

## **U.S. and NATO Apologies for the Chinese Embassy Bombing: A Categorical Analysis**

DEXIN TIAN<sup>\*</sup>

Bowling Green State University

This paper is aimed at looking into the results of the U.S. and NATO apologies for the Chinese Embassy bombing, which occurred on May 7, 1999. Through the theoretical lens of Nick Smith's categorical apology with reference to the relevant works of Tavuchis and Lazare and via the rhetorical method of close textual analysis, this study has analyzed the transcripts of five selected rhetorical artifacts of the U.S. and NATO apologies. A close reading of the artifacts against the nine standards of the categorical apology reveals both positive and negative findings. Positively, the United States and NATO have fully met three standards of performance of apology, reform and reparations, and standing and partially satisfied the standard of categorical regret. Negatively, they have failed to meet five other standards completely in their apologies. At the time, the United States and NATO had the first priority to continue with their air strike campaign and the least motivation to present a full, categorical apology even though they were challenged with the humanitarian necessity and the intention to maintain their relationships with P.R. China.

In 1999, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces were carrying on an air strike campaign to stop the Milosevic regime from killing the Kosovar Albanians in the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). On May 7, a U.S. B-2 bomber dropped five GPS-guided bombs on the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade of the FRY. The bombs fell onto the Embassy from different directions and killed three Chinese journalists with more than 20 other personnel injured. Following the incident, both the NATO headquarters and the U.S. government publicized statements of regret. Responding to the Chinese government's condemning statements and solemn requests for public apologies coupled with angry Chinese demonstrators stoning the U.S. embassy windows in Beijing and damaging the U.S. consulate property in Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Chengdu, NATO and U.S. officials made repeated statements of regret and apologies for the world-shocking bombing of the Chinese Embassy in the former FRY.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the U.S. and NATO statements of regret and apologies for the Chinese Embassy bombing through the theoretical lens of categorical apology and via the method

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Dexin Tian: [dexint@bgsu.edu](mailto:dexint@bgsu.edu)

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of close textual analysis of the U.S. and NATO official statements, public speeches, and diplomatic notes following the Chinese Embassy bombing. Through a close reading of the transcripts of these written records or rhetorical artifacts and by testing them critically against the nine standards of the categorical apology, I intend to search for answers to the following two research questions:

RQ 1: How much do the U.S. and NATO official statements, public speeches, and diplomatic notes fit in with the categorical apology standards?

RQ 2: What can we draw from the U.S. and NATO official statements, public speeches, and diplomatic notes?

### **Literature Review**

In everyday interactions, apologies have been offered and received due to their communicative functions. Just as Lazare (2004) pointed out, "apologies have the power to heal humiliations and grudges, remove the desire for vengeance, and generate forgiveness on the part of the offended parties" (p. 1). In fact, apology-making, as an important rhetorical tool, has almost become a fashion in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There were so many notable figures apologizing for what people had done in the past that this particular decade was called "the current age of apology" (Shapiro, 1997, p. 18) and "the decade of group apology" (Leo, 1997, p. 17). While the notable figures were mostly apologizing for what had happened in the distant past, the U.S. and NATO officials were expressing regret and apologies for their overnight bombing of the Chinese Embassy.

In recent years, there has also been burgeoning popular and scholarly literature on the importance of apologies. Popular attention has been witnessed in newspapers and magazines (Lazare, 1995; Shapiro, 1997; Ching, 1998; Krauze, 1998; Tannen, 1999). Scholarly work has flourished in books and journals (Tavuchis, 1991; Benoit, 1997; Murata, 1998; Yamazaki, 2004). However, besides some popular attention (Carroll, 1999; Goldstein, 1999; Israel, 2000), there has been little scholarly work directly addressing the U.S. and NATO apologies to the Chinese Embassy bombing. As for popular attention, Carroll (1999) contended in a newspaper article that NATO's apologies are insincere because "before apologizing, we must stop the war" (p. 2). There is more criticism in on-line articles. For instance, Goldstein (1999) sharply pointed out that "almost as provocative as the bombing were the so-called 'apologies' issued by the U.S. and NATO ... [which] amounted to an insult" (p. 1). Israel (1999) stated, "power breeds arrogance and arrogance breeds [power]. So [it is] with the Chinese Embassy bombing" (p. 1). As these newspaper and on-line articles came out shortly after the Chinese Embassy bombing, the opinions may be simply personal or somewhat biased. Now that dust has settled over the bombing of the Chinese Embassy, which occurred seven years ago, it is necessary to conduct a thorough study of the U.S. and NATO apologies.

According to Tavuchis (1991), an apology is a speech act, in which the speaker expresses sorrow and regret so as to seek forgiveness from the person wronged. He says to the one he wronged that he is sorry, indicating that he morally regrets doing what he did and wishes to restore his relationship (pp. 22-32). Lazare (2004) further conceptualizes apology as "an encounter between two parties in which one

party, the offender, acknowledges responsibility for an offense or grievance and expresses regret or remorse to a second party, the aggrieved" (p. 23). Actually, the speech act in Tavuchis's definition of apology entails verbal and nonverbal, private and public human interactions. The two parties in Lazare's conception of apology encounter can be individuals or groups such as families, businesses, ethnic groups, or nation states.

In their article entitled "The Promise and Pitfalls of Apology," Govier and Verwoerd (2002) listed three types of meanings associated with the term "apology." The first one is *a defense* as in Socrates' *Apologia*, the second *an excuse* or *account* (e.g., "Sorry. I'm late."), and the third *a moral apology*. A moral apology is concerned with significant wrongdoing and it usually implies a request for forgiveness and reconciliation (p. 67). Since significant wrongs affect the wide social web connecting the wrongdoer and the victim, it usually takes a public apology to express the sorrow for moral wrongdoing. The attack of an embassy with bombs is definitely a significant wrong, so the apologies for such an act fall into the category of moral apology and/or public apology. Govier and Verwoerd (2002) stated:

A public apology is one that is expressed in the public domain on the assumption that it is relevant to the public at large and not solely to the victims of the wrongdoing. Public apologies may be issued by individuals purely as individuals, or by individuals acting as spokespersons for groups or institutions (pp. 67-68).

Thus, apologies for significant wrongdoing need to reach the ears of the relevant public. If an institution has been instrumental in the wrongdoing, an institutional apology is needed. Govier & Verwoerd (2002) further pointed out, as the engine of an apology, emotion tends to be diminished in the institutional case because the spokesperson that issues the apology may not himself or herself have been involved directly in any wrongdoing. Therefore, what is crucial is that the apology-maker sincerely acknowledges the wrongdoing of the offender and the human dignity of the victims by legitimating their feelings (p. 74).

While Govier and Verwoerd emphasized the acknowledgement of wrongdoing, human dignity, and legitimate feelings in public or institutional apologies, Jason Edwards (2005) focused on remembrance, reconciliation, mortification, and atonement in community-focused apologies (p. 321). According to Edwards (2005), a community-focused apology, also labeled as a political apology, is a speech act from one community to another, and the actors involved are broadly defined as communities, including nation-states, organizations, racial, ethnic, and religious groups or individuals speaking on behalf of those groups. Such apologies help to mend and resolve old wounds, strengthen communal bonds, and even deepen relationships among varying actors. It is also possible that they can reaffirm communal values between those communities at both the national and international levels (p. 320).

The success of an apology lies in the match between the apology and its audience (Hoover, 1989, pp. 235-236). In this regard, Tavuchis (1991) contended that, while sorrow is the cornerstone of interpersonal apologies, documentation lies at the core of collective apologies, which consists of public acknowledgement, acceptance of responsibility, and an implicit or explicit promise that the behavior in question will not occur again (pp. 98-105). In addition, Meier (2004) pointed out that there have been two approaches to addressing the quality of apologies. One approach involves experiments designed to judge

perceptions and effectiveness of contextualized apologies, and the other approach uses actual or elicited apologies to evaluate their success or expected results (p. 6). By taking the second approach, the present paper studies the success or results of the U.S. and NATO official statements, public speeches, and diplomatic notes as public, institutional, and political apologies.

### **Theoretical Framework**

By critiquing the theories of social scientists, Aaron Lazare and Nicolas Tavuchis, Nick Smith has developed his theory of categorical apology. Smith (2005) stated:

While the leading social science accounts by Lazare and Tavuchis aptly demonstrate how apologies lubricate reciprocally egoist relationships, such theories ultimately prove unsatisfying because apologies achieve their highest meaning as morally rich acts (p. 473).

To Smith, both Lazare and Tavuchis offer only descriptive accounts, but a prescriptive argument is necessary for deciphering the full meaning of apologies. Believing that apologies fall within a spectrum of meaning, Smith (2005) defined his theory of the categorical apology as representing "the maximally meaningful apology" (p. 473). Confessing that "a categorical apology is a rare and burdensome act, and under certain circumstances full apologies may not be possible no matter how badly we may desire them," Smith has developed his theory to protect the "full meaning of apologies" (p. 473).

There are altogether nine "rigorous and precise" (Smith, 2005, p. 473) standards in the categorical apology theory. The first standard is corroborated factual record. According to Smith (2005), "contested facts often lie at the heart of moral injuries, and in order to apologize categorically the offender must confess to the facts surrounding the offense and establish a record to which the parties agree" (p. 476). To meet this standard, all parties involved agree on a material fact to the offense. The offender should not conceal any facts, and the victim should not exaggerate the offense, either. When new material facts come to light after an apology has been made, a revised apology should account for them (p. 476).

The second standard is acceptance of causal responsibility rather than mere expression of sympathy. For this, Smith (2005) stated: "The offender must not only admit that certain events transpired but must also accept causal responsibility for the harm" (p. 477). Instead of simply saying, "I am sorry that something occurred," the offender need to confess that he or she is the cause for the occurrence and will take the causal responsibility. Otherwise, the offender is not apologizing but merely expressing condolences. To treat an offense as an accident is to deny intentionality and avoid moral culpability. Categorical apologies are unconditional, and the "but" in the form of "I'm sorry, but ..." actually degrades the apology (pp. 477-479).

Identification of each moral wrong is the third standard. As Smith (2005) remarked, "having secured the historical record and taken causal responsibility for the harm, an offender must now recognize the wrongdoing ... [and] pair the harm from which the victim suffered with the moral principle underlying that harm" (p. 479). Requiring the offender to identify each offense and explain the reason for the

apology, this standard guards against conflating several wrongs into one apology. In addition, by isolating precisely what the offender is responsible for, the parties involved can disentangle the causal chain and match the transgression with the moral principle transgressed (pp. 479-480).

The fourth standard is shared commitment to violated moral principles. Smith (2005) noted, "With the historical record agreed upon and the violated principles made explicit, a categorically apologetic offender will commit to the values at issue" (p. 480). Willing to share moral values, the offender will understand the victim's claim as legitimate, his or her behavior wrong, and say: "I was wrong." Only when the offender recognizes the victim as someone who shares common deep beliefs, will the victim believe that the offender is intrinsically motivated and likely to reform (p. 480).

Categorical regret is the fifth standard. In the words of Smith (2005), "categorical regret recognizes and declares a transgression as wrong and wishes it could be undone. It entails a promise that the offender will not repeat the offense even under the same conditions and with the same incentives" (p. 483). A categorical apology is more than the expression of sympathy, sorrow, or guilt. This is because regret can mean several things that are not consistent with apologizing. First, it may imply that one has not done anything wrong if one just regrets for something that he or she wishes done otherwise. Second, an informal use of regret may also refer to the displeasure for unintended consequences. Third, there is also a distinction between guilt and regret. For instance, one may feel a sense of guilt for some privilege, but it does not necessarily indicate that he or she regrets for such privilege (pp. 482-483).

The next standard is performance of the apology. Although the utterance of an apology is necessary, simply saying "I'm sorry" may do little of the work required for realizing the meaning of an apology; therefore, Smith (2005) explicated:

Ideally, the offender would speak the apology and provide a written record of it .... A full apology is a potentially technical undertaking as it identifies moral norms and parses causal responsibility, and a written version allows the offender to craft a precise statement (pp. 484-485).

With this standard, Smith emphasizes the necessity that the offender should appear before the victim with a written statement of apology. In this way, the apology can create both emotional and ceremonial meaning.

The seventh standard is reform and reparations. This standard has two requirements. As Smith (2005) explained:

Categorical apologies promise to never repeat the offense because they denounce transgression as morally wrong .... Categorical apologies can require the offender to provide what are often called reparations, implying that such responses make a victim 'whole' by returning what the offense has taken away (pp. 485-486).

To meet this standard, the offender has to make a promise of moral reform and take the practical responsibility for the harm to the victim.

Standing is the eighth standard. According to Smith (2005), "in order to issue a categorical apology, one must possess what is understood in legal terms as standing ... [which means that] only legitimate disputants adjudicate claims" (p. 489). With this standard, Smith emphasizes the significance that much of an apology's meaning can only be provided by the offender. Although a third party can represent the offender, only the offender can promise never to offend again because he or she recognizes that it is wrong (pp. 489-490).

The last standard is intentions. In Smith's (2005) words, "even if the offender satisfied all of the previous elements, it matters why [he or] she apologizes .... We should not underestimate the significance of the offender's motivations and mental states" (490). To Smith, categorical apologies entail a commitment to not only a shared value and prospect of a future free from harms due to breaches of this principle but also a shared sense of goodness, justice, and the meaning of life (p. 491).

Having introduced Nick Smith's theory of categorical apology, I need to make one point clear before applying it in the analysis of the particular case of the U.S.-NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy. As we can see from the above definition of apology by Tavuchis, the apology-making process comprises the apology from the offender's end and the forgiveness from the end of the offended party. Tavuchis (1991) further elucidated this point by saying that, "a proper and successful apology is the middle term in a moral syllogism that commences with a call [from the offender] and ends with forgiveness [from the offended]" (p. 21). However, Smith's (2005) theory has "not considered the crucial relationship between apologies and forgiveness" because "forgiveness is also a subtle and complex moral act and considerable additional argument would be required to determine when we should accept categorical apologies" (p. 493). Since the present paper focuses on the U.S. and NATO apology-making process and results, Smith's theory of categorical apology well applies to the present study.

## **Research Method**

The Chinese Embassy in Belgrade of the former FRY was bombed on May 7, 1999. Since then both sides have taken some important measures. On July 30, 1999, the U.S. government agreed to pay \$4.5 million to the people who were injured and to the families of those killed in the bombing. It also agreed on December 16, 1999 to provide \$28 million in compensation for the Chinese Embassy bombing. Meanwhile, the Chinese government agreed to pay \$2.87 million for the damage done to the U.S. diplomatic facilities in China (Statement by U.S. State Department, 1999). On April 9, 2000, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States fired one officer and reprimanded six others "for their roles in mistakes that led to the accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade" (Cable Network News [CNN], 2000, p. 1). During the whole process, a series of official statements, public speeches, and diplomatic notes or letters as well as press conference briefings from both the offender and the victim sides have been made public. Since the purpose of this study is to examine the quality or results of the U.S. and NATO apologies for the Chinese Embassy bombing, I have made a purposive selection of NATO's Official Statement, the U.S. State Department Statement, the U.S. Defense Department and CIA Joint

Statement, President Clinton's Speech of Apology, and Albright's Letter of Apology for analysis. These documents are preserved as transcripts in several websites. Except for NATO's Official Statement, which has been downloaded from the website of the Online News Hour of the Public Broadcasting Service [PBS], I have downloaded the rest of the selected written records from the website of the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong; therefore, the authenticity of the written documents can be guaranteed.

Apart from this authenticity, there are three main reasons for selecting the above written documents of apologies as rhetorical artifacts for this study. First, the Chinese Embassy bombing is a significant offense and requires public and institutional apologies. The selected artifacts fall into this category. Second, the selections are representative because the first two official statements express the responses of NATO and the United States as two institutions. As the United States played a leading role in the NATO's air strike campaign in that war and it was the U.S. plane that dropped the bombs onto the Chinese Embassy, the Joint Statement of the Defense Department and the CIA should have sent the very message China required. President Clinton was the head of the United States at that time, and his speech should have represented the most authoritative apology. As the Secretary of State then, Albright could also have addressed the most practical demands from both the U.S. and Chinese sides. Finally, the selection of the above documents instead of others such as the Oral Presentation by Under Secretary of State Thomas Pickering on June 17 to the Chinese government and the written responses of the Chinese side is determined by the purpose of this study and the space of the present paper.

To analyze the artifacts, I will use the rhetorical method of close textual analysis to locate evidence from the texts and match them in accordance with the nine elements or standards of categorical apologies in a critical manner. A close textual analysis or close reading, as Sigler pointed out (2006) "offers a detailed interpretation of a passage of prose, showing how the details of a text relate to the central themes of the story or novel" (p. 1). This method is appropriate and useful for the present research because it "studies the relationship between the inner workings of the public discourse and its historical context in order to discover what makes a particular text function persuasively" (Burghardt, 2005, p. 563).

### **Critical Analysis**

To critically analyze the selected rhetorical artifacts, I will first explicate the context within which the artifacts were produced and then analyze the artifacts while evaluating the analytical results at the same time.

#### *Context*

As for the context within which the U.S. and NATO official statements, public speeches, and diplomatic letters were produced, there are two situations for explication. The first one is what actually happened. On June 17, 1999, U.S. Under Secretary of State Thomas Pickering went to Beijing, P.R. China as the personal envoy of President Clinton to present the official report of investigation into the accidental bombing. His oral presentation was released on July 6, 1999. In this "Oral Presentation" (U.S. Department of State, 1999a, pp. 1-11), Pickering first emphasized, "the report has been prepared by

senior U.S. governmental officials from the intelligence and military organizations" (p. 2). Then he explained, "multiple factors and errors in several parts of the U.S. government were responsible for the mistaken bombing" (p. 2). The mistaken bombing resulted from three basic failures:

- First, the technique used to locate the intended target—the headquarters of the Yugoslav Federal Directorate for Supply and Procurement (FDSP) —was severely flawed.
- Second, none of the military or intelligence databases used to verify the target information contained the correct location of the Chinese Embassy.
- Third, nowhere in the target review process was either of the first two mistakes detected. (p. 2)

Because of these crucial errors, according to Pickering, about midnight local time in Belgrade on May 7, 1999, a U.S. B-2 bomber from Whitman Air Force Base in Missouri dropped five joint direct attack munitions 2000 lb. GPS-guided bombs onto the Chinese Embassy, which killed three Chinese journalists and injured over 20 other personnel.

The second situation for explication is the responses from all sides after the bombing and the subsequent responses. On the second day of the Chinese Embassy bombing, the NATO headquarters issued an official statement expressing its "deep regret for the tragic mistake" (PBS, 1999, p. 1). On the same day, there were responses from the U.S. side. First, the State Department publicized its official statement regretting "the loss of life and injuries of Chinese citizens and damage to property caused by NATO's accidental bombing," and expressing "sincere condolences and remorse to the Chinese people and government" (U.S. Department of State, 1999b, p. 1). Secretary of Defense William Cohen and CIA Director George Tenet also issued a joint statement, "deeply regretting the loss of life and injuries from the bombing" (U.S. Department of Defense, 1999, p. 1). In addition, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright sent a letter to China's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tang Jiaxuan, expressing both personal "sorrow for the loss of life, injuries, and damage" and "governmental apologies and condolences" (U.S. Department of State, 1999c, p. 1).

Following the U.S. and NATO official gestures, governments and media from all over the world expressed their different responses. For instance, the United Nations Security Council agreed to issue a statement expressing "profound regret and distress at NATO's bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade" (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 1999a, p. 1). On May 8, Boris Yeltsin, Russian President at that time, signed a statement, stating that "this was pure tyranny," and condemning the bombing as "the barbarian action of NATO" (*People's Daily*, 1999, p. 1). As for media responses, *The London Observer*, *China Daily*, and *Philippine Star* respectively reported the bombing and the U.S. and NATO's explanations as "a war crime of plotted attack," "a deliberate government conspiracy," and a "ridiculous excuse" (Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network, 1999, pp. 1-16).

The Chinese government responded with "a gross violation of Chinese sovereignty and a random violation of the *Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic Relations* and the norms of international relations," (PBS, 1999, p. 1) "an utmost barbarous act, and a gross violation of Chinese sovereignty,

which is rare in the diplomatic history," (BBC, 1999, p. 1) and "a brazen contempt and serious violation of the *UN Charter* and the basic norms governing international relations" (University of California at Los Angeles [UCLA] Center for East Asian Studies, 1999, pp. 1-2). Besides, due to complicated reasons (that need further research), the Chinese "state-run media delayed by several crucial days publishing reports of U.S. official apologies and explanations" and "there was inexplicable delay in President Jiang's willingness to accept the phone call from President Clinton" (Testimony, 1999, p. 2). Consequently, "the U.S. Embassy in Beijing was besieged by Chinese protestors. Embassy facilities were significantly damaged. Other U.S. posts in China were also targets of demonstrators" (p. 2).

In addition, Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan sent a formal note on May 10 to the United States and NATO, presenting four "solemn and just demands" as follows:

1. To make a public and official apology to the government and people of China and the families of the Chinese victims;
2. To conduct a comprehensive and thorough investigation into the NATO's missile attack against the Chinese Embassy in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia;
3. To publicize a detailed report of the investigation as soon as possible; and
4. To severely punish the perpetrators. (UCLA Center for East Asian Studies, 1999, pp. 1-2)

On the same day, U.S. President Bill Clinton made a second (the first one was made in an informal manner on a golf course, see Israel, 2000, p. 2) formal public speech, apologizing again "to President Jiang and to the Chinese people" and expressing his "commitment to strengthen our relationship with China" (President Clinton Again Apologizes, 1999, p. 1).

### *Analysis and Evaluation*

Against the nine standards of Smith's categorical apology, a close textual analysis of the selected artifacts reveals the following findings. When I explicate each of the analytical findings, I will also present an evaluative judgment.

The first standard of categorical apology is corroborated factual record, which requires the offender to confess to the facts concerning the offense and to establish an agreed-upon record by all parties. Except for President Clinton's Speech of Apology, all the other written records were made public on the second day of the Chinese Embassy bombing. It is true that there are records of the statements and the letter as they were all made public and archived in various traditional or on-line sources; however, there is no indication from the records that efforts had been made for any possible corroboration before these official statements and the diplomatic letter were issued.

Since modern technology has already made all-season communication possible, it is really either negligent or arrogant of both the United States and NATO to fail to contact the Chinese government in the first place. Furthermore, it is also an inconsiderate rush job for the North Atlantic Council and the U.S. Department of State to jump respectively at the conclusions of a "tragic mistake of the bombing of the

Chinese Embassy in Belgrade," (PBS, 1999, p. 1) and an "accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade yesterday" (U.S. Department of State, 1999b, p. 1). Such conclusions were made public within hours after the bombing before any real facts could be released without a thorough investigation. Consequently, the Chinese side responded with extremely indignant and diplomatic terms and even cut off high-level and military contacts with the United States.

Lazare (2004) pointed out: "The most essential part of an effective apology is acknowledging the offense" (p. 75). To do so, the offender needs to correctly identify the party or parties responsible to the victims for the grievance, acknowledge the offending behaviors in adequate detail, recognize the impact these behaviors had on the victims, and confirm that the grievance was a violation of the social or moral contract between the parties (p. 75). The acknowledgement requirements for an effective apology overlap the first standard of categorical apology with higher and more detailed requirements. Close readings of the selected artifacts reveal few efforts made by neither the USA nor NATO to reach such requirements.

The second standard of categorical apology is acceptance of causal responsibility rather than mere expression of sympathy. A close reading of all the written artifacts finds no such words as "responsibility" or "repay." After expressing "deep regret for the tragic mistake" and "sincere sympathy and condolences," the NATO headquarters turned to say that it "never has, and never will, intentionally target civilians" and it will continue with its "air strikes" (PBS, 1999, p. 1). The U.S. State Department expressed its "sincere condolences and remorse" and then conveyed a message that it will "maintain order and safety at our mission sites" in China together with the Chinese government (U.S. Department of State, 1999b, p. 1). After a "joint examination of the mistake over the intervening hours," the Defense Department and CIA "deeply regret the loss of life and injuries" but added that "NATO has conducted thousands of strikes...with a degree of precision and professionalism unparalleled in military history" and "we are determined to strike military and related targets" (U.S. Department of Defense, 1999, p. 1). In her letter to the Chinese Foreign Minister, Albright intended to express personally her "sincere sorrow for the loss of life, injuries, and damage" and extend "sincere apologies and condolences" on behalf of the U.S. government and as a member of NATO. Then she emphasized that "there was absolutely no intention to hit your embassy," and "it is also important to remember why NATO undertook the mission." Finally, she made clear the U.S. concern about "the large-scale demonstrations at our Embassy and Consulates in China" and asked, "the Chinese government provide as soon as possible substantial security reinforcements around the Embassy and Consulate buildings" (U.S. Department of State, 1999c, p. 1). Two days later, President Clinton made a public speech, reiterating:

I have already expressed our apology and our condolences .... But again, I want to say to the Chinese people and to the leaders of China, I apologize; I regret. But I think it is very important to draw a clear distinction between a tragic mistake and a deliberate act of ethnic cleansing. And the United States will continue to make that distinction. (President Clinton Again Apologizes, 1999, p. 1).

From the above, it is clear that neither the institutions nor the high officials of the offender made clear their intention to shoulder any "responsibility." They all followed the patterns as pointed out by Smith "I

am sorry that something occurred," and "I'm sorry, but ...." Meanwhile, they all stressed that the bombing was an accidental and unintentional mistake without providing any convincing evidence.

As for the apology President Clinton reiterated, the President started with "I have already expressed," which may impress the Chinese audience that President Clinton was doing something that he was really reluctant to do since he had done it already. Although it was a sign of sincerity for him to say straightforward "I apologize; I regret" in the middle of his speech, the President turned to instruct the Chinese leaders and people to "draw a clear distinction between a tragic mistake and a deliberate act of ethnic cleansing." Such condescending instruction to the Chinese as victims definitely discounts the sincerity of the speaker as the offender. By saying that "the United States will continue to make that distinction," President Clinton was sending the message that the continuation with the air-strike campaign was more important than any recognition of or commitment to the responsibility associated with the Chinese Embassy bombing.

With regard to the acceptance of causal responsibility, Smith (2005) emphasized that "when accepting responsibility, the offender must parse precisely what [he or] she is responsible for" (478). He emphasized the significance of moral responsibility for a meaningful or categorical apology. Tavuchis (1991) also remarked, "the attribution and nomination of an offense can be negotiated not by an account or appeal to reasons, but only through the faculty of forgiving" (p. 20). This means that the action of the offender must be "semantically and symbolically transformed into 'apologizable' discourse" (p. 20). When the USA and NATO downplayed their bombing of the Chinese Embassy and declared it to be a mistake or an accident, they were not targeting categorical apologies, which are unconditional. Furthermore, the excuses and reasons the USA and NATO were stressing after the word "but" in their statements "will likely degrade the apology" in the words of Smith (2005, p.479). Even if the USA and NATO had bombed the Chinese Embassy by mistake, they should have at least made clear in the written statements, their willingness to accept the causal responsibility for the bombing and the moral responsibility for failing to take necessary measures to prevent the occurrence of the bombing.

The third standard is identification of each moral wrong. As Smith (2005) pointed out, to meet this standard, the offender needs to identify each offense and explain the reason for the apology so as to avoid conflating several wrongs into one apology (pp. 479-480). Among the written artifacts, only the Defense Department and CIA Joint Statement was attempting to clarify each moral wrong, which reads:

We have been jointly examining this mistake over the intervening hours. It was the result of neither pilot nor mechanical error. Clearly, faulty information led to a mistake in the initial targeting of this facility. In addition, the extensive process in place used to select and validate targets did not correct this original error. A review of our procedures has convinced us that this was an anomaly that is unlikely to occur again. Therefore, NATO authorities intend to continue and intensify the air campaign. (U.S. Department of Defense, 1999, p. 1)

Instead of "conflating several wrongs into one apology," the Joint Statement has identified three faulty steps that led to the bombing. This conclusion coincides with the three failures in the Oral Presentation by Pickering.

There are two things to comment upon here. First, if the coincidence holds water, it means that the United States and NATO were able to detect the complicated mistakes that led to the bombing of an embassy within several "intervening hours." The argument here is: How could they have failed to correct any of the three failures or errors in the first place? Second, the purpose of identifying each moral wrong is to apologize more convincingly; however, the Joint Statement concluded that NATO would "continue and intensify the air campaign" (U.S. Department of Defense, 1999, p. 1). Instead of "isolating precisely what the offender is responsible for," (Smith, 2005, p. 480), the United States was producing a self-defense.

The fourth standard is shared commitment to violated moral principles. By this standard, Smith (2005) meant that the offender was willing to share moral values, understand the victim's claim as legitimate, his or her behavior wrong, and say: "I was wrong." Apologies that fail to meet this standard often take the pattern of "I am sorry that X bothers you" (p. 480). First of all, in no place in the five selected written artifacts can sentences like "I was wrong" or "we were wrong" be found. Instead, we do read sentences following the above pattern in the U.S. statements of apology. For instance, the State Department Statement (1999) begins with "the United States deeply regrets the loss of life and injuries of Chinese citizens and the damage to property caused by NATO's accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade yesterday" (p. 1). Similarly, the U.S. Defense Department and CIA Joint Statement also start with "we deeply regret the loss of life and injuries from the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade last night. The bombing was an error." Then, it reiterates the argument in the middle of the statement by "we regret any loss of civilian life or other unintended damage, but there is no such thing as risk free military operations" (p. 1).

Such statements just express regret, and the regret is expressed in a way that downplays the offense of an Embassy bombing as a minor mistake or error. By following the pattern of "I am sorry that X bothers you," the offender was trying to make the offense sound as if somebody else had committed it. In another word, simply by expressing sympathy with words like "regret" and "condolences" and emphasizing words like "mistake" and "accident," neither the United States nor NATO offered "the most meaningful sentence 'I was wrong' in an apology and was not "intrinsically motivated and likely to reform" (Smith, 2005, p. 480).

The fifth standard is categorical regret. By categorical regret, Smith (2005) meant that the offender recognizes and declares a transgression as wrong and wishes it could be undone. It entails a promise that the offense will not be repeated under the same circumstances (p. 483). Although we have found no such sentences as "we were wrong" in the written artifacts, we do find some responsible sentences and promises in the written records. For instance, we read in NATO's statement, "NATO never has, and never will intentionally target civilians" (PBS, 1999, p. 1). In the Defense Department and CIA Joint Statement, there is "a review of our procedures has convinced us that this was an anomaly that is

unlikely to occur again" (U.S. Department of Defense, 1999, p. 1). Thus, we may say that the fifth standard of categorical regret is partially satisfied in the selected artifacts.

The sixth standard is performance of the apology. To meet this standard, the offender should appear before the victim with a written statement of apology to create emotional and ceremonial meanings. Although no one with regard to the selected written artifacts of apology really appeared before the Chinese victims, we do know from the above that U.S. Under Secretary Thomas Pickering went to Beijing as President Clinton's personal envoy. Besides presenting the investigation report, he represented the President and the United States and expressed "the heartfelt condolences of the American people and government to the families of the three Chinese journalists who died in the bombing of your [the Chinese] embassy in Belgrade on May 7" (U.S. Department of State, 1999a, p. 2). The investigation report was in written form and the Oral Presentation by Pickering was also made public as a record; therefore, we can say that the standard of the performance of the apology is met in a diplomatic and praiseworthy way.

The seventh standard is reform and reparations. This standard requires that the offender promise to never repeat the offense and offer to provide reparations for the victim. From what has been mentioned in the discussion about the fifth standard of categorical regret, we find that both the United States and NATO promise never to repeat the offense. In addition, there have been the U.S. government's repayment of \$4.5 million to the people who were injured and the families of those killed in the bombing and \$28 million in compensation for the Chinese Embassy bombing (Statement by U.S. State Department, 1999). Thus, Standard Seven is fully satisfied.

As for the eighth standard of standing, both the United States and NATO are legally represented in their respective official statements, public speech, and diplomatic letter. Under Secretary of State Thomas Pickering also went to Beijing as the personal envoy of President Clinton. He presented the official report of investigation into the accidental bombing to the Chinese government and expressed "the heartfelt condolences of the American people and government" (U.S. Department of State, 1999a, p. 2). As Smith (2005) pointed out, "third parties can corroborate the victim's account of the event, apportion responsibility, vindicate [his or] her moral principles, legitimate [his or] her suffering, and provide reparations" (p. 489); hence, we can say that Standard Eight is also fully satisfied.

The last standard is intentions. As Smith (2005) stated, "even if the offender satisfied all of the previous elements, it matters why [he or] she apologizes .... We should not underestimate the significance of the offender's motivations and mental states" (490). A close reading of the selected artifacts reveals three intentions. First, as discussed earlier, both the United States and NATO did express sympathy, condolences, and remorse for the loss of lives and injuries in the Chinese Embassy bombing, but they did so without the intention to admit that they have done something wrong.

Second, since they assumed that they had not done anything wrong intentionally, the USA and NATO planned to continue with their air strike campaign. For instance, in the NATO Statement, there is "NATO will continue to pursue its goals" (PBS, 1999, p. 1). In the Defense Department and CIA Joint Statement, we read, "NATO authorities intend to continue and intensify the air campaign" (U.S. Department of Defense, 1999, p. 1). Albright expressed the same intention in her letter, saying "NATO

cannot allow Milosevic's 'ethnic cleansing' to go unchecked, and its mission will continue until an acceptable resolution is reached" (U.S. Department of State, 1999c, p. 1). In his speech, President Clinton also reiterated: "Until NATO's simple conditions are met, the military campaign will continue" (President Clinton Again Apologizes, 1999, p. 1).

Finally, the USA and NATO intended to continue their relationships with China. NATO promised to "continue to review the circumstances surrounding the incident and we will make available any further information as soon as possible" (PBS, 1999, p. 1). The U.S. State Department (1991) clearly stated to "remain committed to our developing relationship with China and will ... build a constructive strategic partnership for the 21st century" (p. 1). Secretary of State Albright also remarked in her letter, "it is more important than ever for us to remember our President's—and our—commitment to work together to build a constructive strategic partnership" (U.S. Department of State, 1999c, p. 2). Briefly, we can say it was the second and third intentions that motivated the United States and NATO to carry out their first intention of sympathy and apology.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper was to look into the results of the U.S. and NATO apologies for the Chinese Embassy bombing, which occurred on May 7, 1999. Adopting the theoretical lens of Nick Smith's categorical apology with reference to the relevant works of Tavuchis and Lazare and employing the rhetorical method of close textual analysis, this study has analyzed NATO's Official Statement, the U.S. State Department Statement, the U.S. Defense Department and CIA Joint Statement, President Clinton's Speech of Apology, and Albright's Letter of Apology following the Chinese Embassy bombing. A close reading of the transcripts of these five selected rhetorical artifacts against the nine standards of categorical apology reveals the following findings.

Positively, the United States and NATO as the offender in this case have fully met the sixth standard of performance of apology in a diplomatic and praiseworthy way by sending Under Secretary of State Thomas Pickering to Beijing, the seventh standard of reform and reparations in their promise never to repeat the offense and offer to provide reparations for the victim, and the eighth stand of standing in their legal representation of the written documents and sending Under Secretary of State Thomas Pickering to Beijing as the personal envoy of President Clinton. They have also partially satisfied the fifth standard of categorical regret by recognizing the bombing as a mistake but refusing to admit it as their wrong.

Negatively, the United States and NATO in their apologies have not met the first standard of corroborated factual record in their failure to contact the victim for an agreed-upon record, neither have they satisfied the second standard of acceptance of causal responsibility because their written records were filled with mere expressions of sympathy. In addition, they have not reached the third standard of identification of each moral wrong because they were more anxious to justify their air strike campaign than to make their apologies more convincing. The fourth standard of shared commitment to violated moral principle was also too high for them because they did not want to say in their apologies the simple but most meaningful sentence of "we are wrong." Finally, as for the last standard of intentions, the United

States and NATO had the most motivation to continue with their air strike campaign and the least motivation to present a full categorical apology.

Even though they were challenged with the humanitarian necessity and the intention to maintain their relationships with P. R. China, the United States and NATO, in the last analysis, failed to produce meaningful or categorical apologies for an unexcused missile attack upon an embassy. For future research, the responses of the Chinese side to the U.S. and NATO apologies and the U.S. and NATO declarations of the bombing as an accident need to be further explored.

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