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# **Bosnia and the Failure of the New World Order**

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Honors**

**May 2006**

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## Abstract

This paper attempts to prove that the United States failed to fulfill its international legislative obligations – namely the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide – in the conflicts that occurred in the disintegrating state of Yugoslavia during the early 1990s. By doing this, the paper also attempts to discredit the idea promulgated by the first Bush administration that following the Gulf War and the end of the Cold War in 1991 there had emerged a “New World Order” which would combat the dark side of human nature and ensure that human rights and international law were observed internationally.

The paper attempts to prove these conclusions, first, through an examination of the history of the rise of ethnic hatred in Serbia – then a republic of Yugoslavia – and how this hatred led to the breakup of Yugoslavia and the genocide of the non-Serb population, mainly Muslim, in the Yugoslavian republics of Croatia and Bosnia, mainly Bosnia. Second, the paper attempts to document the substantial amounts of public information about the genocide – available in the United States as the genocide was taking place – as well as public and private acknowledgments by the U.S. and other governments – made as the genocide occurred – that a genocide was in fact taking place in Bosnia. To accomplish this the paper uses accounts from books, and articles in magazines, journals, and newspapers written before, during, and after, the genocide took place.

The thesis attempts to prove one overriding conclusion: Despite an abundant amount of information that genocide might take place, was taking place, and had taken place Bosnia, the U.S. and other governments did not act to prevent the genocide from occurring. This was especially startling as the deliberate inaction took place immediately following the end of the Cold War and the supposed creation of a New World Order, which President George H.W. Bush was then proclaiming as a global effort to support the “victory for the rule of law and for what is right”.

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To all the people whom I neglected in order to write this thing. I hope we can still be friends, boyfriend/girlfriend, and close family members.

## **Introduction**

The first couple of years of the 1990s were a dynamic time for the United States and the world. Just prior, in 1989, the Berlin Wall had fallen, and the U.S.S.R, the U.S.'s competitor in the Cold War, had been self-destructing ever since. By the end of 1991 the Soviet Union would cease to exist. Moreover, during that same year, the United States, along with the help of many other nations and with the approval of the United Nations and a united Security Council, had expelled Saddam Hussein from Kuwait after his army had invaded that country the previous year. The breaking of the bi-polar world and the unity of international action surrounding the Gulf War was seen by some, including the first President Bush, as the start of a "New World Order", one where the United States and its allies would be able to finally act forcefully in foreign policy, not only to protect vital interests, but also to protect cherished values (Power, 2003, p. 260).

President George H.W. Bush had first proclaimed the idea of a New World Order on September 11, 1990, when he addressed the U.S. Congress about Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Iraq's invasion was a "contravention of international law", Bush claimed. This "mockery of human decency" offered the world a test, "a rare opportunity" for it to coalesce and create a "New World Order" that would be "freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice and more secure in the quest for peace" (Bush, 1990). In the months that followed, Bush would claim the world had passed this first test, as it came together – led by the

United States – and forcibly removed Saddam Hussein’s troops from Kuwait, winning a “victory for the rule of law and for what is right” (Bush, 1991).

Following the end of the Gulf War, President Bush reiterated his hope for a New World Order on March 6, 1991, again in a speech before the U.S. Congress where he claimed that the coalescence of international will and force seen in the Gulf War “would not end with the liberation of Kuwait”, but instead would “forge a future that should never again be held hostage to the darker side of human nature” (ibid). Bush proclaimed his hope that “the United Nations, free from Cold War stalemate”, could “fulfill the historic vision of its founders...protect the weak against the strong” and create a “world in which freedom and respect for human rights find a home among all nations” (ibid).

The end of the Cold War had brought many new problems that did create the need for international action in order to create a world for freedom and respect for human rights. The belief that democracy would sweep the world in the post-Cold War world was not so simply realized (Fukuyama, 1992). Instead, the end of the Cold War would bring about a proliferation of problems that the international community should have responded to effectively in order to comply with Bush’s vision of a New World Order. One of these problems was the eruption of violent conflicts based upon ethnicity and nationalism.



Indeed, the lid of at least superficial peace and stability that the Cold War had provided more or less disappeared, and the post-Cold War world featured well-armed factions that sought to seize power in countries that no longer had two superpowers propping them up (Barber, 1992; Rosenau and Durfee, 1999). Thus, the idea of a New World Order would soon receive another test following its success and supposed affirmation in the Gulf War. The test would come in the ethnic conflicts of a disintegrating Yugoslavia, then a communist country in southeastern Europe that shared a border with Italy, Greece and other Eastern European countries. The ethnic conflict in this country would quickly develop into genocide, the first to occur in the post-Cold War era.

The United States had the legal authority, by international law, to intervene in Bosnia and halt the genocide. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide clearly defines genocide as,

any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group (Blaustein et al, 1987, p. 100).

In 1986, the United States had signed onto the Genocide Convention, which mandates signatories “to prevent and to punish” any attempt of genocide as defined above (ibid). Thus, “if the Gulf War posed

the first test for U.S. foreign policy in the post-Cold War world, the Bosnian genocide offered a second” (Power, 2003, p. 247).

This paper attempts to thoroughly demonstrate that the U.S. and other governments failed this second test of the New World Order. It attempts to prove this conclusion by demonstrating that the U.S. and other governments 1) had warning to expect that genocide may occur in Yugoslavia, 2) that there was enough information both publicly available and confidentially held by the U.S. and other governments as the Bosnian genocide took place to confirm that a genocide was in fact occurring, and 3) that the U.S. and other governments deliberately developed misleading rationales to justify their policies of nonintervention during the Bosnian genocide. Moreover, in the aftermath of the Bosnian genocide, the U.S. and other governments continued to fail in their effort to create a New World Order as their policies both awarded Serb aggression and genocide while failing to do anything to punish it.

The conclusions of this paper, while somewhat applicable to other genocides during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, are specific to the Bosnian genocide and the context in which it took place, a time when the President of the United States was asserting the idea of a New World Order that he claimed was a major change in the foreign policies of the U.S. and other governments. The paper’s overall goal is not to generally analyze U.S. foreign policy and when the U.S. and other governments decide to

intervene and when they do not, although implications of the failure of the New World Order will be drawn out in the conclusion.

However, the overall goal of the paper is to simply attempt to demonstrate that during the Bosnian genocide, the U.S. and other government failed to live up to the ideas of the New World Order.

## **I. Bosnian Genocide History**

### **Introduction to the Bosnian Genocide**

Different from the Rwandan, Cambodian, Armenian, and other genocides of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Bosnian genocide was carried out under the close scrutiny of the international community. Bosnia benefited simply from its location in Europe, a focal point of U.S. foreign policy, especially following World War II and the beginning of the Cold War. Prior to its breakup, Yugoslavia had been a communist state that garnered specific strategic interest following its break with Soviet policy in 1948 and its subsequent policy of nonalignment.

However, by the time conflicts in the republics of Yugoslavia began, the first in Slovenia when that republic declared its independence June 25, 1991, Yugoslavia's importance in U.S. political considerations had declined considerably. This was due to, first, the fact that the threat of the Soviet Union had been declining since 1985 and had almost completely vanished by 1991. This meant that Yugoslavia's status as a nonaligned communist country was of declining importance to the United States (Bert, 1997, p. 5). Additionally, as the Soviet Union broke apart, the

United States was focusing less and less on foreign affairs and foreign policy in general, as years of spending and focus on issues of foreign policy had exhausted the American public's desire to tend to external problems. Indeed, in 1991, "the American people felt themselves entitled to some relief from foreign crises and a chance to concentrate on domestic issues" (ibid, p. 82). Hence, an internal power struggle in a country of declining geopolitical importance did not figure prominently, for the most part, in the purview of the American public, intellectuals, or politicians.

Still, the fact that Yugoslavia was in Europe, literally on the doorstep of Western Europe – sharing a border with two countries of what was then the European Community (Italy and Greece) – meant that it could not easily be ignored. However, the many warning signs of possible ethnic conflict and genocide that were present prior to the commencement of conflict in 1991 may not have received the level attention they would have earlier when Yugoslavia was a focus of international affairs. However, once conflict did break out and genocide did begin to occur in the fracturing republics of Yugoslavia – first in Croatia, then in Bosnia – they received a substantial amount of attention from the West, especially in comparison to the lack of attention paid to Rwanda and other sites of genocide in the past. Indeed, "no other atrocity campaign in the twentieth century was better monitored and understood by the U.S. government...in the Bosnian war, the truth had never been in short supply (Power, 2003, p. 264, 327).

### **The creation of hate**

There were plenty of warning signs that potentially bloody ethnic conflict could break out in Yugoslavia as the country began to break apart. For many scholars (Cushman & Mestrovic, 1996; Mestrovic, 1997; Cigar, 1995) the first real warning sign came in 1986, when the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences published its “Serbian Memorandum,” which outlined the importance of *Serbian* solidarity and the need for this solidarity to be placed within a *Serbian* state. The Memorandum proclaimed the need to join all Serbs, including Serbian minorities from other republics of Yugoslavia, into one state due to a perceived victimization of Serbs in the past. The memorandum stated that the Serbs were the “perpetual losers” of diplomatic negotiations and were thus always denied proper democratic representation (Mestrovic, 1997, p. 102). Since Serbs were forced to be scattered within the republics of other nationalities – in this case, the republics of Yugoslavia, of which Serbia was part – they were discriminated against and denied their democratic rights, or so the reasoning went. The Memorandum called for the creation of a *Greater Serbia*, a state with “full national integrity for the Serbian people, regardless of which republic or province” they inhabited (Cigar, 1995, p. 23).

It was with this argument that Slobodan Milosevic rose from obscurity in the Yugoslavian Communist Party to national prominence. On April 1987, he publicly declared at a Serbian protest over an alleged

incident of police brutality in the autonomous Yugoslavian province of Kosovo that he would make it his goal to protect the *Serbian* people (Simons and Smale, 2006). This was significant as prior to that moment nationalist declarations were not supposed to be used by officials of the communist party. The protest, while seemingly a spontaneous show of Milosevic's love for the Serbian people, was, in fact, staged by Milosevic to ensure that the protestors would come, that the media would be in the right place to document his statements, and that the protesters would embrace Milosevic following his statement. They did so emphatically (ibid). This was the start of a carefully orchestrated propaganda campaign by Milosevic to consolidate power in Yugoslavia by mobilizing people around issues of ethnicity. This propaganda campaign would ultimately lead to the execution, mass deportation, and rape of non-Serbs who were living on land deemed to be part of a Greater Serbia.

Following his public declaration of Serbian solidarity, Milosevic became the political face of Serbian nationalism, a strong position to be in as Serbian nationalism had been "simmering" among the Serbian intellectuals and the clerics of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade, the capital of what was then the Yugoslavian republic of Serbia (Cigar, 1995). The position of many intellectuals was clear with the publication of the Serbian Memorandum and the writings of other professors at the University of Belgrade. In the other writings, academics would paint Islam (the Bosnian republic had a plurality of Muslims within it) as "retrograde"

to modern civilization, as an alien religion and culture from which the Serbian people should be protected through the creation of a Greater Serbia (Cigar, 1995, p. 31). At the same time, a best-selling author in Serbia wrote about a “vampire-like resurgence” of a government by Islamic law, and presented maps of a Greater Serbia he hoped would be created. These maps featured large parts of Bosnia annexed to Serbia (ibid). The Serbian Orthodox Church, meanwhile, also warned publicly of Islamic “primitivism” and that Serbs were under a direct threat from “jihad” due to the Muslims presence within Yugoslavia (ibid). Indeed, “...influential figures in Serbia had begun to shape a stereotypical image of Muslims as alien, inferior, and a threat to all that the Serbs hold dear... This discourse spanned much of the Serbian national elite, including leading intellectuals, political figures, and clergymen, and its impact was to extend to all strata of society” (ibid, p. 25).

Milosevic intensified this discourse for his own political ends, becoming president in 1988 of Serbia, where he was able to use the state propaganda machine to greatly increase the fostering of Serbian nationalism and hatred for other ethnicities (ibid, p. 34). “Significantly, convincing documentation shows that the entire process, from the original appearance of Serbian protests in Kosovo through the subsequent series of political machinations, was orchestrated and managed by Milosevic and his faction” (ibid, p. 33).

Indeed, as David Rieff wrote while examining this relatively brief history of ethnic hatred in Yugoslavia, (1995, p. 71) "...the conflict and ethnic divisions were not inevitable...." Prior to Milosevic's rise to power there was a prominent Southern Slav culture in Yugoslavia that bound Croats, Serbs, and Bosnian Muslims together. The breakup of that culture, like the breakup of Yugoslavia, did not just happen by coincidence (ibid). It took a lot of work on the part of Milosevic and other nationalists. "Serb nationalism and suspicion, both fueled by Milosevic's movement, ensured that Serbs, both in Serbia and elsewhere, would find it impossible to accept a governing framework which cast them as a protected minority" (Bert, 1997, p. 42). Indeed, Milosevic's actions and motives were not a mystery to the United States. Warren Zimmerman, then ambassador to Yugoslavia was quoted in 1989 saying: "What does Slobodan Milosevic want? He wants to destroy Yugoslavia and pick up the pieces in a 'Greater Serbia.' That is the only theory that explains all the facts. For the last few years, most of his actions were against the unity of Yugoslavia" (Mestrovic, 1997, p. 92).

By 1989, Milosevic had rewritten the Yugoslavian constitution, giving Serbia dominance in the Yugoslavian government while seizing complete control of the formerly autonomous Yugoslavian province of Kosovo (Cushman & Mestrovic, p. 42). With this dominance Milosevic initiated policies in all of Yugoslavia that were pro-Serb, angering the other republics where Serbs were minorities (Cigar, 1995, p. 33). As the



other republics recoiled against this power move, they held referenda to decide whether to become independent countries. Slovenia and Croatia held their referenda and on June 25, 1991, simultaneously declared their independence from Yugoslavia. Slovenia, with a well-prepared national defense and a very small Serbian minority, was able to escape from a brief attempt by the Yugoslavian national army, the JNA, to keep it a part of Yugoslavia. Croatia, however, had a sizable Serbian minority adjacent to the Bosnian republic, which was at that time still united with Serbia as a part of Yugoslavia. War broke out in the republic of Croatia immediately following that country's declaration of independence. The conflict would foreshadow Serbian actions and motives in the Bosnian conflict, which was now less than a year away.

**A warning: "Yugoslavia's" war with Croatia**

The Croatian conflict featured several Serb actions that would recur in the Bosnian conflict. First, propaganda spread about a genocide about to take place against the Serbs living in the republic of Croatia due to extreme nationalist elements there (Mestrovic, 1996, p. 58). The propaganda emotionally evoked the past, claiming the newly formed government of Croatia was just a reincarnation of the Croatian Ustasa (often spelled Ustashe, or Ustasha) government of World War II, which did in fact systematically murder thousands of Serbs, Jews and gypsies (Helsinki Watch, 1992, p. 235). Second, this use of Serbian nationalist propaganda would help organize Serbian militias both within Serbia and in

Croatia. These militias were extremely Serbian-nationalist in character, calling themselves Chetniks, historic fighters for a Greater Serbia who themselves systematically murdered thousands of Croats and Muslims during World War II (Cigar, 1995, p. 107).

Third, while these Serbian militias were being armed and financed by the republic of Serbia, the Yugoslavian government, controlled by Serbia, demanded that Croatian militias and state defenses be disarmed. The republic would comply, hoping to avoid escalation and attack (Mestrovic, 1996, p. 63). Serbian militias, coupled with the Yugoslavian army – the JNA, which itself was made up almost entirely of Serbs – then attacked Croatia when it declared independence, quickly seizing the land of its heavily out-armed opponent. Serbian troops would seize land even in areas where Serbs were a small minority (ibid, p. 76). This land was declared its own separate republic with alliances to Serbia, in the Croatian case the Republic of Serbian Krajina. Having seized the areas of land in Croatia premeditatedly desired for the creation of a Greater Serbia, the Serbs then embarked on a policy of ethnic cleansing, a euphemism for genocide, by clearing out the non-Serbian population and destroying any evidence of its previous existence.

Specific instances of ethnic cleansing were highlighted in the Croatian war, serving as a warning to the outside world of what would happen in the Bosnian conflict. Indeed, “at the very outbreak, July 7, 1991, of war with Croatia, Serbian forces expelled the inhabitants of the

Croatian-dominated village Celija, in the municipality of Vukovar, and burned the city...The Serbs committed other forced expulsions in Serbian-controlled areas of Croatia as non-Serbs were evicted by paramilitary groups working in tandem with Serbian civilian officials in those areas” (Helsinki Watch, 1992, p. 76). The non-governmental human rights organization Helsinki Watch (pp. 276-280) also documented summary executions of Croatian police officers in three Croatian towns, as well as the executions of Croatian civilians, mostly men, but also including women, children, and the elderly in eleven separate villages. The destruction of non-Serbian civilian homes was widespread in these villages, according the report. The Croatian town of Vukovar was nearly completely destroyed by Serbian artillery during a three-month siege, and 300 non-Serbs were “summarily executed when the city of Vukovar was captured in mid-November” with 2,000 more missing after the city’s fall.

In many ways, what had just happened in neighboring Croatia could have been viewed as a dress rehearsal to genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina...In the end, the Serbs in the occupied territories—comprising less than 5 percent of Croatia’s population—were left in control of well over a quarter of Croatia’s area. To achieve ethnic cleansing in an area where half the people were non-Serbs, the Serbs had expelled thousands of Croatians, as well as others (Hungarians, Slovaks, Ukrainians, and Gypsies), while killing many outright (Cigar, 1995, p. 45).

Atrocities that occurred during the Croatian war were not as well publicized in the media as those in Bosnia would be, due at least partially to focused media coverage of the Gulf War (Sadkovich, 1998, p. 104). The isolated incidents highlighted by Helsinki Watch, and reports on the expulsions of the non-Serb population, and the brutality of Vukovar, were

simply the most visible signs of a Serbian policy of ethnic cleansing that was much more widespread.

The leveling of Vukovar, once a gracious town on the Danube, and the targeting of centuries-old monuments in Dubrovnik, Croatia's most famous tourist resort, were only the most visible signs. Serb forces detained, tortured or slaughtered thousands of Croats whose only fault was their ethnic identity and their attempt to defend their villages (Gutman, 1993, p. xxvi).

Like in the upcoming Bosnian war, the threat of U.S. intervention did not seem to make much of a difference to Serbian policy. While the Serbs were cautious at first because of fear of possible Western intervention due to Bush's proclamation of a New World Order, "after it was clear no outside power would intervene, the (JNA) took the offensive...around the major Serb enclaves in Croatia" (ibid, p. xxvi). When the West did respond, its efforts ended up either hurting the victimized population or, at the very least, not helping them. For instance, the Croats were harmed in their efforts to defend themselves when, in September 1991, the West implemented an arms embargo on all republics of Yugoslavia. This denied the severely out-armed Croats the weapons they had been stripped of prior to the war, thus cementing Serbia's immense arms advantage. When an international presence was in place its limited mandate meant it was unable to stop the Serb policy of ethnic cleansing from taking place. Indeed, "EC (the European Community) monitors stood by and counted as the Serbian-dominated army...expelled 10,000 Croats, the entire population of the east Croatian town of Ilok..." (ibid, p. xxvi).

### **Warnings in Bosnia**

The evidence of deliberate ethnic cleansing by Serbian forces in Croatia had obvious implications for Bosnia, where an independence movement was taking place. As the war raged in Croatia, there was already ethnic-related violence occurring in Bosnia, as JNA reservists would harass non-Serbs in the city of Mostar and other parts of the country. “In late 1991, the predominantly Croatian village of Ravno (in Southern Bosnia) was pillaged and burned by JNA reserve soldiers and Serbian irregular troops” (Helsinki Watch, p. 25). After a cease-fire was declared in Croatia in February 1992, the international community placed increased attention on Bosnia, where the Serbian minority in the republic had already declared its own independent republic, and Bosnians had overwhelmingly voted for independence. By April 5, 1992, a day before Bosnia’s independence would be recognized internationally and war would officially break out, Serbian police had opened fire on demonstrators in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo (ibid, p. 29).

Indeed, Western leaders were well aware of the carnage that was about to ensue in Bosnia on the eve of the republic’s independence. By the arrival of April 6, 1992, the day of Bosnian independence, many Serbian militias similar to the ones organized in Croatia had formed in Bosnia with the help of the Serbian republic and the JNA (Sobel and Shiraev, 2003, p. 181). Meanwhile, Serbian militias operating in Croatia had filtered into Bosnia (Cigar, 1995, p. 49). Moreover, leaders of the Bosnian Serb

movement were warning that if the Bosnian Serbs were not allowed to annex portions of Bosnia they felt belonged to the Serbs, then war would commence, and the Muslim community would “disappear from the face of the Earth” (ibid, p. 37). Due to the fact that Bosnia was *the most* ethnically heterogeneous republic of Yugoslavia, with 31 percent of its population Serbian, 17 percent Croatian and 44 percent Bosnian Muslim, the possibility of larger amounts of violence and destruction occurring in Bosnia than had taken place in Croatia seemed almost certain. Indeed, “the war’s viciousness had been forecast so regularly and so vividly as to desensitize U.S. officials. By the time the bloodshed began, U.S. officials were almost *too* prepared: They had been reading warning cables for so long that nothing could surprise them” (emphasis hers) (Power, 2003, p. 253).

Given this awareness, the United States and other governments should have at least had some contingency plan for action to prevent the worst from happening in Bosnia. Serbia, meanwhile, would follow the same plan in Bosnia that had worked so well for it Croatia – releasing propaganda about an oppressed Serbian minority, arming Serbian militias in conjunction with the JNA to protect this minority, disarming the republic, seizing land premeditatedly determined to be part of a Greater Serbia, and subsequently “cleansing” the non-Serb population from that land.

Apparently the 10,000 dead and 700,000 displaced from Croatia was not enough for the U.S. and other governments to take a proactive stance in Bosnia. Instead, while acknowledging Serb aggression in the Croatian conflict (Mestrovic, 1996, p. 38), U.S. officials deliberately chose not to get involved there, shifting the burden of diplomacy onto Europe and intentionally directing debate away from any sort of American intervention (Sobel and Shiraev, 2003, p. 195). Unfortunately for the Bush administration, and the Clinton administration that followed it, the Bosnian conflict would be much longer, much more brutal, and much better documented than the Croatian conflict. The United States, however, would not change its policy, only intervening more than three years after the commencement of war. By this time the Serbs had already “cleansed” the non-Serb population from 70 percent of the newly independent country of Bosnia. The United States and other governments had thus failed in their obligations to the Genocide Convention, one of the hallmarks of the post-World War II era and surely an integral part of the New World Order as described by George Bush following the Gulf War only one year prior.

### **The Bosnian conflict: differences and similarities**

As in Croatia, Serbian forces invaded to “protect the ‘endangered’ Serb minority” in Bosnia once the republic had officially declared its independence on April 6, 1992 (Mestrovic, 1996, p. 35). However, unlike Croatia, Bosnia’s declaration of independence was met immediately with international recognition by many of the major countries of the world –

including the United States – making it harder for Serbia to justify its intervention in what was now a sovereign nation-state, not just a renegade republic. National sovereignty, after all, is one of the cornerstones of international law (Jackson, 2003, p. 277). Western leaders thought that immediate recognition of Bosnia would send a message to Serbia, preventing it from launching an attack similar to the one it had launched on Croatia. However, Milosevic had now learned that the rhetoric of the United States and its allies far outpaced action. Indeed, the condemnations of Serbian aggression by the international community that had marked the Croatian conflict had led to either no action or, at the very least, ineffectual international intervention in the form of sanctions and impotent monitoring patrols. The mere declaration of Bosnia as a member of the international community would not mean the international community would rise to defend it, Milosevic and other Serb leaders thought (Power, 2003, p. 249).

Also working in Milosevic's favor was the international community's continuation of the arms embargo to all republics of Yugoslavia, even after they declared their independence. This froze in place an immense arms advantage for Serbia, as Serbian dominance of the JNA meant it had access to Yugoslavia's impressive arms supply. This would be a key element of the Bosnian war as the Yugoslavian army was one of Europe's biggest, having, "during 45 years of peace...acquired an immense stockpile of conventional weapons to defend against a mythical



Soviet bloc attack” (Gutman, 1993, p. xxiii). Moreover, Bosnia had long been a strategic part of Yugoslavia, serving as a “principal site of federal army bases, munitions plants and vast underground arsenals.” A large amount of weapons was thus available to those advocating for Serbian sovereignty within Bosnia.

To get around the issue of Bosnia’s new internationally recognized sovereignty, when Bosnia declared independence many of the JNA soldiers stationed in Bosnia – soldiers whose numbers had increased as the JNA withdrew from Croatia into Bosnia – simply “changed their shoulder patches and transformed themselves into the *Army of the Serbian republic of Bosnia...This gave the Serb proxy army a ten-to-one margin over the (newly formed Bosnian) government*” (emphasis mine) (ibid, p. xxxiii). Bosnia was also placed at further disadvantage after many Muslims gave up their weapons after assurances from Serb forces that if they disarmed they would not be attacked, “much to their subsequent chagrin” (Cigar, 1995, p. 109). Muslim leaders thus were only able to hope for international intervention to prevent the pending “catastrophe” of “total war” and break up of their country along ethnic lines (Gutman, 1993, p. 8).

So, while the international recognition of Bosnia was supposed to hinder the overt use of the JNA for Serbian territorial gains, it ended up not hindering Serb efforts at all. The real effect of the international community was seen instead in its arms embargo, which left Bosnians

unable to obtain arms and defend themselves and their newly recognized territory, a right guaranteed to all states by the U.N. charter. Just like in Croatia, with well-organized armed forces and an overwhelming arms advantage, Serbian “militias” were able to seize large swathes of territory with ease. Indeed, soon after combat commenced, the “militias” held 70 percent of Bosnian territory, mainly in the northwestern and eastern sections of the country, where there were sizable Serbian minorities. But, since Serbs constituted only 31 percent of the population of Bosnia, and had been living with Bosnian Croats and Muslims for centuries, there was a tremendous amount of variation in the amount of Serbian population in the regions, cities, and even villages of these captured areas. Hence, once the militias assumed control of the territory, the process of ethnic cleansing had to begin with earnest in order to achieve the goal of creating an ethnically pure Greater Serbia. Due to the large area and population that needed to be cleansed, and increased international attention, the events that would unfold in Bosnia over the next three years would be an obvious case of inaction by the U.S. and other government in the face of clear and substantial evidence of genocide (Rieff, 1995, p. 82).

Bosnian Serb leaders, however, would justify their military occupation of Bosnian territory by claiming it was the Muslims who were committing a genocide against the Serbs as well as systematically raping Serbian women. In fact, many of the propagandist claims by the Bosnian Serb leaders, such as these, would end up outlining what the Serbian

militias were doing to the non-Serb population in the Bosnian territories they occupied (Gutman, 1993, p. x). Serbian propaganda, like during the Croatian war, focused on past genocides allegedly perpetrated against the Bosnian Serb population. In this case, the propaganda claimed that the Bosnian Muslims had helped the Ustasa Croatian government in its genocide during World War II (ibid).

In addition to the previously noted dissemination of anti-Islamic writings and declarations by Serbian intellectuals, politicians, and clergy (see above, pp. 12-16), propaganda also abounded surrounding the “historic wrong” perpetrated against the Serbs *in 1389* when the Serbs lost the battle of Kosovo Polje, which ushered in centuries of Ottoman (and thus Muslim) rule. Not only did this misleading propaganda help convince Serbs to fight, but it would also later be used by politicians from the U.S. and other governments to justify not intervening.

Despite claims of injustices taking place against the Serbs in Bosnia, reports, both by non-profit organizations and the media as well as by the U.S. and other governments, would instead outline a *Serbian* policy of execution and rape of non-Serb civilians. These reports would soon add up to publicly prove a systematic effort by the Serbs to commit genocide against Bosnia’s non-Serb population, predominantly the Muslims, but also Croats and other minorities who had for years existed in harmony together in the country of Yugoslavia. The U.S. government’s failure to live up to its international legal obligations under the Genocide

Convention and stop the Serbian-led genocide proved its unwillingness to move beyond strategic national interests, killing the questionable existence of the New World Order mere months after it had been declared by President Bush.

## **II. Knowledge of Bosnian genocide**

### **Public evidence of genocide in Bosnia**

The Genocide Convention calls on states “to prevent and to punish” any attempt of genocide, which is defined as an “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group” (Blaustein et al, 1987, p. 100). Here, Bosnia differed tremendously from Rwanda and other historical cases of genocide, as through the reports by media and non-governmental organizations, there was enough publicly available evidence to deduce that the Serbs were committing genocide against the non-Serb population of Bosnia.

Reports of Serbian ethnic cleansing were widespread from the beginning of the conflict (Sobel and Shiraev, 2003, p. 195), however it was assumed to be similar in nature to those of the Croatian conflict: mass deportations, some executions, but nothing too severe or organized. Except for the occasional news reports about a shelling of Sarajevo, Bosnia’s capital, Bosnia was portrayed publicly as a chaotic civil war, where confusion reigned and it was impossible to determine who was responsible for reported atrocities. By May, however, reports were circulating within the press of summary executions of civilians committed

by Serbian forces (Burns, 1992). The news media picked up these stories about ethnic cleansing and possible genocide in full force in August of 1992. This increase in media coverage was triggered by Roy Gutman's accounts of forced deportations of Bosnian Muslims, which first ran in the newspaper *Newsday* in early July (Sadkovich, 1998, p. 108). The media really began to focus on the possibility of genocide occurring in Bosnia when Gutman published on August 3, 1992 witness's accounts of a Serbian-run concentration camp for Bosnian Muslims. The idea of concentration camps returning to Europe seemed to spark the media's attention, and following Gutman's report newspapers averaged 25 stories a month on Bosnia for the rest of 1992, a jump from April and May averages of 8.5 per month (ibid, p. 108).

Gutman's accounts, which earned him a Pulitzer Prize, outlined in generic terms the Serb policy of ethnic cleansing, which according to extensive interviews with refugees and Bosnian and Serbian officials followed a distinct pattern. Serbs would gain control of a town and then

round up the wealthiest, the most educated, the most successful, and the political and religious leadership. In mostly Muslim eastern Bosnia, Serb paramilitary forces reportedly executed them in their villages. In some conquered areas of Northern Bosnia, they took them to camps where they were executed without judicial proceedings. But in northwestern Bosnia, a mainly Serb area including (the Bosnian town of) Prijedor, there (were) signs of a power struggle between the Serbs long entrenched in power, who favored judicial proceedings, and radicals, who preferred summary executions. The latter group apparently carried the day (Gutman, 1993, p. 110).

Gutman interviewed scores of refugees from the various concentration camps he could verify – Manjaca, Kereterm, and Omarska –

all located in northwestern Bosnia, as well as camps operating in the towns of Bosanski Samac, and Brcko, in northeastern Bosnia. Through refugee account he pieced together patterns of serial beatings, torture and executions. Gutman was only able to visit one concentration camp, Manjaca, where he was under constant armed guard and could not thus directly corroborate witness' stories. However, through his interviews he was able to establish that prisoners at Manjaca would be selected at night by guards and never seen again. Gutman was not able to get to Bosanski Samac, but he did spend a night in Croatia across the river of the border town where he was able to here "the screams and wails of Muslim and Croat women and children detained by Serbians in Bosnia" (ibid, p. 53). Refugees in Bosanski Samac who made it across the river to Slavonski Samac, Croatia, told of trucks driving up to the police station in Bosanski Samac, delivering men who were to be beaten inside by the police. "Much of the treatment seemed to be standardized in camps across northern Bosnia, judging from accounts by former prisoners" (ibid, p. 55).

Gutman interviewed a former prisoner at the Kereterm concentration camp who said he buried Muslims from the camp who had been murdered by Serb guards. Among those buried by the former prisoner were children as young as two (ibid, p. 84). Other prisoners of the camps corroborated the former prisoner's story and estimated that thousands had been murdered there. Prisoners recognized people there from the Bosnian villages of Biscani, Zecovi, Kozarac, and Carakovo, all

in northwest Bosnia, suggesting an organized effort to round up Muslims throughout an occupied territory and send them to local concentration camps. By far the worst camp Gutman described through witness accounts was Omarska, where “more than a thousand Muslim and Croat civilians were held in metal cages without sanitation, adequate food, exercise or access to the outside world” (ibid, 44). Ten to fifteen prisoners would be executed every day, with estimates of more than a thousand executed at Omarska alone. The rest were subject to daily beatings, and thousands more were estimated to have died from these beatings.

All but a few detainees were civilians, mostly draft-age Muslim or Croat men, but there were many men under 18 or over 60, and a small number of women. The United States embassy in Zagreb (the capital of Croatia)...concluded there were massive atrocities occurring at Omarska and other camps in the surrounding towns....’The Nazis had nothing on these guys. I’ve seen report of individual acts of barbarity of a kind that hasn’t come up in State Department cable traffic in 20 years,’ said a top official at the U.S. embassy, who spoke on condition of anonymity (ibid, p. 91).

Some of the ‘individual acts of barbarity’ included reports of children being impaled on spikes, people having electric drills bored through their chests (Gutman, 1993, p. 41), “fathers and sons orally castrating each other and preteen girls raped in front of their parents” (Power, 2003, p. 314). After international outcry following Gutman’s stories on Kereterm and Omarska, Bosnian Serb authorities closed the camps, transferring all prisoners to Trnopolje, another Serb-run concentration camp in northwestern Bosnia. “A large number of detainees, possibly as many as 1,000, seem to have disappeared without a trace when Omarska was closed” (ibid, p. 91). Witnesses said that at the Trnopolje

camp “more than 200...inmates were shot and dumped in a ravine” while Serb security forces escorted other prisoners out of Serbian-controlled Bosnia, dislocating them permanently from their native homelands (ibid, p. 85). Gutman’s accounts of the Brcko concentration camp revealed estimates of 3,000 people executed by either throat slitting or firing squad during a six-week period between early May and mid-June 1992 (ibid, p. 51).

Other journalists were also writing about the Serbian policy of ethnic cleansing. John F. Burns was one of the first to do so when, on May 22, 1992, he wrote in *The New York Times* about reports of summary executions of Muslim refugees by Serb forces in the eastern Bosnian border town of Zvornik. *The Washington Post*, too, was telling similar tales (Battiata, 1992). By August, nearly all media were reporting accounts such as ones in *Newsweek* (Watson, 1992) of summary executions of prisoners, Serb soldiers giving hungry Muslim boys bread sprayed with insecticide, and women being raped then doused with gasoline and set on fire.

Helsinki Watch, meanwhile, released a report in August of 1992, which further highlighted accounts of summary executions of civilians by Serb forces. The executions took place in the village of Zaklopaca, in eastern Bosnia, the Vlasic Plateau in central Bosnia, and the village of Skelani in eastern Bosnia in the municipality of Srebrenica. “The number of abuses was probably much greater than those seen by Helsinki Watch



as Serbian forces and the ferocity of the conflict prevented the organization from having free access to areas within which war crimes were reported to have taken place” (Helsinki Watch, 1992, p. 6). Journalists had similar problems, which subsequently limited their ability to report on claims of civilian executions by Serbian forces (Sadkovich, 1998, p. 112).

In addition to the executions, there were also numerous public reports about other atrocities committed by the Serbs in their policy of ethnic cleansing. One repeated claim was that of the systematic rape of tens of thousands of Bosnian women. Again, Gutman was the first to break this story, this time on August 8, 1992. In a series of stories he detailed the accounts of 40 Bosnian Muslim women who were raped when their town, Brezovo Polje, in northeastern Bosnia, was captured by Serbian forces in the early summer of 1992.

According to the victims, preparations for the mass rape began early on the morning of June 17 when Serb soldiers in army uniforms and masks piled out of their minivans and rounded up the Muslims of Brezovo Polje for ethnic cleansing. They loaded the able-bodied men from 18 to 60 onto buses and sent them (away) for interrogation... Then (the Serb soldiers) packed about 1,000 women, children and old people into eight buses, drove them around the countryside for two days...to the nearby town of Ban Brdo, the victims said. Serb soldiers returning from the front invaded the buses every night and led off women and girls to an unknown location at knifepoint, recalled Senada, 17. ‘They threw them out in the morning and their clothes were torn, and they were covered with blood,’ she said...’The deepest hurt seems to be moral shame. These women were from the countryside where premarital sex is prohibited, said (Dr. Melika) Kreitmayer, (a gynecologist who examined the girls) who confirmed that all but one had been virgins at the time they were raped. ‘Most of them think they have been ruined for life’...The victims say that right now they would like to be anywhere but in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Most say that once they leave here, they do not plan to return ever again (Gutman, 1993, pp. 70-73).

Gutman documented similar cases of rape in Liplje, a village in north central Bosnia of fewer than 500, where “practically every woman was raped,” according to medical examiners (ibid, p. 74). Gutman described more organized forms of rape committed by Serb soldiers, documenting an actual concentration camp of Bosnian Muslim women strictly for raping purposes. His articles focused on the Partizan sports center in the town of Foca, in southeastern Bosnia, where, “for two months in 1992, between June and August, (the sports center) functioned as a rape camp, holding 74 people, including about 60 women” (ibid, p. 157). Three of Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic’s top associates were admitted by Karadzic to be in charge of Foca during this time. Similarly, a *Newsweek* article (Watson, 1992) reported claims of women chained to fences “who were stripped to their waists” with a sign that read “for all use”, as well as reports of Bosnian Muslim sex slaves who were held for months until they became visibly pregnant, at which point they were “set free to ‘have Serbian babies’” (ibid). While each account was told by a refugee and could not be directly confirmed, they would spark government investigations, which would by and large corroborate journalists’ accounts. Indeed, the United Nations in January 1993, released a report that concluded that the Serbs had committed an “organized, systemic policy” of rape in Bosnia (Cushman & Mestrovic, 1996, p. 15). This conclusion alone should have qualified Serb actions in Bosnia as genocidal, as the Genocide Convention defines a genocide as a deliberate

attempt to “prevent births within” another population (Blaustein et al, 1987, p. 100).

Another Serb action of ethnic cleansing commonly described in newspaper and non-governmental account, and thus publicly available, was the policy of forced deportation of non-Serb populations living in Serb-held areas of Bosnia. Again, Gutman led the way on many of these reports, but other journalists also joined him, and after August 1992 reports of these activities, outlawed by the Geneva Conventions, were widespread (Sadkovich, 1998, p. 108).

Examples of such practices might start small, such as in cases in northwestern Bosnia where local Serb governments would issue orders that placed non-Serbs in inferior positions. For instance, in the town of Celinac, near Banja Luka, Bosnia’s second largest city,

the Serb ‘war presidency’ issued a directive giving all non-Serbs ‘special status.’ Because of ‘military actions,’ a curfew was imposed from 4 p.m. to 6 a.m. Non-Serbs were forbidden to: meet in cafes, restaurants, or other public places; bathe or swim in the Vrbaniya or Josavka Rivers; hunt or fish; move to another town without authorization; carry a weapon; drive or travel by car; gather in groups of more than three men; contact relatives outside Celinac (all household visits (had to be) reported); use means of communication other than the post office phone; wear uniforms: military, police or forest guard; sell real estate or exchange homes without approval... (In other cases) a Serb radio broadcast would inform the citizenry that a local factory had introduced a quota to limit the number of Muslims or Croat employees to 1 percent of the overall workforce (Power, 2003, 250).

In Banja Luka itself, the Serbs took control of the locally elected government and then put a crisis committee in its place, which fired non-Serbs from important managerial and senior positions within local government and companies. “The only non-Serbs in Banja Luka whose

earnings were unaffected by the committee's actions were those who had not risen above menial employment" (Rieff, 1995, p. 84).

Other towns and villages outside the northwest of Bosnia faced more severe tactics. In a similar pattern executed time and again "paramilitary or JNA troops were bussed into a certain city, surrounding it" (Helsinki Watch, 1992, pp. 50-62). Serbian villagers would then evacuate, Serbian forces would then shell the town, and then either invade it (*ibid*), or siege it until the population was starved off (Cigar, 1995, p. 56).

In the end, once a town was under Serbian control, either through civilian or military means, a similar end result would follow including some or all of the following consequences as described by numerous sources that were publicly available in 1992: summary executions and village burning (*ibid*), including the estimated 3,000 non-Serbs killed in the town of Kozarac in northwestern Bosnia; civilians driven at gunpoint out of villages and towns to trains for mass deportations out of Serbian-controlled Bosnia (Gutman, 1993, p. 38); separation and/or deportation, with Muslim men going to concentration camps, women going to rape camps, and all other women, children, and elderly being transported out of Serbian-controlled Bosnia (*ibid*, p. 49); and the holding of non-Serbs civilians in their towns to be used as bargaining chips for Serbian prisoners of war (Helsinki Watch, 1992, p. 69).

Often times deportation would be on sealed boxcar trains (reminiscent of the Holocaust) that would carry thousands of non-Serbs

out of Serb-held territory in Bosnia (Gutman, 1993, p. 49). In many cases, Serbs would force the non-Serbs to sign documents saying that they had been treated well and were willingly leaving their homelands (ibid, p. 25). Once this procedure had been established and was known, Serb efforts would often times not be needed as Muslims would flee on their own accord prior to Serb invasion, fearing the consequences of staying behind (Battiat, 1992).

With these practices in place, it is no wonder that, during the course of the war, over 2,000,000 people were displaced, nearly half of Bosnia's population, with an estimated 628,000 displaced by mid-1992 (Helsinki Watch, 1992, p. 141). This was the goal, not consequence, of Serbian action. The ultimate goal of the Serbs was, apparently to repopulate the 'ghost towns' of ethnically cleansed portions of Bosnia (Burns, 1992). A short list of such towns and areas included in the media and non-governmental reports listed above, and thus publicly available in 1992, includes: Prijedor, Kozarac, and Banja Luka, in northwestern Bosnia, Sarajevo, the Drina River Valley, Zvornik, Bratunac, Vlasenica, and Visegrad in central and eastern Bosnia, Bijeljina, Kozluk, in northeastern Bosnia, Mostar, and Foca in southern Bosnia, and the list goes on and on.

With the descriptions above, this would most likely qualify as a policy of genocide, as the Genocide convention defines a genocide, among other qualifications, as "causing serious bodily or mental harm to

members of' another group of people, and "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part" (Blaustein et al, 1987, p. 100). Forced removal of non-Serb population from their jobs and their homelands could probably be described as serious bodily or mental harm to members of Bosnia's non-Serb population, and could at least plausibly be seen as part of a deliberate scheme by the Serbs to bring about the physical destruction of the Bosnia's non-Serb population.

While this process of summary executions, rape, and displacement was taking place, Serb troops would also destroy any evidence of sometimes centuries of non-Serb existence, which could likewise be seen as an attempt to aid in the physical destruction of Bosnia's non-Serb population. This policy, too, could be gleaned from publicly available reports having to do with Bosnia in 1992 and 1993. For example, in and around Foca, Serbs forces destroyed all fourteen mosques in the town, some which were over five centuries old, including the oldest mosque in Bosnia (Gutman, 1993, p. 24, 160); in Kozarac, the town was surrounded by Serb artillery and completely destroyed (Battiata, 1992); in Sarajevo, Serb artillery badly damaged mosques there, as well as city hall and the national library (Gutman, 1993, p. 79); over the course of 1993, 200 out of 202 mosques and 96 percent of all Catholic churches (the Croats being predominantly Catholic) in Banja Luka were destroyed by Serbs. By the beginning of September 1992, Bosnian officials estimated that the

majority of mosques in Serb-held areas were destroyed, having been leveled and their rubble removed (Gutman, 1993, p. 83).

Indeed...churches and cultural monuments were the constant and cynical targets of the Serbs. Four hundred Croatian churches have been destroyed (wrote Georgie Anne Geyer, in a October 21, 1992 column); the Serb gunmen have consistently used UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) flags, supposedly protecting historic monuments, as markers to destroy those monuments. Over and over in the smitten cities, the gunmen would hit a church steeple with artillery, and journalist at the scene could hear the 'yea, yea' in the background... (Mestrovic, 1997, p. 81).

These policies of murder, rape, forced deportations, and cultural destruction by the Serbs were so pervasive that many in the media concluded that they had to be organized and deliberate. Media reports described "Serbs working from an ethnic map" with the overall goal of creating "corridors" that would connect Serbia with Serb-held territories in Croatia seized during the previous war there (Burns, 1992). These "corridors" would consist of half to two-thirds of Bosnia, according to maps produced by Serbian officials (Gutman, 1993, p. 9).

Most importantly was that, unlike in Rwanda and other cases of genocide in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, outside observers had been in Bosnia to document these actions and bring it back to the United States for public consumption.

In contrast to a previous age, Western observers have been literally bombarded with information about the most recent wave of genocide in Europe. Atrocities have been recorded in sound bytes of human history for all to see...In executing a policy of genocide, the Serbs' methods are a matter of public record: deportation, torture, mutilations, death camps, rape/death camps, and mass executions...While...genocide is tragic, some can always say in self-defense that 'we did not know.'...One thing is certain: the butchering of innocent people in Bosnia has gone on under the watchful gaze of the West. *This time, we know* (emphasis theirs) (Cushman & Mestrovic, 1996, pp. 6, 7, 10).

However, despite the preponderance of evidence publicly available, there was no intervention in Bosnia for over three years. To counter the publicly available information that pointed to genocide in Bosnia, the U.S. and other governments came up with excuses to rule out intervention and the enforcement of the Genocide Convention. These excuses, as will be demonstrated later on, placated the American public. At the very least, claims of “if only we knew” and “never again” would ring hollow in Bosnia, as the information on the public record in 1992 and 1993 clearly points to a policy of Serb-led genocide. However, often times media reports, which are largely based on the second-hand accounts of survivors, are deemed hard-to-believe and possibly made up (Power, 2003, p. 95). However, the majority of the claims in the publicly available information – claims of executions, rape, forced migration, and cultural destruction perpetrated by Serbs against Bosnia’s non-Serb population – would be confirmed by public and private reports by the U.S. and other governments, as will be demonstrated in the next section of this paper. This helps reinforce the conclusion that the U.S. and other governments refused to live up to the normative codes of international law and the “New World Order” during the Bosnian war.

#### **What the U.S. (and other) governments knew**

Over the three-year course of the war, the U.S. and other governments would conclude privately and declare publicly that a Serb-



led policy of aggression, atrocity, and, finally, genocide, was taking place against the non-Serb population in Bosnia.

International government attention had been focused on Yugoslavia since the start of the Croatian war, and by September 1991, an arms embargo was in place covering the entire country, including the breakaway republics (Cushman and Mestrovic, 1996, p. 4). While a diplomatic measure only, this did have grave effects on the situation in Bosnia. As stated above, the arms embargo froze in place a tremendous weapons advantage for Serbian forces at the expense of the disarmed, succeeding republics.

Troop deployment by the international government started formally in Yugoslavia on February 21, 1992, with Security Council resolution 743 calling for the creation of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), to be deployed to Croatia to monitor the ceasefire there and protect the minority Serbs. In April, when hostilities started in Bosnia, the U.N. deployed a small force to the area. Also in April, when Bosnia declared its independence, the United States and European allies officially recognized it as an independent country, with the apparent aim of staving off a Serbian-led invasion against a sovereign state, something forbidden in international law (Power, 2003, p. 249). Again, as shown above, Serbia got around this by having its troops simply switch uniforms or the patches on their uniforms to become either Serbian militias or Bosnian Serb troops, ostensibly to create the image of a civil war as

opposed to a “war of aggression”, which would be internationally condemned (Gutman, 1993, p. xxxiii; Helsinki Watch, 1992; Cigar, 1995).

Thus, as the war commenced in Bosnia, the international community was largely involved, and had a physical presence in the newly independent country. Indeed, the U.S. government had been watching closely as events surrounding the Bosnian war commenced, and officials with the government were well aware of the Serb policy of ethnic cleansing and the ferocity that the coming Bosnian war would entail (Power, 2003, p. 253). Indeed, only a week into the war, on April 14, 1992, an information memo sent through the State Department to Bush’s Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger (who would become Secretary of State that December) bluntly described Serbian war aims as the partitioning of Bosnia. “The clear intent of Serbian use of force is to displace non-Serbs” the memo stated “forcibly partitioning [Bosnia] and effecting large forced population transfers...from mixed areas (including areas where Serbs are a minority) to consolidate Bosnian Serb claims to some 60% of Bosnian territory...in a manner which would create a ‘Serbian Bosnia’” (ibid, p. 264).

This analysis, sent directly to the second in command at the State Department should have been enough to tip the U.S. government about the possibility of genocide taking place in Bosnia. However, as the document stated, the expectation was for “large forced population transfers”, not

genocide. While some may argue that forced population transfers are policies of genocide, others may not consider these actions genocidal or a situation where governments should be *required* to intervene under the Genocide Convention. However, the State Department did have its eye on the situation, and it came to the same conclusion that Helsinki Watch had about the Serb policy of ethnic cleansing. Indeed, in the beginning of the war, the U.S. government had already determined that Serbs military actions would follow a similar pattern, unleashing an artillery attack upon a village first, then an infantry assault by paramilitaries. Once a village was subdued militarily, “a cadre of paramilitaries and regulars stayed to ‘mop up’”, looting valuables, shooting livestock, and blowing up houses. Armed soldiers were killed, unarmed men were rounded up and deported, women and children sent into the countryside. The same pattern followed in all the villages the Serb forces invaded, in Brcko in northern Bosnia, Zvornik in eastern Bosnia, and Prijedor in northwestern Bosnia (ibid, p. 266). According to Jon Western, the State Department official in charge of compiling and analyzing intelligence from the Bosnian conflict:

We could see the attacks coming by watching our computer terminal screens, by scanning the satellite imagery, or often just by watching television. We knew exactly what the Bosnian Serbs were going to do next, and there was nothing we could do. Imagine you could say, ‘In two days this village is going to die,’ and there was nothing you could do about it. You just sat there, waited for it to happen and dutifully reported it up the chain’ (266).

By late May, officers with the State Department were investigating refugee claims of systematic executions and rapes by Serb forces against non-Serb populations. The officers pored over nearly one thousand daily

documents churned out on Bosnia by open sources – media, human rights organizations – as well as classified sources – field reporting, satellite images, “refugee testimony, and telephone and radio intercepts” (ibid, p. 264). By July 4, 1992, the officers were able to conclude that the complete destruction of non-Serb life – the capture of non-Serb soldiers and male civilians, the forced exodus of non-Serb women and children, the destruction of non-Serb property – in essence the Serbian policy of ethnic cleansing – had, in all likelihood been “planned and coordinated” by Serb forces (ibid, p. 266). Thus, the U.S. government, by early July 1992, had determined that, in all likelihood, there was a genocide taking place in Bosnia.

Also by July 1992, the U.S. State Department had determined the existence in Bosnia of what looked like Serb-run concentration camps for non-Serb populations, reports of which would be revealed publicly more than a month later (Power, 2003, p. 266). Despite these reports, and the conclusion that a Serb-led genocide was taking place in Bosnia by officers with the State Department, the U.S. government took no action; State Department officials had to wait for the media to pick up the stories they already knew about – of the complete destruction of non-Serb villages, of concentration camps for soldiers and civilians alike – for reaction to take place (Kenney, 1992).

Inaction in the face of knowledge was not solely U.S. policy. The United Nations also knew about Serb-run concentration camps by July 3,

1992, a full month before their existence would be exposed publicly. Moreover, in a memorandum dated July 1, 1992, from Bosnia the United Nations explained the Serb policy of ethnic cleansing by detailing the targeting of Muslim groups for transport to concentration camps and prisons in order to “establish a Serbian republic...free of Muslims...The treatment of Muslims and other minorities in the camp is reportedly atrocious, with regular beatings, deprivation of food and water, poor shelter, etc” (Helsinki Watch, 1992, p. 229).

When the knowledge of the camps became public, international leaders finally stood tough and demanded access to the camps for monitoring purposes. However, following their public revelation, the camps were closed or moved, their inhabitants either transferred to other camps, or simply disappeared (Gutman, 1993, p. 87). Once media and international monitors gained access to the camps, the Serbs had moved all prisoners out and installed beds and facilities to make it look as though it were a usual detention facility for prisoners, not the focal points of Nazi-like extermination centers that both media reports claimed, and government reports would later acknowledge (Honig and Both, 1996, p. 77).

Through public condemnation and warnings along the lines of “we will not rest until the international community has gained access to any and all detention camps”, by President Bush, the United States showed the influence it could have on the conflict in Bosnia. These declarations had

closed the most egregious of the Serb-run concentration camps. The U.S. and its allies had also shown their influence in other areas, as threats of intervention were followed by Serb cooperation with international humanitarian relief efforts (Helsinki Watch, 1992, p. 193). Yet following the focused diplomatic attention on the concentration camps, time would pass, U.S. attention would shift elsewhere, and the Serbs would continue their operation of concentration camps in other parts of Bosnia. Indeed, the continued existence of Serb-run concentration camps was widely known by the U.S. government, which, “within six weeks of Bush’s pledge...had compiled a list of more than 200 camps (that were still operating)” (Power, 2003, p. 281).

Reports of genocide, however, would largely come from the media and non-governmental organizations such as Helsinki Watch. Besides the detailed accounts already described of execution of civilians, blockage of humanitarian aid, and other war crimes committed by Serb forces, Helsinki Watch declared in its August 1992 report that the “most egregious and overwhelming number of violations of the rules of war” were “committed by Serbian forces” (Helsinki Watch, 6). The report outlined the use of indiscriminate bombing, shelling, and attacking of unarmed Bosnian towns, cities, and villages by Bosnian Serbs with the goal of terrorizing and inducing the flight or surrender of the Bosnian population (ibid, p. 12). The report described the deliberate bombing of non-Serbian cultural monuments by Serb forces. The report also recorded

the orders of head Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic to bomb residential areas in Sarajevo and “burn it all” (ibid, pp. 107-110). This led the organization to conclude its report with the declaration that genocide was occurring in Bosnia, and that it was being committed by Serb forces.

On August 25, 1992, George Kenney, desk officer in the State Department who was in charge of the Bush administration’s public statements about Bosnia resigned in protest of Bush’s policies in Bosnia. He was the first of three other State Department officers to resign over U.S. policy in Bosnia over the course of the next 12 months. “It was the largest wave of resignations in State Department history. Each officer left due to what they felt was the “timid” U.S. policy in the face of clear “aggression and genocide” caused by the Serbs (Power, 2003, p. 315). Writing later about his decision to resign in the November 1992 issue of *Washington Monthly*, Kenney said officials within the State Department were not even investigating reports of war crimes due to pressure from officials higher up in the hierarchy to avoid any presentation of evidence that would lead to an increased probability of U.S. intervention. “A defeatist mentality pervaded the State Department to the lowest ranks; the ethos was that because we can’t get involved, we won’t get involved” (Kenney, 1992).

Despite its initial reticence, “by the end of 1992 the State Department, from its own interviews, no longer doubted that Serbs and to a much lesser extent Croats and Muslims had carried out massive

atrocities” in Bosnia (Gutman, 1993, p. xxxvi). This led to the public declaration by then-Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger of seven Bosnian Serbs as potential war criminals, including head Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic and Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic. In November 1992, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who was appointed in 1992 by the UN Human Rights Commission to investigate the allegations of massive human rights abuse concluded: “The collected evidence leaves no doubt as to who is responsible for the horror: the Serbian political and military leaders in Bosnia-Herzegovina, supported by authorities of the Serbian Republic” (Cushman and Mestrovic, 1996, p. 45). Yet despite their status as potential war criminals, Karadzic and Mladic would continue on for the next three years as head negotiators with the international community at peace and ceasefire agreements.

As the war staggered on into 1993, and the Serbs continued to cleanse occupied territories of non-Serb population, more and more reports of a probable genocide, this time from official government reports, began to be made public. In January 1993, the U.S. government released a report to the United Nations concluding that 80 to 90 percent of the war crimes committed in Bosnia were being committed by Serb forces (Cushman and Mestrovic, 1996, p. 15). Government interviewers tasked with investigating claims of executions in the Serb-run concentration camps concluded that as many as 5,000 men were slaughtered at one site alone; more than 70,000 civilians were still being illegally held (Gutman,



1993, p. 139). In January 1993, the European Community released a report concluding that at least 20,000 Muslim women had been raped in 1992, with some of the rapes occurring in special Serb-run detention centers set up for the women (Gutman, 1993, p. 146).

On February 22, 1993, the UN Security Council authorized a tribunal to investigate allegations of war crimes in Bosnia, the first such international tribunal since the Nuremberg Tribunal following World War II. In April 1993, the International Court of Justice in The Hague demanded Serbia take measure to “prevent genocide” from taking place in Bosnia (Mestrovic, 1996, p. 4). “As of June 1993, the U.S. Department of State had submitted to the United Nations eight reports on atrocities and war crimes in former Yugoslavia...[and] 88% were attributable to Serbs, 7% to Bosnian Muslims, and 5% to Croats...” (Mestrovic, 1996, p. 7).

Due to these reports, Warren Christopher, the new secretary of state under Bill Clinton, came under increased pressure by the media and Congressional leaders to declare whether the Commander-in-Chief believed that genocide, as opposed to just war crimes, was taking place in Bosnia. Publicly, Christopher continued to dance around such a declaration, claiming acts “tantamount to genocide” were taking place (Power, 2003, p. 319). However, privately, Christopher had received a memorandum from Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research Toby Gati, which declared that the Serbs had violated the Genocide Convention by “killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm,

inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction, (and) imposing measures to prevent birth...against Bosnia's Muslims (simply) because they were Muslims" (ibid). Public declarations by Serb leaders and soldiers, expressing intent to eradicate Muslims and create an ethnically homogeneous state, plus the systematic pattern of the violations occurring in *Serb*-held areas of Bosnia, led Gati to conclude that the Serbs had undertaken such actions "with the intent of destroying the Muslim group". Thus, by the middle of 1993, the United States had again privately declared that a genocide, perpetuated by the Serbs, was taking place in Bosnia, although this time the declarations were emanating from diplomats at the highest levels of governance (ibid).

More evidence of official government knowledge of the genocide in Bosnia continued to be made public both before, and after, the middle of 1993 when Secretary of State was told that genocide was in fact occurring. A series of reports issued by the European Community from February 1993 to April 1994 documented the destruction of 200 out of 202 mosques and 96 percent of Catholic churches in Serb-controlled areas of Banja Luka, in northwestern Bosnia. Many of the mosques dated from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Cushman and Mestrovic, 1996, p. 47).

In May of 1994, a U.N. Commission issued a report that concluded the majority of concentration camps in Bosnia were instruments of the Serb "policy of 'ethnic purification' through terror, rape, and slaughter"

(Cushman and Mestrovic, 1996, p. 53). While Croatian and Bosnian forces also operated camps, “no policy or pattern of wrongdoing could be identified in the detention camps” operated by them, the commission’s report said (ibid). The report offered continued confirmation of Serb war policy to conquer a town militarily, and then round up the population en masse and interrogate them in a process that entailed “rape, other torture, and slaughter...Men between the ages of sixteen (or younger) and sixty were separated from older men, women, and children. These men, considered of military age, were transferred to larger, more heavily guarded camps, where tortures and murders were the rule”, the report concluded (Cushman and Mestrovic, 1996, p. 53). The U.N. report stated that the goal of the Serb-run concentration camps seemed “to have been to eliminate the non-Serbian leadership, political leaders, officials from the courts and administration, academics and other intellectuals, religious leaders, key business people and artists – the backbone of the Muslim and Croatian communities”; these groups were targeted “for destruction”, the report said (Honig and Both, 1996, p. 77).

A UN report on rape in the Bosnian conflict in March of 1995 found that “Serb atrocities strongly suggest a systematic rape and sexual policy against Muslim women” (Mestrovic, 1996, p. 7). In March 1995, Warren Zimmerman, the last U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia prior its breakup called Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic an “architect of massacres in the Muslim villages, ethnic cleansing, and artillery attacks on

civilian populations....He invited comparison with a monster from another generation, Heinrich Himmler” (ibid, p. 169).

In March 1995, the only real *public* declaration of genocide taking place in Bosnia by the U.S. government occurred when a classified CIA report was leaked to *The New York Times* that stated that “the Central Intelligence Agency has concluded that 90 percent of the acts of "ethnic cleansing" were carried out by Serbs and that leading Serbian politicians almost certainly played a role in the crimes (Mestrovic, 1997, p. 148). “The C.I.A. report, based on aerial photography and what one senior official called ‘an enormous amount of precise technical analysis,’ also concludes that while war crimes were by no means committed exclusively by Serbs, they (the Serbs) were the only party involved in a *systematic* attempt to eliminate all traces of other ethnic groups from their territory” (emphasis mine) (ibid). The C.I.A. officials concluded that the contents of the comprehensive review of war crimes by the agency led them to conclude “virtually conclusively that Serbian leaders could be indicted” on charges of genocide (ibid). In April 1995, the International War Crimes Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia formally indicted Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic and Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic as war criminals who orchestrated genocide in Bosnia (Cushman and Mestrovic, 1996, p. 20).

Thus, high-ranking officials in the U.S. and other governments had reached the conclusion– both confidentially, and publicly – that the Serbs

had committed a systematic and organized policy of genocide in Bosnia. However, despite U.S. pledges to a “New World Order” and the Genocide Convention, that there was no forceful intervention during the first three years of the Bosnian conflict. The U.S. and other governments’ continued refusal to intervene and halt the genocide demonstrated how Bush’s supposed New World Order applied only to specific, probably oil-filled, parts of the world.

### **III. Nonintervention**

#### **The non-forceful interventions of the U.S. and other governments**

For nearly three years, the U.S. and other governments would pursue a strict policy of nonintervention in Bosnia, avoiding any forceful military deployment or action that would benefit one faction over the other. This despite the fact that the U.S. and other governments had publicly and privately declared that the Serbs were committing a genocide against the non-Serb population in Bosnia.

From the beginning the United States was reticent to respond in Yugoslavia the way it had in the first Persian Gulf War. U.S. diplomatic efforts had been limited when the republics of Slovenia and Croatia broke away from Yugoslavia in 1991, as Secretary of State James Baker called for the territorial unity of Yugoslavia but claimed that the United States had “no dog in this fight” (Mestrovic, 1996, p. 38). The main diplomatic efforts in the Croatian war were instead made by European states through the collective actions of the European Community, which at this time was

strengthening due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the independence of Eastern European countries, and the organization's movements towards unification (Power, 2003, p. 258). As the E.C. diplomatic mission began in Yugoslavia just prior to the war in Croatia, Jacques Poos, one of the diplomats on the mission, proclaimed this to be "Europe's hour" (Usborne, 1991). Europe would remain the main diplomatic player in Bosnia as well, and the E.C.'s efforts in Croatia foreshadowed the nature of its involvement in Bosnia.

In Croatia, the Europeans worked persistently for ceasefires. While they would condemn Serbia as the aggressor, they would *only condemn*, watching as Serbian troops and irregulars seized large portions of Croatian territories (Fisher, 1991). Starting in August of 1991, there would be truce agreements almost monthly, followed by Serbian violations, international condemnations of *Serbian* violations, and the restarting of peace negotiations (ibid; Harden, 1991; Gardner et. al, 1991; Associated Press, 1991). By November 1991 12 ceasefires had been signed, only to be broken immediately afterwards over the five months of war. The best the European Community could offer was tough diplomatic penalties, with economic sanctions and an arms embargo against *all* of Yugoslavia, which included the republic of Croatia as well as Serbia.

This E.C.'s central focus on avoiding intervention while working diplomatically to end the conflict was a pattern that continued into the Bosnian war, even though the community had changed to the European

Union. Before the Bosnian war began, the European Union was negotiating for the ethnic division of Bosnia along the lines of its three ethnicities – Croat, Serb, and Muslim – in order to avoid what many knew was going to be a much bloodier war (Reuter, 1992b). When the war commenced in April after recognition of Bosnian sovereignty by the international community, the European Union once again took the lead in the diplomatic efforts. And, once again, reports abounded of Serbian aggression. The situation, though, was much more dire than it had been in Croatia, as larger areas of land were involved in war, which meant much more conflict and refugees. But the Europeans continued on the same course, negotiating peace agreement after peace agreement that would all consistently be broken by Serbian aggression (Tanner, 1992; Silber, 1992; Jackson, 1992).

The cycle of negotiated and broken ceasefires would continue in Bosnia, but with an increasing number of vows to intervene militarily by the international community. But nothing proposed by the international community would enforce these vows in any real way. Rather, the European Union hoped to coerce the Serbs diplomatically into a ceasefire (Gutman, 1993, p. xxix); this policy of appeasement would continue for more than three years of war. Indeed, “39 ceasefires were signed during the course of the Bosnian war, which Serbia used only to expand the war front, using each cease-fire to reposition troops and artillery for subsequent attacks” (Mestrovic, 1996, p. 42).

This incredible failure of diplomacy – 39 violated ceasefires – cannot be blamed on the innocence of the international community and its relatively new actor to foreign policy, the European Community/Union. Diplomats should have easily recognized the Serb policy of using peace negotiations as “a handy stalling device” for military gains, as it was the same practice the Serbs had used in the Croatian war. Moreover, the practice of using peace negotiation solely as a tool for military purposes was publicly declared by both the president of the Bosnian Serbs, Radovan Karadzic, and the head general of the Bosnian Serb armies, Ratko Mladic. During the war Mladic stated: “In order to succeed, you have to be devious; (you have to) tell (the negotiators) one thing one time, another thing at another time”; Mladic believed this because, as he so eloquently state in 1993: “as long as planet Earth has been in existence, borders between states and peoples have been determined by the shedding of blood and by the cutting off of heads” (Cigar, 1995, p. 184)

Karadzic was even more blunt than Mladic had been by declaring to Bosnian military personnel: “Pay no attention to what we do at the conferences, as all the maps are transient, and only what you hold is eternal. Hold every village of ours, and do not worry” (ibid). And yet these were the people, along with Milosevic, with whom the international community was attempting to negotiate a peace treaty.

The international community would continue to attempt to approach the Serbs diplomatically on Bosnia for more than three years.



Thus, the international community only had diplomatic weapons with which to punish Serb aggression. Early on, the best the European Union could do was threaten to pull its ambassadors out of Belgrade, Serbia's capital, excluding Serbia from diplomatic functions (Traynor and Palmer, 1992). By the end of May 1992, the European Union had pushed through strongly worded sanctions at the Security Council, which in resolution 757 banned all imports and exports, including oil to Serbia (News Services, 1992).

But the European Union was also going to extremes in order to avoid confrontation. The sanctions passed in resolution 757, for instance, involved no enforcement mechanisms, so while "NATO members sent a flotilla of small warships into the Adriatic...its navies only compiled a log as ships docked at the Yugoslav port(s)" (Gutman, 1993, p. xxxiv). Enforcement mechanisms were not added until April 27, 1993, and these were easily bypassed by Serb ships only months afterwards (ibid).

Such diplomatic failures, and the inability of the European Union or the United States to fix them, led the Serbs to believe that no one would stop them militarily. They thus continued their aggressive policy, and ceasefires continued to be violated. The United States and the European Union, unable to stop the war, began to focus instead on the delivery of humanitarian aid for refugees in Bosnia, something they could do without intervening militarily on the side of a particular party in Bosnia. However, as the Serbs continued to attack humanitarian convoys (Helsinki Watch,

pp. 112-121) the international community edged closed to military combat with the Serbs.

Indeed, the Security Council passed resolution 770 on August 13, 1992, which allowed states to use force to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid. The resolution's strong language continued to center on the delivery of humanitarian aid, however, it also made light of the "abuses against civilians imprisoned in camps, prisons and detention centres" (United Nations, 1992). The resolution led to the deployment of an additional 6,000 U.N. peacekeepers to reinforce the 100 already in Bosnia since April (Power, 2003, p. 281). The troops included 1,800 British troops, but no American troops (ibid). Belying the forcefulness of the U.N. resolution – designated as a chapter seven enforcement mission, which allows states and peacekeepers to use military force to carry out the resolution's stated goals – troops were sent with the warning that if they suffered too many casualties they would be called back (Gutman, 1993, p. xxxvii).

Moreover, these troops did not fulfill the resolution's goals. Again, Security Council resolution 770 said U.N. troops could use force, if necessary, to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid. The resolution, if properly enforced, should have brought international troops into conflict with Serb forces, as the Serbs hindered the delivery of humanitarian aid to areas that they had surrounded in order to starve out resistant Bosnian government enclaves such as Sarajevo, Bihac, and Srebrenica (Helsinki

Watch, 1992, p.121). It was clear, for instance, to everyone in the U.S. State Department that the siege of Sarajevo, Bosnia's capital, was a blatant attempt by Serbian troops to cut off humanitarian supplies to that city and starve its population into surrender (Kenney, 1992). Already in August, Helsinki Watch had reported attacks and delays by Serbian troops on tons of medical, humanitarian, and emergency food supplies (pp. 112-121). These attacks would often encourage the threat of force by the international community to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the effectiveness of the mandate of resolution 770 (ibid, p. 192). The Serbian forces, however, would take this into account, and they would halt their "attacks for a couple of weeks, only to have actions recommence a few weeks later" when public pressure had declined and international attention was diverted elsewhere (ibid, p. 193).

The Serbs were thus able to continue to attack and halt the delivery of humanitarian supplies in Bosnia, despite the strongly written resolutions of the U.N. Security Council and publicly available knowledge that the Serbs were breaking these resolutions. The deliberate policy of the United States, and of other governments, of not getting involved forcefully in Bosnia thus trumped its vocal claims to back up the delivery of humanitarian aid by force. Indeed, attacks by Serb forces would continue on humanitarian supplies into 1993 (Reuter, 1992; McKinsey, 1992; Talwar, 1993; Gelb, 1993) with no armed intervention by the international community. Legislation allowing international intervention to deliver

humanitarian aid would not be used, with Clinton deciding instead to airdrop supplies into Bosnia to avoid intervening (ibid, p. xxxviii).

Other efforts of forceful international involvement were equally ineffective. The no-fly zone that the United States and NATO – with the graces of the United Nations – created over Bosnia by the end of 1992 would almost never be enforced. Indeed, U.N. estimates showed that Serbian planes had violated the no-fly zone *4,000* times over the course of the conflict (Mestrovic, 1997, p. 247).

In addition, U.N. troops in Bosnia caught Serbia funneling arms to the Bosnian Serbs in direct violation of the arms embargo. Indeed, U.N. troops reported seeing the “following in transit from Serbia to Bosnia: 512 tanks, 506 armored vehicles, 120 heavy mortars, 130 heavy artillery pieces, 48 rocket batteries, 33 laser-guided missiles, 368 ammunition trucks, 14 artillery ammunition trucks, and 1.9 million gallons of fuel” between October 1994 and July 1995. And this was only “the tip of the iceberg” according to journalists in the area (Mestrovic, 1997, p. 248). Despite such violations, the international community made no seizures of weapons or any other effort to otherwise punish the Serbs.

This policy of deliberate nonintervention was evident, too, in the peace negotiation efforts by the international community. By September 1992, the policy for Bosnia was set, with the European Union’s diplomatic actor Lord David Owen and U.N. envoy Cyrus Vance the main peace negotiators for the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia.

Vance and Owen would only continue the pattern outlined earlier that stressed peace but was not enforced with any actual military engagement to enforce it. Peace would thus prove impossible to achieve, given Serb offensive war plans for a Greater Serbia (Bert, 1997, p. 243).

As the U.S. and European governments had shown a marked resolve to not get involved in any forceful way in Bosnia, Owen and Vance were forced to attempt to reach a compromise that all three ethnic groups in the Bosnian conflict would agree to. As the Serbs were the most powerful of the three groups, the mediators had to cater to their interests, which was the creation of a Greater Serbia. The two negotiators thus set about a negotiating process of ethnic partition of Bosnia that heavily favored the Serbs, giving them control of 60 percent of Bosnia's territory. This despite the fact that the Serbs only constituted 31 percent of the country's population (Cigar, 1995, p. 119).

While some may see Vance and Owen's diplomatic efforts as pragmatic, they seem contrary to the goals of the "New World Order". Indeed, the peace process allowed Bosnian Serb General Mladic and Bosnian Serb President Karadzic – individuals declared possible war criminals by the United States and who would be indicted by a war crimes tribunal for orchestrating genocide – to negotiate, *and* awarded them with territorial concessions.

In the end, after almost a year of negotiation, the Vance-Owen peace deal failed, another example of the Serbs using the international

community as a stalling tactic for its war in Bosnia (ibid, p. 125; Gutman, 1993, p. xxxiv). Other attempts at peace negotiations that came later followed similar lines and ended with similar results: failure and manipulation by the Serbs for their own gain (Cigar, 1995, p. 157). While all this took place over the course of three years of war in Bosnia, the international community did nothing except deliver aid. A notable exception to this is the declaration of Bosnian safe zones, and the intervention that ensued when the Serbs invaded these zones. This exception will be discussed further on in the paper.

Aside from this exception, however, Bosnia proved that the New World Order was not comprehensive in its coverage. The inability of the U.S. and other governments to forcefully punish the Serbs for violating not only Security Council resolutions, but also the Genocide Convention and, thus, the ideals of the New World Order, demonstrated how international leaders could apply the enforcement of the ideals of the New World Order selectively. As will be demonstrated in the next section, because Bosnia did not fall within the direct interests of the U.S. and other governments – as had Iraq had during the Gulf War – government leaders deliberately decided not to make Bosnia an example of where the New World Order needed to stand strong, despite the clear violation of the New World Order’s ideals in the war-torn country.

### **American government and public's reasons for not intervening**

Why did the United States avoid intervening in Bosnia in spite of the preponderance of evidence and recognition that genocide was taking place by Serb forces against the non-Serb population in Bosnia? The main reason was that Bosnia was not important enough politically to the politicians of the U.S. and other governments to merit any form of forceful intervention.

Indeed, Bosnia, and the rest of Yugoslavia, had declined considerably in geopolitical importance following the fall of the Soviet Union (see above, pp. 10-11). Stability in the Balkans was no longer of essential importance now that there was no danger of it turning to Moscow for assistance. The declining nature of Yugoslavia's strategic importance to the West, therefore, split foreign policy specialists in Washington during the Bosnian war. Some believed the United States should not intervene due to the limited strategic importance of Bosnia. Others believed the end of the Cold War would usher in the era of Bush's New World Order where the United States and other countries in the world would intervene whenever "vital interests *or* cherished values were imperiled" (emphasis hers) (Power, 2003, p. 260).

The side of nonintervention won the day, for the most part, in U.S. policy on Bosnia. It did so because Bosnia failed to register as a security interest to the United States. Indeed, following the Vietnam War and the subsequent restructuring of U.S. foreign policy, there emerged a strict set of requirements for U.S. intervention abroad based largely on the

philosophy of *realpolitik*, or solely strategic interests (threats to oil supply, regional stabilization, overriding economic interests, etc) (Power, 2003, pp. 260-262). This policy was seized upon by the Reagan administration and continued by its predecessor George H. W. Bush. While the Bush administration had used New World Order rhetoric in its justification of the Gulf War – relying heavily on the importance of international norms, such as state sovereignty and human rights – in Bosnia, where there were wonton violations of these norms by Serbia, yet U.S. actions were limited. Apparently the violation of these norms, recognized and condemned repeatedly by American political leaders over the three years of war in Bosnia (see above, pp. 10-11), was not enough to merit U.S. intervention (Power, 2003, p. 327; Mestrovic, 1997; Rieff, 1995). While arguments for the importance of enforcing the norms of international law would occasionally percolate both Bush’s and Clinton’s administrations, official policy would never deviate from one of non-intervention until late 1995. This policy of nonintervention happened because, by 1989, the U.S. government’s Bosnian policy was solely a humanitarian one (Sobel and Shiraev, 2003, p. 177). With no large reserves of oil, or other compelling security interest remaining in the former Yugoslavian republic, these humanitarian interests were not enough to lead the Bush administration to believe “that the Balkans held any strategic importance for the United States” (Gutman, 1993, p. 176).



Intervention, thus, was not the priority of the U.S. government. Indeed, there is little evidence the United States, or any nation for that matter, “vigorously petitioned the international community to assemble an intervention force”, as had occurred previously during the Gulf War. Instead, most states “were much more exercised by the need to refrain the United Nations from any further involvement” (Cushman and Mestrovic, 1996, p. 130). The U.S. government was regimented in its decision, with midlevel and junior U.S. officials arguing for increased U.S. efforts in Bosnia, but describing the offices above them as “black holes” within which the reports of atrocities and their rationales for forceful intervention simply disappeared (Power, 2003, p. 269).

This determination, that Bosnia did not qualify as a security interest to the United States, was ultimately a major deciding factor in the U.S.’s deliberate policy of nonintervention during the Bosnian war. Indeed, prior to the Gulf War, the American public showed similar levels of support for military intervention as it did in Bosnia (see below), with only 63 percent of Americans supporting Bush’s decision to go to war (Morin, 1990). Troop deployments to the Gulf, meanwhile, prior to Bush’s public rationalization for war, were met with low levels of American public support, with numbers hovering around 38 percent (Hey, 1990).

Still, the fact that there was no overwhelming domestic political pressure supporting intervention was a major factor in the U.S. government not reversing its policy of nonintervention. Strong domestic

pressure to intervene might have galvanized change in the administrations' policies. This did not come to pass, however, as the end of the Cold War had led to a decline in the importance of all things foreign to the American public. Indeed, "the extensive focus paid to the destruction of the U.S.S.R. by both the Reagan and Bush administration led to a desire by most Americans to focus on domestic issues following Communism's collapse" (Bert, 1997, p. 83). Moreover, "Americans have historically opposed military campaigns abroad except in cases where the United States or its citizens have been attacked...when it has benefited from the 'rally-around-the-flag' effect (Power, 2003, p. 305).

However, media reports of the carnage would help change public opinion, albeit briefly. For instance, following the reports of Serb-run concentration camps in Bosnia by Roy Gutman of *Newsday*, a majority, 53 percent of Americans, supported U.S.-backed air strikes against the Serbs, a rise from 35 percent in a poll administered only three weeks prior, when the presence of such camps was not known publicly (Watson, 1992). Meanwhile, only 33 percent opposed the strikes, down from 45 percent in the comparison of the same polls. Indeed, George Kenney, the State Department officer who resigned in August 1992 due to his objection to the U.S. policy on Bosnia, said the State Department was "nudged by journalists" and that their "policy was media-driven," as the State Department would only respond to media reports, not actively seeking – and often ignoring – its own information (1992). However, coverage of

the war's atrocities was not always constant and overwhelming, and there was a lot of confusing information about what was actually happening in Bosnia (Sadkovic, 1998). Plus, the attention of Americans was truly focused on domestic issues as, by January 1993, only one percent of Americans believed that Bosnia was the most important issue in American politics (Sobel and Shiraev, 2003, p. 146).

All these factors considered, support by the American public for U.S. intervention would remain fairly constant throughout the war, with a slight majority of Americans supporting a U.S. troop presence in multilateral humanitarian and peacekeeping activities. For instance, in January 1993, 58 percent of Americans believed military forces should be used to protect humanitarian relief and prevent atrocities (ibid, p. 182). In August 1993, and continuing to April 1994, 61 percent of Americans would approve of air strikes against the Serbs. This majority of support disappeared if the United States would act unilaterally (ibid, pp. 180-193).

Domestic support of U.S. military operations in Bosnia would ebb and flow during the course of the war. For instance, support for a U.S. troop presence with U.N. peacekeepers was very high, at 80 percent in July 1992, when the conflict was at a pitch. Support peaked at times of particularly intense media coverage of atrocities, as in February 1994, when a Serbian artillery shell exploded in a marketplace in Sarajevo, killing 68 people and injuring more than 200. The attack was broadcast extensively in the United States, something peculiar to the reporters

stationed in Bosnia, as reports of civilian deaths in Sarajevo due to Serbian shelling were frequent (Rieff, 1995, p. 18). The extensive coverage, however, galvanized public support for U.S. intervention, with 75 percent favoring U.S. involvement with U.N. peacekeepers at that time. This surge in support would push Clinton to urge NATO to enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnian airspace, and in May 1994, NATO jets shot down four Serb planes (Sobel and Shiraev, 2003, pp. 188, 189). However, media coverage of Bosnia soon died down as the Serbs – following their well-established policies – halted attacks on Sarajevo until international pressure subsided (ibid). Soon thereafter, NATO enforcement of the no-fly zone would return to its non-existent nature (Mestrovic, 1997, p. 236).

The somewhat tepid support for multilateral U.S. actions, and lack of support for unilateral U.S. action, led George Bush to conclude that domestic support for U.S. intervention in Bosnia was based entirely on humanitarian reasons, which could evaporate the moment things went bad. Following the regulations for American intervention outlined under the Reagan administration, Bush determined that, with no strategic U.S. interest threatened, no American intervention should occur. Thus, despite consistent majority support by the American population for a U.S. presence in multilateral military efforts, no American troops appeared in any of the U.N. forces deployed in 1992 and early 1993, when Bush's term as president expired (Sobel and Shiraev, 2003, pp. 194-211).

Clinton, meanwhile, although stressing domestic issues during his campaign, used Bush's weak stance in Bosnia against him to gain political advantages during his election campaign in 1992 (ibid, p. 228). However, Clinton, once in office, would commit no U.S. troops to U.N. efforts in Bosnia, and repeatedly proclaimed Bosnia a European affair to be dealt with by Europeans (Power, 2003, p. 259). With only other countries' troops on the ground, Clinton was in a precarious position to escalate multilateral efforts in Bosnia (Sobel and Shiraev, 2003, pp. 186, 210). But, despite the inertia on nonintervention it inherited in Bosnia, the Clinton administration did have several opportunities to reevaluate the U.S.'s policy in Bosnia, and it could have deployed American troops to Bosnia on numerous occasions. It chose not to. The Clinton administration had reached a similar conclusion as Bush had previously, and it chose to embrace Bush's position of non-intervention for two-and-a-half years. According to Clinton, "the conventional political wisdom" was that there was "no upside and tons of downside" when considering whether to intervene (ibid, p. 218). Thus, due to its lack of strategic importance and inability to garner consistently strong numbers of public support, Bosnia was never able to justify itself as a case for U.S. military intervention.

However, the public's lack of strong, sustained support for intervention could also be justified by the *government's desire to not intervene*. Unlike during the Gulf War, where the U.S. government took charge in advocating for military intervention, not only to the United

Nations but also to the American people, the Bosnian war was met with the opposite: a deliberate policy of misinforming the American people with misleading rationales for not intervening. This fact is bluntly demonstrated in the next section of this paper as well as in the following: “A...poll (administered during the war) showed that while 54 percent of Americans favored military intervention in Bosnia, but that figure rose to *80 percent* when those surveyed were told that an independent commission had found genocide under way” in Bosnia (ibid, p. 289). The fact that the U.S. government had privately concluded that a genocide was occurring in Bosnia, and that reports by independent commissions *were*, in fact, reaching such conclusions, means that one of the main reasons why there was not strong public support for intervention was the U.S. government’s failure to inform the public clearly of the nature of the conflict. Had the U.S. government proclaimed that it was intervening in Bosnia to prevent genocide, a claim that could have easily been made in 1992 and 1993, it would have enjoyed levels of public support far larger than it had prior to the Gulf War (Morin, 1990).

Indeed, “in the absence of American leadership, the public is usually ambivalent” about military engagements abroad; and “instead of leading the American people to support humanitarian intervention” in Bosnia, both Bush and Clinton had “adopted a policy of nonconfrontation” (Power, 2003, p. 305). “The administration(s) would not confront the Serbs, and just as fundamentally, they would not confront opponents of

intervention....Thus, the administration('s) language shifted from that of "moral imperative to that of an amoral mess" (ibid). The New World Order was thus not operating effectively.

### **Government rationales for not intervening**

Of course, the U.S. government could not just say it wouldn't intervene in Bosnia because it served no strategic interest. To do so would violate the international norms embodied in the Genocide Convention and contradict U.S. moral and political policy. The U.S. government thus had to remake the Bosnian conflict into a situation that justified its non-intervention, especially as the reports of genocide perpetrated by the Serbs continued to stream in starting in May of 1992 and continuing into 1995. The arguments and actions taken by the U.S. government as well as other Western nations and international institutions to justify non-intervention included: withholding or downplaying information about atrocities and genocide; the idea that the conflict was a civil war, with atrocities committed by all sides, Bosnian Muslims, Bosnian Croats, and *Bosnian Serbs*; the idea that the conflict was the result of eons of ethnic strife between the three ethnic groups who could, thus, simply not live with one another; the idea that any form of Western intervention would be ineffective and would lead to a prolonged conflict that could easily turn into a quagmire for outside forces; and the idea that any escalation of Western intervention would jeopardize humanitarian and peacekeeping efforts.

**Rationale #1: downplaying the conflict**

As the conflict in Bosnia commenced, the United States attempted to limit the public's knowledge of Serbian atrocities against the non-Serb population. While officials high up in the administration knew of Serbia's overall war plans – of removing the non-Serb population from large portions of Bosnian territory – early on in the conflict, they made little to no effort to determine the details of these removal efforts and whether they involved genocidal actions (Power, 2003, p. 264; Mestrovic, 1997, p. 66; Kenney, 1992).

This policy of hear no evil, see no evil, got so bad that in August, as reports of possibly genocidal atrocities by Serb forces were reported in the media, the State Department “no longer believed the reports of starvation *coming from our own embassy in Belgrade*” (Emphasis mine) (Kenney, 1992). Indeed, despite the Bush administration's knowledge of the existence of Serb-run concentration camps for non-Serb civilians in Bosnia, the administration continued to deny existence of the camps, even after their public revelation in the media in early August. Despite the publication of these stories, the administration still waited “until after the first television pictures of emaciated prisoners shocked the world” before addressing the issue publicly (Gutman, 1993, p. xxxi).

Following the deluge of media reports of Serb-led genocide that followed the public revelation of the Serb-run concentration camps, the U.S. government continued to hinder the efforts of official recognition of the Bosnian genocide, withholding information of Serbian atrocities from



the United Nations (Kenney, 1992). Throughout 1993, Clinton's secretary of State would continue to use the phrase that acts "tantamount to genocide" were taking place in Bosnia, thus allowing for condemnation of the actions while at the same time not raising the descriptions of the actions to the level of genocide, where members of the international community would be legally obligated to intervene. This despite the fact that privately, the administration recognized that *genocide*, not acts tantamount to it, was being performed by Serb forces (Power, 2003, p. 319).

**Rationale #2: moral equivalency**

Thus the U.S. government attempted to avoid recognizing atrocities taking place in Bosnia in order to prevent further escalation of international involvement in Bosnia. However, this was a hard claim to stand on because, as early as April of 1992, reports of the worst atrocities and casualty rates seen in Europe since World War II were being thrust onto the front pages of newspapers and magazines, while leading T.V. and radio broadcasts. This would force some sort of response by the U.S. government as to its stance on this violence and what it was prepared to do, if anything, to stop it (Sobel and Shiraev, 2003, p. 195; Gutman, p. xvii). Following the U.S. government's inability to hide the atrocities taking place in Bosnia, it tried to justify them as the result of a civil war that featured atrocities being committed by all sides.

And to some extent, this was true. Reports issued by non-governmental organizations, states and the United Nations, all declared that both Bosnian Croat and Muslim forces, as well as Bosnian Serbs, were responsible for specific, documented cases of war crimes and atrocities (Helsinki Watch, 1992; Cushman and Mestrovic, 1996, p. 15; Gutman, 1993, p. 146; Mestrovic, 1996, p. 7). Politicians would use these reports of Muslim and Croat atrocities to claim that all sides were equally guilty and that there was, thus, no side on whose behalf to intervene (Power, 2003, p. 308). Canadian Major-General Lewis MacKenzie, who was chief of staff of the U.N. mission in Bosnia from March to August of 1992, was one of the major proponents of this point of view, even going on a speaking tour where he declared: “Dealing with Bosnia is a little bit like dealing with three serial killers—one has killed 15, one has killed 10, one has killed five” (Gutman, 1993, p. 169). Warren Christopher, Clinton’s secretary of state, would make similar claims, as well as Lord David Owen, one of two chief peace negotiators in Bosnia for the international community (Cigar, 1995, p. 121). Cases of Muslim and Croat abuse were also detailed in major media outlets, including *The New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, the *New Republic*, *Newsweek*, among others, and was used to justify moral equivalency among all parties in Bosnia (Sadkovich, 1998, p. 126). Indeed, “much of the mainstream media have been quick to use any act of violence on the part of Croats or Muslims as a

pretext for morally equating all sides” (Cushman and Mestrovic, 1996, p. 17).

However, claims of *moral equivalency* between Serb atrocities and those committed by the Muslims and Croats were simply not true. Indeed, cases of atrocities committed by Muslims and Croats never amounted to more than a combined five, 10, or – at highest estimates – 20 percent of the total reported atrocities and war crimes combined. Serbian forces were thus constantly held responsible for 80 percent, if not more, of the atrocities in Bosnia. Moreover, the reports showed that *only* the Serbs’ atrocities were deliberate, organized, and targeted at a specific group of people, in this case the non-Serbs living in Bosnia. While official reports such as these, which implicated the Serbs as the main perpetrators of atrocities in Bosnia, continued to stream in, U.S. leaders continued to claim moral equivalence among all ethnic groups. And these views continued to be dispersed by the U.S. government even after the leak of a confidential CIA report in March 1995, which concluded that 90 percent of the war crimes were committed by the Serbs, and that only Serb actions were systematic and organized in nature (Cushman and Mestrovic, 1996, p. 10). As *The New York Times* reported in its article about the leak: “the (CIA) report makes nonsense of the view -- now consistently put forward by western European governments and intermittently by the Clinton Administration -- that the Bosnian conflict is a civil war for which guilt should be divided between Serbs, Croats and Muslims” (Cohen, 1995).

While the sheer disproportion of atrocities committed was a good counter-argument to claims of moral equivalence among the ethnic groups in Bosnia, the most important aspect of these reports was the *organized* nature of the atrocities committed by the Serbs. The organized nature of atrocities is essential in determining whether or not the Genocide Convention applies to cases of atrocities of war, as the destruction of an ethnic groups must be done “with *intent* to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group” in order to be defined as genocide (Blaustein et al, 1987, p. 100). Indeed, during World War II

American, British, and Canadian servicemen all committed atrocities. However, the understanding up to now has been that, unlike the Nazis, it was not Western government policy to do so...Moreover, despite the excesses of the Allies at Dresden, Hiroshima, and elsewhere, most intellectuals today are not prepared to say that Nazi German and the Allies were morally equivalent” (Cushman and Mestrovic, 1996, p. 24).

Claims of moral equivalency made by officials with the U.S. and other governments, such as Secretary of State Christopher and lead international negotiator David Owen, were thus misleading at best, untruthful at worst. However baseless the claims, their dispersion by major political figures and members of the media contributed to the confusion surrounding who was at fault for the atrocities being committed in Bosnia, aiding the U.S. government’s policy of nonintervention (Mestrovic, 1997, p. 146).

### **Rationale #3: eons of ethnic strife**

As reports of atrocities in Bosnia continued to indict the Serbs as perpetrators of genocide, other excuses had to be used to justify the U.S.’s

policy of non-intervention. One such excuse was that the violence seen in Bosnia was the result of ancient ethnic hatred between the Serbs, Muslims and Croats of Bosnia. Intervening militarily would thus be pointless, as no military force, no matter how large would be able to permanently stop these races from armed conflict (Watson, 1992).

And indeed, the ethnic groups in Bosnia had a history of violence as the Croatian Ustasa government had exterminated thousands of Serbs and Muslims during World War II, while Serbian forces, too, had executed thousands of Croats and Muslims (Cigar, 1995, p. 107). Serbian propaganda, flaming the idea that Serbs were still upset by their defeat and subsequent rule in 1389 by the Ottoman Empire (Muslims), helped further cement the ideas that there existed in Bosnia historic ethnic hatreds that would be impossible to overcome. Even the region that Yugoslavia sits in, the Balkans, actually serves as the root of a verb, to balkanize, which means to split up “into smaller and often hostile units” (Merriam-Webster’s, 1999, p. 87).

Some U.S. policy elites thus thought that rather than engage in an politically and monetarily costly military intervention, the best route would be to let these the conflict continue and then pick up the pieces once the fighting had stopped (Mestrovic, 1997, p. 127). Others, like President George Bush, his Secretary of States Lawrence Eagleburger and James Baker, and President Bill Clinton and his Secretary of State Warren Christopher, did not swear off Bosnia in such a manner. They did,

however, publicly state that military intervention would not be able to stop the pitched ethnic hatreds that had formed in Bosnia due to centuries of misdeeds (Sobel and Shiraev, 2003, p. 200; Power, 2003, pp. 302, 308). David Owen, co-chief piece negotiator for the international community, repeatedly made similar statements (Cigar, 1995, p. 11; Helsinki Watch, 1992, p. 16).

Yet, these statements overlooked obvious facts. First, Muslims, Croats, and Serbs had lived for nearly 50 years united in the country of Yugoslavia. Indeed, “empirical research in ethnic relations in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina carried out in 1986 and 1989 reveals that ethnic distance and prejudice in these lands were considerably less than in many other multiethnic European nations” (Mestrovic, 1997, p. 147). Second, alliances between all races, Muslim, Croats, and Serbs had risen and fallen over the many centuries these ethnicities had lived in existence with one another. The idea that there were simmering hatreds persistent for centuries thus seems a bit specious (Cigar, 1995, p. 13). Third, peace between the ethnic groups was ruptured only in the late 1980s, as the propaganda of Serbia described above artificially inflamed ethnic hatreds among Serbs to the point where a genocide could take place (ibid). Prior to this, the three ethnicities had lived peacefully in Bosnia for nearly 50 years. It thus seems more likely that relegating the events in Bosnia

to insoluble centuries-old atavistic dilemmas shrouded in the dawn of time implicitly assumes that a solution will always be elusive and that it is pointless to seek one. Although superficially attractive, this idea was

often only a convenient rationalization for shrugging one's shoulders and doing nothing (ibid, p. 13).

This line of reasoning corresponds well with the U.S. and other governments' repeated desire of non-intervention in Bosnia. Even so, the Genocide Convention does not allow for caveats. If a race, in whole, or in part, is being systematically targeted for destruction – as non-governmental organizations, states, and the United Nations had repeatedly concluded was taking place over the three years of Bosnian war – states must do everything they can to stop it. Offering up the rationale of historical ethnic hatred as a reason to not intervene, thus, is flawed.

**Rationale #4: a quagmire**

This idea of irresolvable ethnic hatred, led to another reason offered by the U.S. government to not intervene: that any intervention would be ineffective, as any force would quickly find itself mired in a quagmire among people who could not stop fighting.

Indeed, the Serbs were consistently portrayed as rugged, “valiant guerilla fighters”, based largely on the performance of Serb fighters of WWII, who had run a successful insurgency against Nazi troops for four years (Rieff, 1995). This not only led to the belief that fighting the Serbs would be difficult, but that it would also be immoral, as the Serbs had fought on the Allies side in WWII, while the Croatians and others had collaborated with the Nazis (Rieff, 1995, p. 39; Mestrovic, 1997, pp. 79, 118; Gutman, 1993, p. xxi). Other factors, such as Bosnia's rugged mountain topography, led those in the military, government, and media to

believe that any military intervention by the west would be a prolonged, costly, and potentially disastrous, Vietnam-like engagement.

And this may all be true, except for the part about the valiant Serb guerrilla fighter, as the actions of Serb fighters in World War II had absolutely nothing to do with the fighters in the Bosnian conflict, who were mostly drunken thugs (Mestrovic, 1996, p. 33); many Serbs, too, had in fact collaborated with the Nazis (Gutman, 1993, p. xxi). But the beliefs that a western intervention with ground troops would devolve into a quagmire may have been merited, despite the difference in the Serb fighters of the early 1990s from those of the early 1940s.

However, evidence shows that a ground intervention would not have been needed to repel the Serbs. In fact, Alija Izetbegovic, the Bosnian president, said he would have been satisfied if the West were to simply rescind the arms embargo and allow the Bosnians to defend themselves (Watson, 1992). But an infusion of arms to the Bosnian side may not have immediately turned the tide and stopped the killing. To do this, the U.S. and other governments could have easily ordered air strikes against Serb forces, thus not getting involved in a quagmire as no outside troops would be deployed while still possibly fulfilling its obligations under the Genocide Convention of preventing a genocide taking place.

However, even the prospects of air strikes were deemed too risky by the U.S. government. Members of the Bush administration argued that air strikes may not work in repelling Serb forces, and would thus either



lead to a forced escalation of the conflict to achieve their removal, or an embarrassment to U.S. credibility by starting an intervention and then having to back down, unsuccessfully (Bert, 1997, p. 242).

However, there is little doubt that tactical “bombing of supply depots, artillery, key bridges...and other strategic assets in Bosnian-Serb areas (and) Serbia” early in the war as the Serbs were grabbing the majority of their territory in Bosnia “would have had a big impact on the war” (ibid, 24). Even after the Serbs had seized all the territory and cemented their positions in the Bosnian countryside, the mere threat of Western intervention, even in the limited form of air strikes, would have no doubt hindered the Serb policy of ethnic cleansing and continued warfare. Indeed, “the Serbs have repeatedly backed down when faced with even the remote possibility of Western intervention” (Mestrovic, 1997, p. 236). There are many examples of this. One such example occurred in 1993, when the Clinton administration advocated for the approval of air strikes and the lifting of the arms embargo, compelling Bosnian Serb leaders to immediately agree to a major peace treaty that would have stopped the war. After European countries refused to adopt Clinton’s policy due to their fears of escalation and casualties in regards to their troops on the ground, the Serbs reversed their position, resuming their attacks (ibid). Similarly, following the Serb bombing of a Sarajevo marketplace in February 1994, the West issued an ultimatum to the Serbs to pull back their artillery surrounding Sarajevo or risk air strikes. The

Serbs pulled back their artillery immediately, only to return them a few months later after international scrutiny had passed (Sobel and Shiraev, 2003, p. 215). Likewise, after a July 21, 1994, press conference, in which Secretary of State Warren Christopher stated repeatedly that the U.S. would not intervene to protect an attack on Sarajevo, “the next day the Serbs unleashed the most intense artillery attack of their sixteen-month siege on the capital” (ibid, p. 233).

Air strikes, thus, could have played a large role in stopping the genocide in Bosnia, as the Serbs appeared to be listening to the threats from the U.S. government and other Western leaders. Indeed, following the intense international scrutiny after publication of Serb-run concentration camps, rape camps, and mass executions,

Serb leaders...responded by toning down their tactics. At the very least, they seemed to become more sophisticated and shifted their focus of effort to less dramatic, but probably no less effective, ways to cleanse territory, such as by siege and starvation, having benefited already from the shock value of the initial massive onslaught” (Cigar, 1995, p. 144).

Moreover, some claim that if Western threats of air strikes had been realized, “Serbia’s war effort would have been seriously stunted, its war lobby seriously damaged” (Bert, 1997, p. 241). It would have damaged Serbs’ self-perception of invisibility, showing that mandates would be enforced while damaging a war machine especially susceptible to air strikes due to its heavy reliance on artillery, which could be easily targeted by air planes (Rieff, 1995, pp. 156, 157). Moreover, it would have declaratively stated where Western alliances lay, pushing Croatian forces

from their ambivalent position to the side of the Bosnians (ibid). And it would have, most likely, forced the Serbs to seriously negotiate, consolidating their gains and leading to a “shorter war and more just termination, with fewer victims” (Cigar, 1995, p. 174). While there were some advocates in the U.S. government for the use of air strikes in Bosnia, the option was often never explored as a serious policy option. Indeed, President Bush’s lamented in 1995 that, “the Pentagon never told me that artillery or bombing could do the job; they said it would take 250,000 men on the ground. Sometimes the number soared to 500,000” (Mestrovic, 1997, p. 117).

Instead,

as the war went on, the Bosnian Serbs formed an increasingly more complete view of US will and intentions, and it took stronger threats to get their attention as they constantly validated their assumption that the US was not willing to intervene...The tendency for the US to talk tough but do nothing encouraged the Bosnian Serbs to believe they could make further gains, and paradoxically it encouraged the Bosnians to hope help was on the way” (Bert, 1997, pp. 241, 243).

By refusing to intervene, the international community thus emboldened Serbs’ actions in Bosnia, which would eventually lead to a more prolonged intervention that would cost the international community billions of dollars in relief and mediation effort both during and after the conflict (Mestrovic, 1997, p. 246). The fact that the U.S.’s dominant military was the key to any intervention makes it the most responsible in not intervening to stop the Bosnian genocide (Cigar, 1995, p. 163).

#### **Rationale #5: obstruction of peace and humanitarian aid**

Aside from claims of ineffectiveness, the West also tried to justify not intervening forcefully with missile strikes because such an escalatory policy would sacrifice the humanitarian and peace negotiation efforts taking place in Bosnia.

Indeed, while the international community had experienced difficulty in delivering humanitarian aid, its effort to deliver the aid featured the longest-running humanitarian airlift since the Berlin airlift and was “one of the largest and most heroic humanitarian relief efforts in modern history” (Power, 2003, p. 326; Rieff, 1995, p. 13). However, the opposite had taken place with international efforts to negotiate peace, as Serb aggression and cleansing policies were met with condemnation and threats of intervention, but never actual intervention. Instead, in the end, the Serbs were granted territorial concessions for their condemned actions (Cigar, 1995, p. 125).

The juxtaposition of incredibly noble efforts to deliver humanitarian aid with extremely ignoble peace negotiations showed the true nature of the international community. The purpose of international effort

was not to save Bosnia but, as politicians like to say, ‘to contain the crisis’...the fact that something was being done seemed to serve as a pretext behind which the great powers – aka the international community – could hide. Each time the call for intervention mounted in France, or Britain, or the United States, the government ministers of the countries in question, and, with more authority, representatives of the United Nations, who were perceived as having an objectivity about Bosnia...would quickly insist that the reason no intervention was possible was that it...would compromise the humanitarian effort (Rieff, 1995, pp. 13-15).

Thus, while the U.S. and other governments “often spoke sternly about Serb brutality and criticized European and U.N. peace plans that would have divided Bosnia and ‘rewarded aggression’” they did not intervene and “left the Bosnians to their own meager devices” (Power, 2003, p. 327). The Serbs, meanwhile, figured the “diplomatic and economic jabs” of the international community “were worth enduring if the reward for that endurance was an independent, ethnically pure” Greater Serbia (ibid, p. 263). So, while two U.S. presidential administrations feared getting involved militarily in Bosnia due to their claims that such an intervention would have an ill effect on peace efforts, their policies of nonintervention served to exacerbate the main problem obstructing a peace deal, that of Serb aggression. Indeed, “by ‘hiding behind disaster relief,’ President Bush avoided the issue of the USA helping to disarm the Serbian aggressor” (Mestrovic, 1996, p. 40).

Thus, the five rationales and actions offered by the U.S. and other governments to not intervene in Bosnia seem misleading, and could be seen simply as attempts by the U.S. and other governments not to have to have to intervene in a county that served they had determined served no strategic interest. While these rationales worked for more than three years in keeping the U.S. and other governments from forceful military intervention, as will be seen in the next section of the paper, they would ultimately be dragged into such an intervention. Thus, for three years, the U.S. and other governments spent billions in commitments of

humanitarian aid and military monitoring that ultimately ended up serving to prolong the conflict, allowing the Serbs to continue to practice genocide and create a Greater Serbia in Bosnia (Mestrovic, 1997, p. 246). The ideals of the New World Order outlined in the introduction of this paper were thus quashed in Bosnia.

## **IV. Srebrenica**

### **More of the same and exceptions: safe areas and Srebrenica**

It would take substantial domestic political pressure from the media, Congress, and the American people to get the Clinton administration to change its policies in Bosnia. A major shift in policy – to one where the United States finally lived up to the international legal obligations of the Genocide Convention and the ideals of the New World Order – would only come due to an aberration in the international community’s official policy of deliberate non-intervention. This aberration consisted of the United Nations safe areas, enclaves of Muslim population in Serb-held territories of Bosnia that the international community decided to protect.

Following the rapid invasion of Bosnia by Serb forces that enjoyed a major arms advantage, there still existed five pockets of resistant Bosnian towns and villages that were surrounded by Serb forces (six, if you count Sarajevo, the Bosnian capital). Cut off from reinforcements and supplies, and swollen with non-Serb refugee populations, these enclaves were in desperately poor condition, both militarily and from a

humanitarian standpoint. Already by March 1993, reports were coming out of once such enclave, Srebrenica, of over 30 people dying daily due to their inability to receive supplies (Honig and Both, 1996, p. 85). These reports spurred French General Philippe Morillon, then commander of U.N. forces in Bosnia, to go to Srebrenica personally and bring the world's attention to the city with the hopes of "avoiding another Vukovar" (a Croatian village Serb forces completely destroyed in 1991, executing its inhabitants) (ibid).

At this point, Serb forces had been intensifying their attacks on Srebrenica and the other four enclaves. With the extra media attention brought by Morillon's visit to Srebrenica, as well as governmental condemnations of Serb aggression that had occurred during 1992 and 1993 as government and media reports continued to relay Serb atrocities and probable genocide, the international community finally came to the defense of the Bosnian people, passing U.N. Security Council resolution 819, on April 16, 1993. The resolution declared "Srebrenica and its surroundings as a safe area" (United Nations, 1993, p. 2). Security Council resolution 824 extended this safe area status to the towns of Tuzla, in northeastern Bosnia, Bihac in extreme northwestern Bosnia, and Zepa and Gorazde, which, like Srebrenica, were also in extreme eastern Bosnia. Finally, on June 4, 1993, the Security Council passed resolution 836, which mandated U.N. troops (UNPROFOR) "to deter attacks against the safe areas...and to promote the withdrawal of military or paramilitary

units other than those of the Government of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina” (United Nations, 1993, p. 3). The resolution also authorized UNPROFOR “to take the necessary measures, *including the use of force*, in reply to bombardments against the safe areas...or to armed incursion into them or in the event of any deliberate obstruction in or around those areas to the freedom of movement of UNPROFOR or of protected humanitarian convoys” (emphasis mine) (United Nations, 1993, p. 3). The resolution also gave U.N. member states, acting either alone or through regional organizations (such as NATO), the ability to use air power to enforce these safe area resolutions.

This was a major step for the international community. Prior to the creation of safe areas over 50 Security Council resolutions had been passed on Bosnia. Most of these resolutions had been passed with a focus on the delivery of humanitarian aid. The enforcement of human rights under international law – the Genocide Convention and other major pieces of legislation, such as the Geneva Conventions, among others – had become the lost agenda (Rieff, 1995, p. 164). The creation of these safe areas was thus a major change in policy, a shift towards enforcing the rhetoric of the New World Order. It also demonstrated a break in U.S. and international policy of strict non-involvement, aside from diplomatic condemnations and sanctions. This shift in policy in all likelihood saved the safe areas as many of them, including Srebrenica, had been under Serb attack when the United Nations issued the resolutions. While Serb



leadership assured the United States, and the other countries on the Security Council, that it was not their forces attacking Srebrenica and the other safe areas, this claim of denial was a common tactic used by the Serbs throughout the war, as they claimed to be dedicated to the peace process while in reality they were just using it to seize more land and stall intervention (Rieff, 1995, p 177). The United States and other governments could have again taken the Serbs on their word, pretending the enclaves were not being attacked, and allowed them to fall. Instead, the United States and other governments decided to stand up to Serb aggression, and use its power to protect a population under the threat of genocide. The U.S. and other governments had thus taken the leap they previously avoided, standing up for international law and the moral imperatives of the New World Order.

The leap, however, would prove nothing more than an aberration. Indeed, immediately following the passage of the resolution, nations struggled with how the implications of the resolutions would be achieved (Honig and Both, 1996, p. 104). The international community had committed itself to the defense of five over-populated enclaves that were in desperate need of supplies and care. While in its resolutions the international community had stressed the temporary nature of the safe areas, as the war stretched on for another two years the burden of the safe areas proved to be too much for its collective will.

### **An aberration leading to a tragedy**

While the safe areas totaled five in all – six if Sarajevo is included – I will focus largely on Srebrenica due to its tragic end result. However, many of the problems described in this analysis of Srebrenica also apply to the other safe areas as well.

One of the first problems Srebrenica and the other safe areas faced was receiving enough troops to monitor the safe areas and assure their safety. Military experts estimated that 34,000 troops would be needed to effectively monitor the safe areas. When these estimates were deemed excessive by nations on the Security Council, an alternate opinion stated that a bare minimum of 10,000 troops would be needed to ensure at least a “light” implementation of the resolutions (ibid, p. 116). In the end, the Security Council decided to grant the safe areas 7,600 troops, a sizable number, but well below the estimates military experts had said would be needed to ensure the effectiveness of the safe areas. However, even this reduced number also proved to be too much for nations to collectively assemble. It wasn’t until May 3, 1994, that 570 Dutch troops arrived in Srebrenica, relieving the 143 Canadian peacekeepers that had been deployed there in April 1993 (ibid, p. 127).

Following the deployment of Dutch troops, the situation on the ground in Srebrenica gradually deteriorated. Because of the United Nations’ designation of Srebrenica as a safe area, instead of a safe haven, the Dutch soldiers were placed in a difficult situation. Whereas a safe

haven – which had been created in northern Iraq to protect the Kurdish population following the Gulf War – allowed for the international community to act against the wishes of all parties involved, safe areas required *consent* from all parties before any major action could be taken (ibid, 1996, p. 103). The Dutch forces were thus left at the mercy of the besieging Serb forces for the delivery of aid and supplies. This was especially problematic given the Serb policy of blocking the delivery of aid to areas that they had encircled (see page 58).

And Srebrenica would prove no different as the Serbs slowly and methodically strangled the safe area. Indeed, by early July 1995, the Dutch were low on fuel and ammunition, and “were performing most of their tasks on mules and were living off emergency rations” (ibid, p. 6; Power, 2003, p. 392). Of the 570 Dutch soldiers originally deployed, only 429 remained in the safe area, and only half were infantry; the rest were simply support and medical troops (Honig and Both, 1996, p. 6). While the obstruction of supplies to the safe area was explicitly forbidden under resolution 836, the international community decided not to counter Serb violations with force in order to avoid derailing peace negotiations and the possibility of escalating Western involvement in the conflict. Moreover, due to the consensual nature of the safe areas, U.N. officials wanted to avoid confrontation as “the man you bomb today is the same man whose cooperation you may require tomorrow for the passage of a humanitarian convoy” (ibid, p. 181). Thus, requests by Dutch troops for missile strikes

to punish Serb attacks against the safe area were denied (Power, 2003, p. 399). Indeed, while “the U.N. mounted a major peacekeeping operation in Bosnia, (it) remained hostage to...the stubborn opposition of the warring parties. There was no peace to keep, and no will – therefore, no mandate – to enforce it” (Spencer, 200, p. 155).

This led to a situation where the presence of the Dutch troops maintained the safe area, but the troops had little power to enforce the requirements of the Security Council’s resolutions. Thus, Muslim militias and troops remained armed within the safe area, using it as a cover to go out and attack Serb forces. Serb forces, meanwhile, would retaliate with artillery attacks into the safe area. The Dutch troops, with no resources and no legitimate threat of air strikes for such “minor” infractions, could do “little more than watch, count, log and report violations” (Honig and Both, 1993, p. 6). It had become clear to both the Dutch troops and Serbian forces outside the safe area that the peacekeepers would not be able to protect Srebrenica in the case of a Serbian attack. Yet again the inability of the United Nations and members of the Security Council to match rhetoric with actions had undermined efforts of enforcing international resolutions, law, will, and the ideals of the New World Order. This would have disastrous effects when Serb forces did finally attack Srebrenica in July of 1995, overrunning it and murdering its population, continuing its policy of genocide but this time under direct international supervision.

### **Serbs take Srebrenica**

By July of 1995, the United States and other governments found themselves in the same position they had been in since the end of 1992, still debating whether to use air strikes to combat Serbian aggression while at the same time negotiating with Serb leaders to create a peace treaty that they hoped would finally end the war (Bert, 1997, p. 244). Given the underlying belief of both negotiators and the Serbs that the only way to reach a durable peace treaty was through ethnic partition of Bosnia, many policy makers in the United States secretly wished Srebrenica would disappear because its presence in the Serb-held eastern territories of Bosnia was a major sticking point to negotiations. Indeed, “the Serb nationalists were not about to agree to a peace deal that preserved Muslim enclaves, which tied down Serb troops and kept nettlesome Muslims in their midst. The whole idea (of the war)...had been the creation of an ethnically pure Serb state (Power, 2003, p. 394). Thus, the Serbs’ attack on Srebrenica had been predicted by U.S. intelligence analysts prior to its occurrence, with the belief that the Serbs would take control strictly for territorial concessions during peace negotiations.

The Dutch troops stationed in Srebrenica, while resigned to their inability to fulfill U.N. resolutions, did believe that their presence, coupled with the power of NATO air strikes, could deter a Serb attack (ibid, p. 392). Thus as the Serbs began their attack, the Dutch requested NATO air attacks, hoping to be able to enforce at least the fundamental concept of a safe area as defined by Security Council resolution 836. The first such

request came on June 6, 1995, but that request, along with four others that followed, was denied by U.N. leaders who were operating outside of Srebrenica and whose final approval was necessary for air strikes to commence (Power, 2003, p. 397).

The rationale for these denials was multifaceted. First, and fundamentally, the United Nations was sticking with its policy of not taking sides, especially due to its reliance on the Serbs for the maintenance of the safe areas and any effective peace treaty. The United Nations was thus reluctant to order any air strike unless planes caught Serb forces *in the actual act of attacking* (Honig and Both, 1996, p. 181). Moreover, U.N. leaders continued to believe Serbian assurances that the attacks on Srebrenica were not going to lead to a complete invasion. Indeed, the U.N. officials in charge of giving final authorization for the missile strikes “could not understand why (Bosnian Serb General Ratko) Mladic would want to take, or even punish, the safe area” while seemingly productive peace negotiations were taking place (ibid, p. 20). The United Nations did not want to risk taking sides against the Serbs over what could have turned out to be another skirmish between the armed Muslims within Srebrenica and the Serb forces outside it (Power, 2003, p. 397). The United Nations thus ignored pleas of action from its own peacekeepers on the ground.

Once it became clear that the Serbs were meaning to invade all of the safe area – and after Serb forces had actually fired upon Dutch peacekeepers – U.N. officials finally decided to grant permission for the

peacekeepers' missile requests. However, the Serbs employed simple tactics to avoid being struck, halting their attacks whenever NATO planes were overhead, and then attacking again once the planes went back to Italy to refuel (Honig and Both, 1996, pp. 176, 25). The careful nature of the NATO air strikes, which authorized planes to strike targets only when "actively attacking forces could be designated" meant that the Serbs had figured out an easy way to avoid the one remaining threat the international community had to halt the Serbian advance on Srebrenica (ibid, p. 22).

Moreover, the lengthy permission request process for the air strikes ensured the planes were not getting updated target lists. Indeed, requests by troops on the ground would have to be approved first by a U.N. commander, then a NATO commander – a process that entailed faxing the requests from the field to various offices for approval. This process would take more than four and a half hours to achieve when Serb forces began their final assault on Srebrenica July 11. Due to the burdensome qualifications surrounding the air strikes, only one Serb tank was destroyed during the invasion, another damaged, by NATO. With an immense arms advantage due to their blockage of supplies into the safe area, Serb forces quickly seized control of Srebrenica and air strikes were called off. The Serbs were no longer attacking and the U.N. peacekeepers, along with 40,000 Muslims refugees the peacekeepers were mandated to protect, were now Serb hostages. And despite somewhat unbelievable claims by government officials such as "nothing in the history of the war,

as brutal as it was...would indicate” that the Serbs “would kill every last one” of the Muslims (Power, 2003, p. 410), the Serbs, unsurprisingly, would continue their policy of ethnic cleansing that they had so successfully performed during the three previous years of war.

### **The Srebrenica massacre**

After the safe area fell, the Serbs began to evacuate 25,000 Muslim refugees that had been protected in Srebrenica for over two years.

Apparently 15,000 of the Muslim refugees decided to flee through the forests out of fear of what the Serbs would do to them. They hoped to reach Bosnian-held territories in the north, but most were gunned down by pursuing Serb forces as they passed through Serb-controlled land (Honig and Both, pp. 48-53). The ones who stayed behind, especially the men of combat age, shared an equally grisly fate. While the Dutch peacekeepers tried to maintain control over the evacuation process, Serb forces were in *de facto* control, with Serb General Ratko Mladic eventually ordering the men separated from the women and children. Thus, “while the U.N. soldiers looked on, armed Serbs ripped fathers, brothers, and sons from the hysterical grip of the women” (ibid, p. 402).

As had been the case over the previous three years of ethnic cleansing by the Serbs, the Serbs justified the separation as an investigation into war crimes they said the Muslim men had perpetrated. Reports of the separation of the refugees by gender did not raise immediate alarm among the leaders of the U.S. and other governments.



For instance, officials at the United Nations claimed that “they trusted Serb promises to adhere to the Geneva Conventions” (ibid, p. 410).

Demands of international observation for the refugee evacuation process met with claims that the Serbs had been continually making during their three-year-plus war campaign in Bosnia: The Serbs “never *refused* access to international observers; they granted it so as not to arouse suspicions but then blocked or ‘postponed’ it on the grounds that they could not guarantee the safety of visitors” (emphasis hers) (ibid, p. 411).

Thus the status of the more than 6,000 male refugees from Srebrenica became unknown. Already, on July 12, a day after Srebrenica had fallen, Dutch soldiers began finding dead bodies of Muslim refugees in the town of Potocari, a village to the north of Srebrenica, where the refugees had fled and were subsequently held by the Serbs for transport. On July 13, more than 4,000 of the male refugees failed to reach Tuzla, a safe area in northeastern Bosnia, where U.N. officials had expected them (Honig and Both, 1996, p. 44). Instead, the men were transported by the Serbs from Potocari to Bratunac, to the northeast of Srebrenica near the border with Serbia. In Bratunac, the men were herded into a stadium and onto a football field, where Dutch soldiers posted in Bratunac heard continual gunfire. Serb soldiers would later brag to the Dutch soldiers about how they were murdering all the men. On July 14, Dutch soldiers witnessed nearly 1,000 of the refugee men crouched on the football field. “That same day, an American U-2 spy plane photographed some 600

people on the same field. When the plane returned some days later, the football field was empty, but it was noticed that a nearby field had changed in appearance: it showed signs of recent mass digging, and experts identified what they believed to be three mass graves” (ibid, p. 59).

In all, an estimated 6,546, unarmed men would go missing following the fall of Srebrenica (ibid, p. 65). The Serbs, meanwhile, took the women, children and elderly of Srebrenica on a “ghastly journey” that paralleled the forced deportation descriptions that the Serbs had practiced earlier in the Bosnian war (see above, pp. 32-33). On their trip to Tuzla, where they would eventually be deposited, the 23,000 women and children “were frequently stopped along the way so that Serb gunmen could select the young, attractive women for a roadside rape...it was public knowledge that women between fifteen and thirty-five were being singled out and removed from buses” (Power, 2003, pp. 403, 404). Instead of the prolonged trips and rape camps that had been the common treatment of refugees by the Serbs earlier in the war, most of the women, children and elderly refugees that made it to Tuzla after only a two-and-a-half hour journey; none of the men, however, would make it out of Bratunac alive.

### **Government and public knowledge**

The main goal of the United Nations at this point was to ensure the safety of its captured peacekeepers, and to aid the arriving refugees who had been deported by the Serbs from Srebrenica to Bosnian-controlled

territory. Reports received by the United Nations of the missing Muslim men, and their possible mass murder, were thus not acted upon (Honig and Both, 1996, p. 44). Similarly, the United States was not using its satellite technology to determine whether reports of mass slaughter coming from the Bosnian ambassador to the United Nations were true. Instead, the United States was busy focusing on how to limit the vulnerability of its NATO pilots (Power, 2003, p. 408).

By July 13, it was public knowledge that the men of Srebrenica were being separated from the women and children in Potocari and transported elsewhere, and that thousands of the male refugees had gone missing. The media were reporting this as well as summary executions of refugees by the Serbs on July 14. The number of people reportedly executed, however, was small in number (ibid, p. 404). The United States' only response was to declare that any Serb action against international law would be held accountable later by the U.N. war crimes tribunal. By July 21, reports continued to come in from survivors of systematic executions of the more than 6,000 men missing from Srebrenica's refugee population. Reports were of Muslims being led off transport busses two-by-two, or in some cases 20-by-20, to specific areas, and then executed by gunshot moments later. The reports "were too numerous and 'too authentic' to be false", the Dutch defense minister publicly stated on July 21, as the last of the Dutch peacekeepers from Srebrenica came home (ibid, p. 417).

On July 24, the U.N. Human Rights Commission's Special Rapporteur for the former Yugoslavia, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, issued a report declaring that the United Nations knew nothing of the more than 6,000 Muslim refugees from Srebrenica who had disappeared under in Serb supervision. Mazowiecki publicly pleaded for U.N. action both to determine the whereabouts of the missing refugees as well as to come to the aid of the eastern safe area of Zepa, which had come under Serb attack but was still fighting to protect itself with the help of its 79 peacekeepers. The United States and other government, however, on July 21 had publicly declared they would use air power *only* to protect the safe area of Gorazde, which was not then under attack. By July 27, Serb forces had overrun the safe area of Zepa, its 16,000 refugees meeting the same fate as those of Srebrenica, with the men who trusted themselves to Serb authorities murdered (ibid, p. 418). This proved too much for Mazowiecki who resigned from his post, disgusted with what he said was a "slow and ineffectual" policy of the United Nations and other governments in the face of a "swift and brutal" Serb policy of ethnic cleansing. "The very stability of international order and the principle of civilization of civilization is at stake over the question of Bosnia", Mazowiecki said. "I...cannot continue to participate *in the pretense* of the protection of human rights'" (emphasis mine) (ibid).

### **What the U.S. (and other) governments did**

But, at least in the United States, Bosnian policy was changing. Increased pressure from Congress, media, and, especially from republican Senator Bob Dole, who was emerging as Clinton's chief competition in the upcoming presidential election of 1996, was making Clinton look weak and ineffectual. Clinton had criticized – much to his political benefit – George Bush's unwillingness to actively intervene in Bosnia in 1992, as reports of Serb ethnic cleansing came out during the fall of the 1992 election campaign. While in office, the claims Clinton had made during his election campaign of 1992, such as: "I would begin with air power against the Serbs to try to restore the basic conditions of humanity", had subsequently clashed with his commitment to domestic issues, multilateralism, and his fear of limited public support for military intervention in Bosnia (ibid, p. 274; Sobel and Shiraev, 2003, pp. 186, 210; see above).

But, now, things had changed. Following the fall of Srebrenica and reports of mass executions that followed, 52 percent of Americans supported the *unilateral* deployment of U.S troops to Bosnia (Sobel and Shiraev, 2003, p. 217). This was the first time the support level for unilateral intervention had reached a majority. Moreover, 78 percent of Americans approved the deployment of U.S. troops in a multilateral context, also a high number based on past levels of public support (see above, p. 68). As Clinton continued to be skewered by the media, congressional leaders, the American public, and his future competition for

reelection, he exclaimed, privately, on July 14: 'This can't continue....We have to seize control of this....I'm getting creamed" (Power, 2003, p. 437). Bosnia had finally crossed into the direct political calculations of a U.S. president. And it wouldn't be long before action took place.

Clinton's national security advisers began meeting almost daily by July 17, starting a process where they would meet 21 times in 23 days to talk exclusively about U.S. policy on Bosnia. Clinton himself would attend many of these meetings (ibid, p. 438). The United States, meanwhile, began to use satellite data to determine what had actually happened to the missing refugees of Srebrenica. By August 4, the analysis of the data had all but proved that the Bosnian male refugees of Srebrenica had been slaughtered. The analysis of satellite data showed the location where hundreds of Bosnian men were herded by the Serbs. Days later, these locations turned into large mounds of overturned dirt with heavy vehicle tracks surrounding the newly created mounds of earth (ibid, p. 419). This evidence led the United States to believe that the refugees had been executed and buried in mass graves, a conclusion the country shared with the United Nations in a closed session of the Security Council on August 10. The evidence wasn't released publicly, however, until later in November in a U.N. report (Mestrovic, 1997, p. 19).

Diplomatically, however, things were progressing quickly. On August 8, Clinton's National Security Adviser Anthony Lake embarked on a trip to Europe to inform American allies that there was to be a change in

U.S. policy: The United States was going to bomb the Serbs if they violated anymore U.N. resolutions. While the United States hoped for cooperation from its allies in NATO, if they did not approve of the change in policy, the U.S. made it clear there was little they could do to stop it (Power, 2003, p. 437). The allies, thus, began to pull their troops out of Bosnia, and by late August, U.N. peacekeepers had been completely withdrawn. The policy had changed: now any move of Serb aggression against the non-Serb area of Bosnia, even if not publicly known, would be met not with negotiation, but with force (ibid).

The Serbs had disrupted the delicate balancing game they had been playing in Bosnia for more than three years with the U.S. and other governments. When, on August 28, a Serb artillery shell landed in a marketplace of Sarajevo, killing civilians, the game had officially ended. The United States, under the auspices of NATO, began a bombing campaign against the Serbs, finally enforcing international law and some semblance of the New World Order after refusing to do so for more than three years. Beginning on August 30,

NATO planes flew 3,400 sorties and 750 attack missions against fifty-six targets. They avoided aged and rusty Serb tanks and concentrated on ammunition bunkers, surface-to-air missile sites, and communications centers. They called the mission Operation Deliberate Force, as if to announce up front that what might have been called 'Operation Halfhearted Force' was a thing of the past. The Bosnian army was sent into tailspin, and Muslim and Croat soldiers succeeded in retaking some 20 percent of the country that had been seized and cleansed in 1992 (ibid, p. 440).

As the air strikes continued at a clip not seen since the Gulf War, the Serbs not only stopped their offensives on the ground, but they also

began cooperatively negotiating for peace. The peace process benefited by having President Clinton personally advocating for the success of the negotiations while also promising to supply U.S. troops, under the auspices of NATO, to ensure the peace treaty was maintained (Martin and Silber, 1995). The fact that the negotiations took place in Dayton, Ohio, in the heart of the United States, seemed to mean the United States meant business. On November 21, leaders from the three main ethnicities in Bosnia reached an agreement on a ceasefire. On December 15, 1995, the Dayton Peace Accords were formally signed. After three years of nonintervention, the U.S. government had ended the bloodiest conflict in Europe since World War II in a little more than three months. However, during the prolonged course of the war, about 102,000 people had been killed, tens of thousands murdered simply due to their ethnicity (Silber, 2005).

## **V. Aftermath**

### **The Dayton Peace Accord and more failure**

The West had not completely washed its hands and righted its policies in Bosnia with the passage of the peace accords. The peace treaty and subsequent actions by U.S. politicians and their policies in Bosnia would reveal more failures by the U.S. and other governments to adhere to the ideals of a New World Order.

First, “ultimately, the removal of Srebrenica was a political boon to the Dayton Peace process, and probably wanted by western



negotiators...the loss of the two Muslim enclaves had tidied the map of Bosnia by eliminating two nettlesome noncontiguous patches of territory” (Honig, 1996, p. 185). The allowance of the fall of Srebrenica and the territorial concessions of this territory to the Serbs in the Dayton Peace Accords helped Serb leadership achieve a goal it had been pursuing since 1986 (see above, p. 12), splitting the country into separate ethnic entities. The Serbs, who constituted only 31 percent of the population prior to the war’s commencement, received 49 percent of the country, including Srebrenica, to govern. The Croats and Bosnian Muslims received the remaining 51 percent of the country, which they were to govern jointly. The country remained united, with one government centered in Sarajevo, but each entity, and hence, each ethnicity, had its own regional government. These regional governments would prove to be stronger than that of the central state, allowing the Serbs to achieve their goal of an ethnically pure state dominated by Serbs. This further entrenched ideologies of nationalism in Bosnia (Silber, 2005).

But peace had come at last to Bosnia, and it came in large part due to the international community. While Clinton warned that “America cannot and must not be the world’s policeman” Clinton tried to frame the peace treaty and subsequent deployment of U.S. troops to implement the treaty as a moral imperative. “He invoked images of raped women and skeletal men in concentration camps” and asked Americans never to forget that “a quarter of a million men, women and children have been shelled,

shot and tortured to death. Two million people, half of Bosnia's population, were forced from their homes and into a miserable life as refugees". And he implored his "fellow Americans" that "*in this new era*, there are still times when America – and America alone – can and should make the difference" (emphasis mine) (Mitchell, 1995). Why the U.S. government chose to intervene following the fall of Srebrenica and the death of a little less than 6,000 Bosnians when, as Clinton admits, there had been a quarter of a million victims during the three years of Serb ethnic cleansing reiterated the contradiction between the New World Order and the policies of the U.S. government.

Another example of the failure of the New World Order in Bosnia is the continued policy of U.S. and NATO troops to pursue indicted Serb war criminals. U.S. and NATO troops only make arrests when they "happened to encounter" an indicted war criminal (Power, 2003, p. 492). While the Dayton Accords stressed that the Serbs must work with the U.N. war crimes tribunal to bring indicted war criminals to justice, they made no allowances for NATO troops to actively pursue war criminals (Jensen, 1995). This led to the situation where many of the more than 40 Serbs charged with war crimes "not only lived freely but also continued to occupy positions of authority" (Power, 2003, p. 492). Indeed, Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic and Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic, two of the chief leaders of Serb genocide in Bosnia, still remain "at large" to this day, despite the fact that they are openly seen in public

and can easily be found by reporters who wish to talk to them (ibid). Despite some minor progress with the war crimes tribunal, the failure to apprehend those most responsible for the genocide in Bosnia while they remain visible members of their communities is another demonstration of how the U.S. is not living up to even a limited interpretation of the New World Order.

Thus, even after having intervened to halt practices of genocide, U.S. and other governments' policies failure *to punish* Serb actions of genocide continue to reveal how the U.S. and other governments are failing to enforce the principles of the New World Order.

### **Conclusion**

Bosnia proved to be a large failure in the hopes that a New World Order would emerge out of the post-Cold War world. President George H. W. Bush had declared the possible creation of the New World Order prior to the Gulf War, which he claimed provided the United States with a "rare opportunity" to demonstrate its ability to lead the world to a future where the "victory for the rule of law and for what is right" ruled foreign policies of the U.S. and other governments.

The genocide that took place in Bosnia immediately after the success of the Gulf War would prove to be a test of the New World Order that the U.S. and other governments would not pass. Indeed, the large amounts of information that a genocide might take place in Bosnia, the large amounts of public and confidential information that the U.S. and

other governments possessed which confirmed – while the genocide was taking place – that a genocide had occurred in Bosnia, and the creation of misleading rationales the U.S. and other governments disseminated to justify their policies of nonintervention demonstrated the failure of the idea of a New World Order in U.S. foreign policy. Put more succinctly, the Bosnian genocide provided “sufficient evidence to discredit once and for all the idea that nations willingly march out to help their fellow non-nationals, especially if there is a cost involved” (Bert, 1997, p. 237).

Moreover, after successful intervention to halt genocide, the U.S. and other governments’ actions following the successful intervention demonstrated a further failure in the testing of the New World Order. The U.S. and other governments’ actions of rewarding Serb aggression and genocide while failing to punish the Serb leaders responsible for these illegal policies demonstrate this.

While these conclusions are meant to apply solely to the study of U.S. and other governments’ actions in Bosnia, larger implications can be seen in the failure of the New World Order in Bosnia. First, the deliberate policy of governments to avoid intervening to prevent a genocide debunks claims of “never again”, the “unwritten belief that with (more) knowledge” of a genocide taking place “the international community will act” (Cushman and Mestrovic, 1996, p. 157). Indeed, during other genocides of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this was a common claim. In Cambodia, for instance, the country was cut off from the outside world due to its hostile

government and the strict adherence to state sovereignty during the Cold War. In Rwanda, the limited press and government activity in that country was commonly blamed for non-intervention (Melvern, 2004, p. 129; Klinghoffer, 1998, p. 3). “But in the Bosnian war, the truth had never been in short supply. What was missing was U.S. willingness to risk its own soldiers on the ground or to convince the Europeans to support NATO bombing from the air. As a result, the ethnic cleansing and genocide against the country’s Muslims proceeded apace” (Power, 2003, p. 327). This seems to substantiate claims of many scholars (Power, 2003; Cushman and Mestrovic, 1996; Melvern, 2004; Brunner and Mills, 2002; Adelman and Suhrke, 1996) that it was not a lack of knowledge, but a lack of will on the part of informed governments to intervene in the other cases of genocide during the 20<sup>th</sup> century beside Bosnia.

Another implication of the failure in Bosnia is that it revealed possible limitations of the United Nations. While the organization has made it possible to codify many of the world’s moral codes into international law, the organization’s ineffectiveness to enforce these laws was fully demonstrated in Bosnia. Indeed, “the U.N. mandate” during the Bosnian war “included enforcing no-fly zones, protecting” populations in the seven safe areas,

delivering humanitarian assistance, making Sarajevo free from heavy weapons, and other demands (featured) in over one hundred Security Council resolutions...The United Nations had the authority to enforce these resolutions and protect civilians: it could use ‘all necessary means.’ Yet these mandates were intermittently implemented at best, and, at worst, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and other atrocities were

carried out by Serbs in full view of the United Nations without much response” (ibid, 151).

While some of the failure of the United Nations to act forcefully in Bosnia can be blamed personally upon U.N. personal not taking an active enough role in condemning and punishing Serb aggression (see above, p. 73), a lot of it can be explained by the very nature of the organization itself.

Take, for example, the quintessential U.N. operation of peacekeeping. In Bosnia – despite the deployment under chapter seven status, which allows the peacekeepers to use force to implement its resolutions – the United Nations was forced to treat all parties in Bosnia in an impartial and neutral manner. After U.N. member-states stated they would not intervene forcefully in Bosnia, forceful implementation of resolutions became a non-option for the organization. Thus the United Nations was forced to rely on an ethos of

impartiality and neutrality...In this view, the United Nations’ power derives from persuasion rather than coercion, which, in turn, is dependent on its moral authority. And, the argument goes, its moral standing is founded on its impartiality. All parties must be treated equally and not be shown favoritism or partiality. UN officials, in other words, would have to tolerate the occasional evil if they were going to be able to remain effective not only in Bosnia but elsewhere” (ibid, p. 152).

Thus, until the United States and other governments embrace policies of more forceful intervention, the United Nations will continue to be handcuffed. This is especially problematic given that the United Nations is often used as a fig leaf to cover up inaction by states, as it was in Bosnia (Rieff, 1995, pp. 192, 193). With forcefully worded resolutions,

but a system that doesn't allow these resolutions to be enforced, nations can continue to give the appearance of wanting a New World Order, while, in reality, pursuing a policy of inconsistent morality.

Thus, given these implications and the overall failure of the U.S. and other government to prevent genocide in Bosnia, governments will probably always be able to find a rationale to avoid having to prevent genocide. What will it take to have the U.S. governments fulfill the obligations of the Genocide Convention? The experience in Bosnia seems to suggest the only way to have this occur is to force the issue directly onto the political agenda of the president. Indeed, policy in Bosnia changed only when Clinton was “getting creamed”, the political costs of him not intervening too much to take (see above, p. 101). How to put genocide – or other major human rights violations – on the political agenda of the president is a task for another paper. However, it is something of tremendous importance for, as Toby Gati, a member of the Clinton administration, said, “when you make the original decision that you aren't going to respond (to a genocide) when these kind of things happen, then, I'm sorry, but these things are going to happen” (Power, 2003, p. 420).

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