the world of photojournalism with her outstanding body of work. She has witnessed her fair share of death and destruction over the past four decades from wars to natural disasters in Haiti, Kosovo and, very recently, in Ukraine (Dickson & Matthews, 2022). She has also taken an activist stance in her work. She was detained and arrested in April 2000 during the IMF World Bank detentions, underscoring her commitment to reporting on important international events.

Her presence at the Kukës refugee camp was critical to the understanding of "The Baby and The Fence". While at first glance the image depicts tragedy, Guzy (cited in Garrova, 2019) said, "It's actually a joyful photo. Families that had escaped ethnic cleansing did not know if their loved ones had survived or not; [they] were lined up along that fence. When one family saw relatives on the other side of the barbed wire, they celebrated and handed their young children back and forth while waiting to be reunited" (para. 8).

Along with fellow photographers Lucian Perkins and Michael Williamson, Guzy won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for feature photography for images of Kosovo refugees (The Pulitzer Prizes, 2023). Guzy worked as a staff photographer for the *Miami Herald* from 1980 to 1988 and *The Washington Post* from 1988 to 2014. As of April 2022, Guzy is a contract photographer for *ZUMA Press*. She won four Pulitzer Prizes—in 1986, in 1995 for coverage of the Haitian crisis, in 2000 for her monumental work in Kosovo, and in 2011 for her photojournalistic reporting on the 2010 Haiti earthquake and its aftermath. This remarkable achievement has been accomplished by only five people. Further, she was the first photojournalist to obtain that achievement. She was also the first woman to win the National Press Photographers Association's Newspaper Photographer of the Year Award in 1990.

### 5.2 Women Photojournalists as First-Hand Witnesses

Guzy and other women photojournalists were instrumental in documenting the Kosovo humanitarian catastrophe as it developed. They captured the pain and tenacity of the Kosovo Albanian people through their images, especially the women and children. Their photographs raised awareness to the plight of refugees, the conditions in camps for the internally displaced, and the effects of the fighting on civilians. Focusing on the experiences of women in the battle, they offered a distinctive viewpoint. The stories of women who had experienced sexual assault, been uprooted from their homes, or actively supported their families and communities were emphasized. They highlighted the effects of the conflict on women specifically as well as the fortitude and resiliency of women in the face of adversity by amplifying these voices. When documenting the human tales underlying the fighting, female photojournalists frequently contributed a distinctive viewpoint to their work. They were able to build connection and trust with their subjects, especially with women and children, which made it possible to take more private and intimate pictures. Their photographs depicted the psychological toll of the conflict and enabled viewers to empathize more deeply with individuals who were impacted. By occupying positions in industries where men predominate, they questioned conventional gender stereotypes. Women could be first-hand witnesses and storytellers, as evidenced by their presence in conflict areas and their capacity to produce powerful visuals (Lengel, 2018). They helped dispel gender preconceptions in journalism and opened the way for next generations of female photojournalists.

These women photojournalists and other media professionals, along with human rights advocates and activists, are advocating for peace in the Balkans, East Central and Southeastern Europe, and elsewhere worldwide (See Brettell, 1995; Boudling, 1995; 2001). Several noted women photojournalists during the Kosovo war include Ami Vitale, an American photojournalist, who focused on capturing the stories of women and children affected by the conflict and shed light on the gender-specific impacts of the war and the resilience of women in the face of adversity; Alexandra Boulat, a French photographer who captured the daily lives and struggles of Kosovo Albanians and refugees; Carolyn Cole an American photojournalist, who won the Pulitzer Prize for Feature Photography in 2004 for her work of documenting the humanitarian crisis, the aftermath of the conflict, and the resilience of the Kosovo Albanian population; Alexandra



Avakian, an American photojournalist of the *Time* magazine, who depicted the experiences of refugees, the devastation of towns and villages, and the work of aid organizations. Another important photojournalist who is not a woman but documented the experiences of women during the Kosovo War, is Gervasio Sánchez, a Spanish photographer. His photographs highlighted the stories of women who had been victims of sexual violence and the challenges they faced in the aftermath of the conflict.

These women photojournalists and their work have successfully and compellingly captured the essence of being a refugee, including the agony of being separated from loved ones, the will to reach safety, and the human spirit's resiliency in the face of difficulty. By reminding viewers of the individual lives impacted and the necessity of resolving the problem of displaced people, it humanizes the larger political and humanitarian crisis.

## 6. Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

Media have the capacity to articulate narratives, sometimes competing and contradictory. Often such narratives emerge simultaneously. Finnegan argues that “a powerful photograph can seem a lot like a powerful piece of oratory in terms of circulation and impact” (cited in Bruce & Finnegan, 2021, p. 99). Analyzing images of Kosovo refugees at the 25th anniversary of the conflict is important to understand the historical contexts that continue to shape the socio-cultural and political situation of Kosovo, the Balkans, and in broader Southeastern and East Central Europe. Visual rhetoric scholar, Carol Finnegan, suggests that “the theoretical and critical resources of rhetoric enable us to explore the specificity of visual discourse as well as its fluidity, its movement across domains of space and place and time and history” (cited in Bruce & Finnegan, 2021, p. 92).

This study sheds light on the intricate dynamics of visual rhetoric and exemplifies the potential for such analyses in contemporary academic discourse. The reception of Kosovo Albanians was sympathetic and supportive in 1999 (Jaakkola 1999; Saavala, 2010). By contrast, acceptance of refugees after the rise of anti-Muslim racism post-9/11 (See Lengel & Smidi, 2019; Smidi & Lengel, 2017) and, in particular, during the Syrian humanitarian crisis and the current invasion of Ukraine by Putin's Russian military forces, both of which have been infused with religio-ethnonationalism (Newsom & Lengel, 2020; 2022). This has not been the case with Ukrainians fleeing their country after the invasion by the Russian military from 24 February 2022 until the present. Thus, more research is needed to explore the ongoing impacts of humanitarian crises in East Central and South East Europe including, for instance, ongoing health impacts (see, for instance, Ai et al., 2002; Hanna et al., 2015; Kienzler, 2022; World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, 1999; Redwood-Campbell et al., 2008; Szilard et al., 2002), and other traumas (Lengel, 2018; Lengel et al., 2008; Newsom & Lengel, 2023; Schwandner-Sievers, 2013). Such work is especially important given the recent ethnic conflict which has erupted in Kosovo in June 2023 following the April 2023 elections in four municipalities in north Kosovo (Lynch et al., 2023).

More research is also needed on the impact of visual rhetoric, affect studies, and intercultural communication to understand how marginalized and oppressed individuals and groups are discursively constituted as “the Other” in visual media texts. Such research is crucial to understand how media coverage and representation of conflicts in the Balkans and broader Southeastern and East Central Europe address the intersection of visual rhetoric, visual culture, and historical context (Bruce & Finnegan, 2021), in order to understand how images communicate citizenship, family, community experiencing conflict, gender, and on the human toll and nature of the visualization of armed conflict and its impact on displacement of families.

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