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ABSTRACT

James E. Covington III: Visionary Policy: Bill Clinton, the Bosnian War, and American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era, 1992-1995
(Under the direction of Michael C. Morgan)

Bill Clinton assumed office during a particularly challenging period of American history. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States enjoyed a period of unprecedented power and authority. Clinton was elected to office largely for his domestic policies, however, his vision for America’s position in the post-Cold War world steered his foreign policy, particularly with respect to Europe.

Clinton’s vision was more inclusive and encompassing than that of his predecessor, George H. W. Bush. During the post-Cold War years, Bush was more inclined to let Europe sort out their own problems, particularly in the case of Bosnia. Clinton, however, was more willing to see post-Cold War European problems as American issues. The Bosnian War represents a point where these two ideals collided. Guided by this vision, Clinton overcame challenges from the European Community, political adversaries, and even his own public en route to intervening in Bosnia.
To my family, whose love and support not only astonish and motivate me, but also make me want to be a better man. I love you all, and I could never adequately thank you for everything.
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Introduction

In late December 1995, the first American combat troops of NATO’s IFOR (Implementation Force) stepped out of their armored personnel carriers and set foot on frozen Bosnian soil to enforce the ceasefire set forth in the Dayton Peace Accords. These forces, the first American “boots on the ground” in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY,) represented the culmination of a long political and diplomatic process. For nearly three years President Bill Clinton had been seeking to halt the violence that had plagued the Balkans since the fall of the Soviet Union. Now, his efforts were finally paying off.

Between 1992 and 1995, the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (hereafter Bosnia) claimed the lives of more than 100,000 people and wounded at least twice that number.¹ The fighting raged in a confined territory with a population of fewer than four million people. The violence, which has been called the worst European

¹ The total number of casualties is a highly debated topic. Getting an accurate total of casualties of the war has proven very difficult. Some organizations estimate the total as low as just over 82,000 and others estimate as high as more than 350,000. For the purpose of this paper, I went with the most accurate study I could find, conducted by the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Also considered were studies by the Households in Crisis Network (The Bosnian Book of the Dead) and the Research and Documentation Center in Sarajevo, but the ICTY was much more careful in compiling their figures.

See Appendix 1.
atrocities since the Holocaust, unfolded in plain sight while the rest of the world pretended not to notice. Until 1995, the United States and its European allies seemed content to let the United Nations fumble the crisis – with disastrous results.

Perhaps the most troubling facet of the Bosnian War was that it occurred as the world was looking to the U.S. and Western Europe for leadership. Richard Holbrooke, President Bill Clinton’s Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, called the failure of the U.S. and the EU to intervene “the greatest collective security failure of the West since the 1930s.” In his 1998 memoir, Holbrooke wrote, “Yugoslavia undeniably represented a failure of historic dimensions. Why and how had it happened – and just at the moment of the West’s great triumph over communism.”

Clinton’s decision to intervene in Bosnia marked a reversal, or at least a significant shift in American foreign policy – not only toward the Balkans, but in the direction of U.S. international relations as a whole. As the Americans attempted to chart a new course for their foreign policy and determine their new role in a world without the Soviet Union, Bosnia provided a brutal initiation into the post-Cold War era.

The end of the Cold War presented an interesting challenge for American foreign policy makers; they no longer had to plan their moves with the end goal of defeating their Soviet adversaries. Having emerged victorious over the communist

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giant the U.S. - the world’s sole superpower - faced uncharted territory. For the first time in 45 years, the United States had to create a foreign policy. It was up to the Americans to decide their new role in the post-Cold War world. Their victory over communism had not only increased American power and authority, but also their responsibilities, and U.S. policy makers had to determine when and how to best use their military power.

Somalia presented the first opportunity for post-Cold War, American military intervention. Not even a year into the post-Cold War era, and with mere weeks remaining in his tenure, President George H. W. Bush ordered the deployment of American combat forces to Somalia to secure the Somali trade routes and facilitate the flow of food and medical supplies to the Somali people. Despite Bush’s assurance that this would not be an “open-ended commitment,” the timing of the deployment effectively left Bill Clinton’s administration in charge of the operation.

Securing trade routes and enabling food and medical supplies to reach Somali civilians hardly seemed like a daunting challenge for American combat forces, who had obliterated Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi army about a year earlier. American forces met with success during the early days of the mission, officially titled Operation Restore Hope. The situation quickly turned ugly for the Americans, however. In October 1993, during Clinton’s first year as president - the “Black Hawk

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4 There is some debate as to whether or not the United States “won” the Cold War, and this can be argued at length. Regardless, of one’s stance, the Soviet Union certainly did not win, and the end result was that the U.S. had achieved unprecedented power and influence after the fall of communism.

Down” incident and subsequent Battle of Mogadishu created a media nightmare that would echo loudly during the following years. The administration responded by hastily pulling American combat forces out of the region.6

Since the 1960s, many historians have argued that the American government has long used military intervention to advance selfish foreign policy goals. Some even argue that the U.S. government deliberately deceived its citizens about its true intentions in order to garner their support.7

I argue that American foreign policy in Bosnia represents a break from this trend. Bosnia offered the U.S. policymakers no promise for commercial capital gain, nor did they fabricate a reason to unilaterally intervene. I make the case that Clinton entered office with a more encompassing vision for U.S. foreign relations than that of his predecessor. Clinton’s vision included more cooperation with Russia and the European Community in the post-Cold War world. In the case of


7 Much has been written about United States foreign policy and military intervention abroad. William Appleman Williams’ masterpiece, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy, argues that the aim U.S. foreign policy was to secure a commercial frontier that would be safe for American economic expansion. [William Appleman Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company 1972.)] John Quigley offers a recent contribution to this foreign policy conversation with his work, The Ruses for War: American Interventionism since World War II. Quigley asserts that U.S. policy makers have repeatedly urged the American public to support wars for reasons that turned out later to be hardly credible. Quigley cites the George W. Bush administration’s use of weapons of mass destruction to justify the 2003 invasion of Iraq as recent evidence of a well-established American foreign policy trend. Quigley makes this case for many military operations conducted during and after the Cold War. American intervention in the Bosnian War, however is not mentioned in his work. [John Quigley, The Ruses for War: American Interventionism since World War II, (New York: Prometheus Books, 2007.)] This is an argument that Walter LaFeber would agree with. In his work, America, Russia and the Cold War 1945-2006, LaFeber asserts that American domestic policies have long determined their foreign policy. LaFeber suggests that Harry S. Truman, and his secretary of state Dean Acheson, demonized communism and exaggerated the Soviet threat in order to get military bills passed in congress. [Walter LaFeber, America, Russia and the Cold War 1945-2006 (New York: McGraw Hill, Inc., 2008.)]
Bosnia, Bill Clinton and his policy makers waited patiently (perhaps too patiently) to overcome the objections of his adversaries (both foreign and domestic) in order to provide an opening that would prove politically feasible for an American intervention rather than fabricating a false motive and deceiving the American public into supporting an intervention. The Srebrenica massacre acted as this tipping point for the Clinton administration’s foreign policy. It gave Clinton the opening that he needed to employ his agenda toward the former Yugoslavia. American intervention in the Bosnian War was not politically feasible until the Srebrenica massacre. Bill Clinton realized the opportunity that Srebrenica offered and took advantage. In several cases, however, the Clinton administration intervened in regions where the United States had no substantial interests at stake. It made no attempt to misinform the public and perhaps paid the price for its own candor.⁸

Clinton’s vision was more-inclusive and encompassing than that of his predecessor, George H. W. Bush. Bush’s less-encompassing and more limited view of American policy (also shared by most of Clinton’s other political adversaries) had more utility during the Cold War, which was where his view was shaped. During the post-Cold War years, Bush was more inclined to let Europe sort out their own problems, which explains why he chose to stay out of Bosnia. Clinton, being the first president elected after the Cold War, was more inclined to see post-Cold War

⁸ Bill Clinton acknowledged that the American public was not in favor of committing American combat forces in Bosnia and would remain opposed to such actions until he could assure them that he would only commit U.S. forces to a “clear, limited, achievable mission” and that they would be “well-trained and heavily armed to minimize the risk of casualties. Bill Clinton, “Ending the Bosnian War: The Personal Story of the President of the United States”, Bosnia, Intelligence, and the Clinton Presidency: The Role of Intelligence and Political Leadership in Ending the Bosnian War (Little Rock: William J. Clinton Presidential Library 2013) 7-9.
European problems as American issues. Bosnia represents a point in American history where these two visions collided.

Writers continue to debate Clinton’s motivation for sending U.S. forces to the Balkans. Decision makers rarely have a single motivation for their actions, much less one as consequential as intervening in a long-running and bloody foreign crisis. Clinton had many reasons for acting in Bosnia. To be sure, political gain, approval ratings, legacy, and the desire to do good factored into his decision. But more important than any of these factors was his vision for American foreign policy in the post-Cold War world.

As a candidate, Clinton centered his campaign on domestic issues. He had, however, been very critical of the Bush administration’s failure to address the human rights abuses in the Balkans. Soon after his November 1992 victory, Clinton pushed a greater U.S. role in ending the violence in the former Yugoslavia. He hinted that American military intervention in Bosnia was a genuine option and signaled a tough foreign policy toward the Balkans. Clinton recognized that the U.S. would have to assume a leadership role to force any real change, but he lacked the political power to act unilaterally. Still, guided by his vision for post-Cold War Euro-American stability, Clinton persisted.

This thesis begins with a short historiography of the Clinton presidency followed by a brief history of the Balkan conflict, dispensing with the myth of “ancient hatreds,” and then presents a comprehensive description of Clinton’s vision for the U.S. in the post-Cold War world. No thorough discussion can ignore the many obstacles that blocked Clinton from acting on these principles. Western
European leaders, domestic American political rivals, and the American public all stymied his initial hopes of ending the crisis in Bosnia. Clinton finally acquired the political wherewithal to overcome each of these obstacles after the 1995 Srebrenica Massacre. The massacre provided new opportunities for action, and Clinton took full advantage. By the end of the year, the United States had used its military power to force the Serbian aggressors in Bosnia to come to the negotiating table and sign a lasting peace agreement. Throughout, Clinton remained devoted to his vision of America’s role in the post-Cold War world, which Bosnia put to its severest test.
Historiography

Bill Clinton rose to power, seemingly out of nowhere, at a pivotal juncture in the history of the United States and the world. Not since the Great Depression had a president assumed office at a more challenging time – the collapse of communism and a time of when maps and globes rapidly became outdated. In his book *The Clinton Charisma: A Legacy of Leadership*, Donald Phillips describes Clinton’s surprising rise to power in a chaotic post-Cold War world where big countries are breaking up into smaller ones, neighbors are fighting one another, former enemies become friends and former friends become enemies. “The end of the Cold War left America with no perceptible enemy around which to rally the masses.” Amid the chaos, occurred the “startling and unlikely” rise of Bill Clinton, a relatively unknown governor from the small southern state of Arkansas.⁹

In many respects, the Clinton presidency stands out in recent American history. Clinton was the first president elected in the post-Cold War era, he was the first Democrat to be elected to a second term since Franklin D. Roosevelt, and he was the first president to balance the budget in three decades. Yet his time in the White House was accompanied by a national obsession with his personal life and

character.\textsuperscript{10} His effectiveness as a leader combined with morally questionable actions made for one of the most polarizing administrations in U.S. history. Phillips describes Clinton as “a lightning rod for hate, ridicule, and opposition, he was the target of an endless series of attacks perpetrated by a well-organized and well-funded group of political enemies.” Nearly every month of his eight-year tenure, there was some sort of orchestrated attack on Clinton’s character, still he left office with a 67 percent approval rating – the highest for a departing president in the history of polling. Phillips asserts Clinton’s personal magnetism (The Clinton Charisma) was the reason Clinton was “loved and loathed” to extremes. Clinton possessed an uncanny ability to charm people, superb communication skills, and talent in connecting with others – physically, intellectually, and emotionally.\textsuperscript{11}

In her essay, ”The Compromising Clinton: Images of Failure, a Record of Success," Rita K. Whillock, details a few reasons why Clinton was so polarizing. She describes Clinton as an “enigma to the public, a mass of contradictions.” She offers several examples: Clinton is a country boy raised in Hope, Arkansas, yet a Rhodes scholar who graduated second in his law school class. He touts a strong belief in traditional values, yet (at the risk of alienating many Arkansas voters) he married a strong-willed, modern, out-spoken woman, who maintained her maiden name for years after their marriage. Clinton publicly questioned U.S. involvement in Vietnam in the 1960s and 70s, and rebelled against military service, yet he defeated a two war heroes known for their strong foreign policy leadership. He was a young


\textsuperscript{11} Phillips, \textit{The Clinton Charisma}. 3-4.
president who connected with the elderly (Arkansas had the 2nd oldest population in the U.S. in 1994.) Clinton was successful in breaking the perceptual link between youth and inexperience and allowed him to win their support. Finally, Clinton openly proclaimed his faith in God as a Southern Baptist, but held a pro-choice stance and contended that homosexuals deserve to live their private lives free from judgment or state control. This stance angered the Southern Baptists in his home state – they argued that his home church should have expelled him for holding these views that contradicted church beliefs.12

Joe Sobran, in his book Hustler: The Clinton Legacy, was more pointed in his criticism. “It’s not his lies alone that make Clinton so exasperating; it’s the posturing – the lip biting, the finger wagging, the Bible quoting – that accompanies them. No matter how often the lies are exposed, he is soon back at it, his voice cracking with sincerity...No matter how low your opinion of him, sooner or later, you find you’ve overestimate him.”13

It is not surprising that such a divisive figure has been the subject of so many books and essays. Former cabinet members, political pundits, journalists and political scientists have all made contributions to the early Clinton historiography. Lately, historians have begun to examine the Clinton presidency. Some hope to deify the former president trumpeting his accomplishments or approval ratings, while others aim to demonize Clinton, highlighting his involvement in scandals and


13 Joe Sobran, Hustler: The Clinton Legacy, (Vienna, VA: Griffin Communications 2000) xiv
usually highlighting his impeachment. The most effective authors, however, are those who aspire to remain neutral while describing and assessing the good and the bad of the Clinton administration. This tactic makes for a more rewarding read. This is particularly true regarding Clinton’s foreign policy, where most of the discussion of scandal can be marginalized. With few exceptions, authors accept that the Clinton administration represents a change in U.S. foreign policy. The end of the Cold War, and the rapidly changing world, necessitated such a change. What is less universally accepted is how the president responded to the emerging world. More interesting than the obvious good job versus bad job argument, however, are the discussions in which these authors engage, often unintentionally, concerning motivations or driving forces behind Clinton’s foreign policy decisions.

Like other aspects of the Clinton presidency, authors are divided with respect to the motivations that guided Clinton’s foreign policy decisions; most focus on one of three. Some try to convince their audience that Clinton was motivated by a genuine desire to do good and make the post-Cold War world a more peaceful place. Others argue that Clinton’s desires were a selfish quest for personal or political gain. Most argue that Clinton was concerned with his legacy – how history would remember his years in office – and his foreign policy decisions reflected a desire to have history remember him kindly.

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14 One notable exception is John Quigley’s *The Ruses for War*, Quigley argues that American foreign policy has remained unchanged since her rise to superpower status, and that Clinton continued the American tradition of involving US forces only for capital gain, often deceiving the public as to his self-serving intentions. In this respect, the Clinton administration offered little to no change from those of previous administrations since the U.S. became a world power. Situations changed, but US approach did not. Quigley offers several examples from Clinton’s foreign policy where this seems to be the case, but he conveniently leaves out Bosnia.
Clinton possessed an uncanny ability to captivate his audience. This often made people want to believe the best about him. Phillips notes this in *The Clinton Charisma*. He claims Clinton’s personal magnetism (The Clinton Charisma) was the reason Clinton was both “loved and loathed” to extremes. Clinton had an uncanny ability to charm people, superb communication skills, and talent in connecting with others – physically, intellectually, and emotionally. This Charisma aided Clinton in adopting a unique and effective leadership and decision-making style as well as his damage control strategies. Phillips argues that it allowed him to be an effective leader, who learned quickly from his mistakes.\(^\text{15}\) Clinton’s charm is possibly the reason many authors assert that Clinton’s motivations were virtuous and that he truly wanted to make the world a better place.

One example is Joe Klein, *The Natural: The Misunderstood Presidency of Bill Clinton*. Klein’s work seeks to move beyond the scandals and media hype to reveal a “more accurate assessment of the policy, the politics, and of Bill Clinton himself, whom Klein believes is a good man, who wanted to use his presidency to make for a better world. His personal demons aside, Clinton lived to serve. Klein Provides a narrative of the inside functioning of the Clinton White House and how its administration enabled America to rise to unprecedented levels of prosperity and global influence.\(^\text{16}\) Klein asserts Clinton conducted a serious, substantive presidency; his domestic policy achievements were impressive and his foreign policy was considerable and accomplished against great odds, “even in time of

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\(^{15}\) Phillips, *The Clinton Charisma*, 3-4.

national apathy and skepticism.”

Furthermore, Klein states “Clinton performed the most important service a leader can provide: He saw the world clearly and reacted prudently to the challenges he faced.” Klein notes that Clinton was lucky to have served in relatively quiet times (compared to the tumultuous era of his predecessor and successors,) but he laments this was also unfortunate, as he was never challenged in a way that tested his “impressive strengths,” and the absence of such a challenge exacerbated his weaknesses.

Another example is Sidney Blumenthal’s work, *The Clinton Wars.* Blumenthal’s book is a memoir of his time as Clinton’s aide and confidant, which reads like a personal quest to rectify Clinton’s damaged public image while simultaneously striking back at some in the media for having the audacity to besmirch their national leader. Like Klein, Blumenthal depicts Clinton as a successful leader who had righteous motivations. However, Blumenthal lacks Klein’s impartiality and his work often sound like political spin. Still, Blumenthal’s work, and others like it, represents a significant portion of the Clinton historiography.\(^\text{17}\)

While some may be convinced of Clinton’s benevolent motives, other authors believe Clinton had more self-serving intentions. In his book, *High Hopes: The Clinton Presidency and the Politics of Ambition,* Stanley Renshon describes Clinton as “a smart, educated, disarmingly sincere and decidedly charming suitor, but with a moral compass frozen at self interest.” Renshon claims Clinton was the most skillful politician to occupy the White House since Lyndon Johnson. He would often tell the

public what they wanted to hear in order to benefit politically (through a boost in approval ratings and later reelection.) He cites Clinton’s promise to the American people that he would not send troops to Bosnia for no longer than one year as an example. Renshon notes that Clinton learned quickly from early foreign policy mistakes and that his skill at communicating with the American public ensured the political success he sought.18

Rich Lowry’s work, Legacy: Paying the Price for the Clinton Years, Argues that Clinton’s success had little to do with his policies and that his character flaws brought on his scandals through lawlessness. Hell-bent on political success, Lowry accuses Clinton of appeasing hostile regimes and ignoring threats to American security from abroad. Lowry asserts Clinton’s international relations record was “appalling,” specifically in the Middle East. He blames Clinton for the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, which Lowry claims prompted his book.19

Of the various motivations mentioned throughout the Clinton historiography, Legacy is the most often cited. Not surprisingly, many authors argue Clinton’s true desire is to be remembered fondly and written about kindly in history books. Richard E. Cohen’s Changing Course in Washington: Clinton and the New Congress captures this sentiment. Cohen depicts Clinton as a young, vibrant politician who was greatly motivated by his legacy. Cohen states the early Clinton era was his opportunity to make

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changes and cement his legacy. “Clinton’s fresh ideas and team of leading players brought both new substance and style to Washington.” Cohen Clinton’s early years were ones of great leadership and direction for the country led by a young leader with lots of ideas and intent on getting things done in a time of great international uncertainty. Cohen credits Clinton’s youth and vigor as much as his intelligence for his success. He also claims that George H. W. Bush lacked the necessary energy and commitment to overhauling American foreign policy in the post-Cold War world. 

Nigel Hamilton’s Bill Clinton: Mastering the Presidency attempts to “penetrate the fog of political war” to describe Clinton’s presidency, which Hamilton claims was at first disastrous, but ultimately successful. Hamilton see’s Clinton’s story as “one of the most extraordinary reversals of fortune in modern American biography.” Hamilton portrays Clinton as a very cognizant of his legacy, and driven by this consciousness to recover after early adversity. Once Clinton learned how to be a president, Hamilton claims, he became unbeatable and “set American standing in the world higher than it has ever been since.” Throughout his book, Hamilton references Clinton’s actions in Bosnia as examples of his growth as a president. Hamilton notes that Clinton was determined not to repeat mistakes in Bosnia that were made in Somalia.

These are only a few examples of the three most dominant motivations in the Clinton historiography (benevolence, personal gain, and legacy.) There is another


21 Cohen, Changing Course in Washington


23 Hamilton, Bill Clinton. 490-491.
possibility: one that has yet to be discussed in the historiography of Bill Clinton’s presidency. Clinton was driven by a new vision for American foreign policy in the post-Cold War world. Certainly benevolence, political gain, approval ratings, and legacy all factored into his decision. But more powerful a motivation than any of these factors was Clinton’s vision for American foreign policy in the post-Cold War world. James D. Boys touches on this concept in his work *Clinton's Grand Strategy: U.S. Foreign Policy in a Post-Cold War World*. “Clinton sought to find a role for an America that it could neither dominate nor retreat [from.]”²⁴ The advancement of American economic competitiveness, the spreading of democracy, and the maintenance of a strong national defense were all key components of American post-Cold War foreign policy. “Clinton believed that this combination would ensure the United States stayed secure by remaining the strongest force for peace, freedom, and prosperity in the world.”²⁵ Still, Boys sees this as merely a goal for the Clinton administration, and not their motivation, which he still sees as political gain.²⁶

Similarly, David H. Bennett’s book *Bill Clinton: Building a Bridge to a New Millennium* addresses Clinton’s reshaping the United States in the post-Cold War era without mentioning Clinton’s motivation for doing so. Bennett briefly mentions that

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Clinton said he had wanted to do so in a campaign speech, then he describes how he went about making it happen.²⁷

The most revealing look into Clinton’s motivation comes from the president himself. In his book, Between Hope and History: Meeting America’s Challenges for the 21st Century, Clinton aims to convince the American public of a “shared destiny as a nation, a duty to prepare for the new century, and our need for a shared vision of twenty-first century America that will enable us to grasp the extraordinary opportunities of this age of possibility.” He explains he ran for president because he believed that in 1992, Americans “lacked a unifying vision for our future and a strategy to achieve it,” and “were in danger of just drifting into the new era. My vision for America at the dawn of a new century is of a nation in which the American dream is a reality for all who are willing to work for it.”²⁸ Clinton was referring to the American people rising to meet the domestic challenges they faced at the dawn of the new millennium. Still, his words offer a peek into his motivation meeting the foreign challenges as well. If he possessed such a vision for America’s future within its borders, he must have been guided by a similar concept for challenges from abroad.

Clinton recognized that the world was at a turning point and old solutions would not solve new problems. There would be challenges for sure – In 1993, Clinton did not yet know how he would employ his vision, he did not yet know how to be an effective president, he would face a steep learning curve, and he would encounter stiff opposition. But it was his vision for America’s leadership in the post-Cold War

²⁷ David H. Bennet, Bill Clinton: Building a Bridge to a New Millennium. (New York: Routledge, 2014) 2.

world that would provide the guiding force for Clinton's foreign policy decisions. After some early foreign policy debacles, Bosnia provided the testing ground for Clinton’s vision.
Background: The Red Herring of Ancient Hatreds

It would be irresponsible to look at the Bosnian War in a vacuum. The most recent round of tensions in the Balkans is easily misunderstood without historical context. Many believe centuries-old episodes of hatred and oppression had repercussions that have echoed throughout the history of the region, and that the Bosnian War represented the most recent chapter in an age-old cycle of violence. Often overlooked are long periods (sometimes even centuries) of peaceful coexistence among the Balkan peoples, where they interacted, lived, and worked together in tranquility. Nevertheless, these periods of war and peace created a complicated religious, ethnic, and nationalist history, that would mean any intervention to stop the fighting could have had both geopolitical and historical consequences.²⁹

The roots of the religious divisions of the South Slav people date as far back as the Great Schism between the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches in 1054. Ecclesiastical and theological differences led to disputes and sometimes violence between the Serbs, who were Orthodox Christians and the Croats, who were Catholics.³⁰ Then, the first Ottoman soldiers complicated matters.

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³⁰ Several historians argue that the differences among the South Slavs lie solely in their religion, and not in the racial or ethnic makeup of the people involved. Richard West states that there is "no 'ethnic' difference between the warring factions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, all of whom are alike in
when they crossed the Hellespont into Europe in 1358. Aided by an earthquake that destroyed the protective fortifications surrounding several cities, the Ottomans occupied Gallipoli along the vital Dardanelles.\textsuperscript{31} Around 1361, the Ottoman sultan, Murad I, captured Adrianople in Thrace. In the ensuing decades, the Ottomans systematically captured the remaining provinces of the Byzantine Empire.\textsuperscript{32}

As the Ottomans moved into the Serbian heartland, tens of thousands of Christians fled north and west to the sanctuary of the realm of the Catholic Hungarian King Louis I (Lajos I.) Most of these refugees settled in modern-day Croatia. Many of the southern Slavs converted to Islam, especially in southwest Serbia and in Montenegro. They assumed the farmlands left behind by the fleeing Serbs and built mosques on the sites of Serbian churches. The combination of religious disputes, Ottoman conquest, displacement of refugees, and widespread Islamic conversion helped to produce a tangled map of religious and ethnic diversity on the Balkan Peninsula.\textsuperscript{33}

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\textsuperscript{32} The exact year of the Ottoman capture of Adrianople is somewhat in question. Historians estimate that it occurred between 1361 and 1371. Donald Edgar Pitcher explains that early Ottoman history is "so intertwined with legend and so abounding that scarcely an event can be dated with any certainty before the Battle of Kosovo in 1389." Still, most sources contend Murad I's capture of Adrianople occurred around 1361. Donald Edgar Pitcher, \textit{An Historical Geography of the Ottoman Empire: From Earliest Times to the End of the Sixteenth Century} (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1972) 35-41.

\textsuperscript{33} West, \textit{Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia}, 9-11
By the nineteenth century, revolts across the Balkans threatened Ottoman control over the region. It was evident that the Turks, having fallen behind the Russians and Europeans in military technology and battlefield tactics, remained in possession of an over-stretched empire that had grown weak and complacent. Militarily, the late-19th-century Ottomans were a far cry from their 14th century ancestors. In 1912, with Russian encouragement, Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, and Serbia established the “Balkan League” in defiance of their Ottoman rulers. Later that year, they initiated the first of two brief, but bloody, “Balkan Wars” that left more than 150,000 dead and the national boundaries within the Balkans redrawn. The wars ended the long period of Ottoman rule in the region.

The land grab that followed added nationalist complexities to longstanding religious and ethnic tensions. Following nationalist logic, each of the Balkan states sought to expand its territory at its neighbors’ expense. These identities, born in the Middle Ages and nurtured under Ottoman rule, yielded a tangled map, shot through with religious and ethnic tensions.

Further violence and warfare plagued the Balkans throughout the rest of the 20th century. Serbian nationalism famously contributed to the outbreak of the First World War. The other Balkan states entered the conflict in the hope of furthering


35 M. Hakan Yavuz and Isa Blumi. eds, War and Nationalism: The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913, and Their Sociopolitical Implications, The Utah Middle East Series, (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press 2013) 31.

their own political goals. The Treaty of Versailles rewarded those who had allied themselves with the Great Powers with more territory, leading to the new kingdom of Yugoslavia and an enlarged Romania.

Meanwhile, the treaty punished the Balkan allies of the defeated Central Powers. Further political and economic problems plagued the Balkan states during the interwar years.\(^\text{37}\) The German invasion of Yugoslavia in March 1941 ushered in a four-year period of occupation, resistance, fratricide, and genocide - a particularly brutal chapter to Balkan history known as “Ustasha Terrors.”\(^\text{38}\)

The Croat and Catholic “Ustasha” quickly aligned themselves with the Nazis, further exacerbating both ethnic and religious friction during their pursuit of a “fifty-year-long policy of intolerance” as advised by Hitler.\(^\text{39}\) The Croats adopted the slogan, “Convert a third, expel a third, and kill a third” when dealing with non-Catholics within their grasp. Slaughtering combatants and civilians alike, the Ustasha executed their orders with such ferocity that they horrified some of the most hardened of Hitler’s SS.\(^\text{40}\)

After World War II, a charismatic communist leader and resistance leader, Josip “Tito” Broz assumed power in Yugoslavia. As president, and virtual dictator, Tito was able to subdue the ethnic, religious, and nationalist tensions in his country.


\(^\text{39}\) West, *Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia*, 77-87

\(^\text{40}\) West, *Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia*, 97.
His answer to these rivalries was simple: Loyalty to Tito and Yugoslavia was all that mattered. He adopted the slogan, “Brotherhood and Unity” as he suppressed nationalism with an iron fist; loyalty to any other cause, was punishable with prison, exile, or even execution.\(^4\)

Tito’s death in 1980 marked the beginning of Yugoslavia’s collapse. Spurred along by the collapse of the Iron Curtain, from 1989 to 1991, the regime crumbled and the central government lost power and influence, giving the republics ample reason to break away to form their own nations. By this time Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic exploited and fanned the growing upsurge of Serbian nationalism en route to becoming the most powerful political figure in Yugoslavia.\(^5\)

The Serbs, who had controlled much of the arsenal of the former Yugoslav army, began a campaign of systematic murder, rape, and torture against their former Croat and Muslim neighbors in an attempt to form “ethnically pure” Serb governments in Croatia and Bosnia.\(^6\)

On March 3, 1992, Bosnia declared its independence from Yugoslavia. Most Bosnian Serbs boycotted the new Bosnian government, choosing instead to take up arms. Violence erupted immediately, and by late March 1992, the streets of many Bosnian cities were afflicted with open warfare. Bosnian Serbs initiated the fighting, but it quickly grew into a complicated three-way territorial war among the Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, and Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims). Though the fighting was

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mostly contained within the Bosnian borders, the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats received varying amounts of support from Serbia and Croatia respectively.

At the outbreak of the fighting, many analysts turned to the region’s deep past and argued that its future was doomed to founder on the rocks of centuries of ethnic and religious hatred. They argued that the Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks have been fighting for so long, and that hate is so ingrained into their culture, that they will continue to propagate violence toward one another.\footnote{At the most influential of these authors during the early 1990s was Robert Kaplan, whose book \textit{Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History} suggested that nothing could be done by outsiders to bring peace to a region so steeped in violence. Kaplan’s work had a profound effect on many policymakers, including some key members of the Clinton administration. Robert Kaplan, \textit{Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993)} In reality, it is easy to pick a few bloody chapters of Balkan history and assume that violence has always, and will always plague the region, but this practice distorts reality. One could reach similar conclusions about many Western nations.\footnote{Historian and current chairman of the Bosnian Institute in London, Noel Malcolm uses bloody chapters of the history of France to illustrate that a country’s bloody past does not determine its direction. Noel Malcolm, \textit{Bosnia: A Short History} (New York: New York University Press), xxi – xxii.}

The Balkans have witnessed much bloodshed, but they have also enjoyed long periods of peace and tranquility. In many cities, multi-ethnic neighborhoods prospered, and families lived and worked with neighbors of different faiths and backgrounds. The rate of intermarriage was so significant that no Balkan province could claim to be ethnically homogenous.\footnote{Both Holbrooke and Malcolm repeatedly mention the significance of these periods of tranquility to Balkan history. Holbrooke in particular notes that the ethnic groups in Bosnia had lived and worked together in “every walk of life.” He notes the “considerable” intermarriage and friendships despite their neighbors’ ethnicities. Holbrooke, \textit{To End a War} 23.} These periods of peace did as much as any of the violence to create Balkan diversity. Yet many Western commentators
emphasized the stories of conflict and downplayed the periods of peace, perhaps because bloodshed sells more books.

Whatever the “truth” of Balkan history, this supposed and complicated past of occasional explosions of hatred resulting in the wholesale slaughter of belligerents and civilians formed a key part of American policymakers’ perceptions. Other perceptions weighed in as well. The wave of civilian massacres occurred in the shadow of the “Hour of Europe,” at a time when the great powers believed (or hoped) such atrocities were a thing of the past. While the Americans and Europeans agreed that the violence needed to stop, a military intervention would have to be handled carefully, and had several potential consequences. The war posed a threat to the stability of Europe, while too great a degree of American involvement threatened to undermine the authority of the European Community. Additionally, intervention had the potential to damage the fragile friendship between the U.S. and Russia as the Russians (historically allied with the Serbs) were turning toward democracy.

Perhaps the most important concern for U.S. policymakers was the potential for American bloodshed. During the 1990s, the Balkan combatants had displayed a thirst for violence that troubled the American public. Potential centuries of peace notwithstanding, the Balkan states had recently displayed some of the most extreme and violent examples of hatred that the world has been forced to witness. The U.S. had recently enjoyed a quick, decisive victory in Iraq that saw the Iraqis fleeing from the battlefield in the face of American technology. The Serbs seemed to be displaying a tenacity that the Iraqis had not. This had convinced many in
Washington that the Serbs would not run from the Americans.\textsuperscript{47} They were blooded, and not likely to halt their crusade because the Americans told them to do so. The Bosnian War promised the potential for real American bloodshed and quagmire.

The Bosnian War

As noted before, Tito's death in 1980 marked the beginning of Yugoslavia's collapse. From 1989 to 1991, communism crumbled and the central government lost power and influence, giving the republics ample reason to break away to form their own nations. In June 1991, the republics of Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence from Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav federal army promptly invaded Slovenia to prevent their secession. After 10 days of fighting, however, the European Community brokered a ceasefire guaranteeing the Slovenes their independence. The Yugoslavians agreed to withdraw all troops and equipment from the region in three months.48

Croatian Independence was not secured so quickly or decisively. Ethnic Serbs with support from Yugoslav forces declared war on the newly independent nation of Croatia. They seized about a third of the country – mostly areas where ethnic Serbs made up the majority of the population. Yugoslav aircraft bombed the Croatian government headquarters in Zagreb as ground forces moved to within 10 miles of the Croatian capital. Croatia responded by severing all ties with Yugoslavia and a brutal war ensued.49 In September 1991, The U.N. Security Council decided to


prohibit the export of all weapons to the territories of the former Yugoslavia. The embargo’s aim was to halt the violence by restricting the supply of weapons going into the region.50

In December 1991, Germany officially recognized Croatia’s independence, and the rest of the European Community followed shortly after. In January 1992, U.N. envoy Cyrus Vance negotiated a ceasefire in Croatia, and 14,000 U.N. Peacekeepers deployed to enforce the shaky peace agreement. The presence of the peacekeepers reduced the violence, but sporadic fighting and occasional ceasefire violations would continue until August 1995, when two major Croatian offensives would expel the ethnic Serb forces from the country.51

Encouraged by the actions of their neighbors, Bosnia declared its independence from Yugoslavia in March 1992. In response, most Bosnian Serbs chose to take up arms rather than participate in the political process. By late March, the streets of many Bosnian cities were afflicted with open warfare. The U.S. and European Community officially recognized Bosnia’s independence in April 1992.52 Serbia and Montenegro moved quickly to preserve the remainder of Yugoslavia.


They established the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, though the new state received little international recognition.53

Backed by Yugoslav forces, the ethnic Serbs not only took their fight to the Bosnian government army, but also turned on the non-Serb citizens of Bosnia. They quickly seized large portions of the country (eventually, the Serbs would almost two-thirds of the Bosnian geography) and began a campaign of ethnic cleansing in an effort to create a “pure” Bosnian Serb state. Bosnian President Izetbegovic asked the U.N. Security council to intervene, but they declined to send peacekeepers.

In early May, Yugoslavian and Bosnian Serb forces attacked Sarajevo, but Bosnian Special Forces soldiers and local gang members thwarted the Serb assault. Still, the Yugoslavian forces managed to kidnap President Izetbegovic at the airport after he had returned from negotiations in Lisbon. The Yugoslavians used Izetbegovic as leverage to guarantee their safe exit from Sarajevo. On May 18, the Bosnian and Yugoslavian governments reached a shaky peace agreement and Yugoslavia withdrew their forces from Bosnia, but left their heavy weapons in the hands of the Bosnian Serbs.54

With the Yugoslavian forces gone, the Bosnian Serbs escalated their campaign of violence all across the country. By the end of May, they had shelled Red Cross and UN relief convoys, overran and massacred the inhabitants of the village of


Kozarac, and began an artillery barrage of Sarajevo. The U.N. Security Council responded to these actions by passing Resolution 757, which imposed economic sanctions on Serbia, on May 30, 1992. The Bosnian Serb shelling of Sarajevo intensified. The escalation of violence had captured the world’s attention, and the international community initiated efforts to reopen the airport in Sarajevo for humanitarian relief flights. The U.N. Security Council agreed to send 1,500 peacekeepers from their Protection Force (UNPROFOR) to secure the Sarajevo airport. The U.N. authorized its member states to take “all measures necessary” to assist in the delivery of humanitarian aid to Bosnia, and by August, had authorized the use of force to protect aid convoys.

In October 1992, the U.N. Security Council established a War Crimes Commission to investigate widespread reports of atrocities including mass rape, torture, starvation, and executions committed by all sides, particularly the Bosnian Serbs. NATO forces deployed to Bosnia under U.N. authorization and the Security Council instituted a “no-fly zone” over Bosnia. President Bush threatened to use U.S.


airstrikes to enforce the U.N. no-fly zone. In November, the U.N. authorized its member states to enforce the Serbian embargo on the high seas.\textsuperscript{59}

January 1993 offered some hope for peace as U.N. Envoy Cyrus Vance and E.C. envoy Lord David Owen presented their peace plan, which would divide Bosnia into 10 autonomous provinces under a decentralized federal government. Bosnian Croat forces immediately accepted the Vance-Owen plan, eventually the Bosnian government and even Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic (after being threatened with further U.N. sanctions) would accept a modified version of the plan, the but it fell through when the Bosnian Serbs rejected it. Following the failure of the Vance-Owen peace plan, the U.N. established a War Crimes Tribunal to investigate and prosecute barbarities committed in all former Yugoslav republics since January 1, 1991.\textsuperscript{60}

Determined to step up American efforts toward peace in Bosnia,\textsuperscript{61} President Clinton authorized the aerial delivery of relief supplies to Bosnian Muslims in February 1993, after Bosnian Serb forces denied passage of aid convoys to besieged

\textsuperscript{59} Clark, \textit{Bosnia: What every American Should Know}, 95.

\textsuperscript{60} Clark, \textit{Bosnia: What every American Should Know}, 97.

\textsuperscript{61} In a memorandum from Tony Lake to President Clinton, Lake stated that Clinton’s foreign policy team was considering how the U.S. would “increase its longer-term goal in the humanitarian effort. In fact,” Lake wrote, “we should try to use this action as leverage with the parties on the ground to cease interference with relief convoys and relief agencies (and their UNPROFOR escorts) to be more assertive in getting the convoys through.” Memorandum - Anthony Lake to President William J. Clinton, “Presidential Decision on Humanitarian Air Drops for Bosnia,” February 19, 1993. \textit{CIA Historical Collection}, accessed June 13, 2015, online at http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/1817859/1993-02-19C.pdf
areas. The Clinton administration encouraged the U.N. to tighten the sanctions on Serbia and proposed a “lift and strike” policy toward the Bosnian Serbs. Clinton had campaigned on this policy during the 1992 election, and now he was proposing “lift and strike” as a workable policy in Bosnia. For the most part, the European Community disagreed that “lift and strike” would have a beneficial impact on the situation on the ground. They felt the most likely consequence of lifting the arms embargo would be a flood of weapons to all sides, resulting in the fighting and killing rising to new levels. They also feared the Bosnian Serbs would launch preemptive assaults the ethnic Croats and Muslims in Bosnia.

In April 1993, the U.N. passed Security Council Resolution 819, which designated the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica as a safe area. Furthermore, the Security Council demanded the “unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance to all parts of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina” and that “the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) immediately cease the supply of military arms, equipment and services to the Bosnian Serb paramilitary units in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.”

NATO initiated “Operation Deny Flight” to enforce the U.N. no fly zone over Bosnia. Eventually, NATO would expand the operation to

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include close air support for U.N. troops and coercive airstrikes.\textsuperscript{65} The first American combatants would see combat in support of Operation Deny Flight. In May, the passed U.N. passed Security Council Resolution 824, extended their safe areas to include the cities of Sarajevo, Bihac, Zepa, Gorozade, and Tuzla. Regardless of U.N. resolutions, Bosnian Serbs continued to carry out military operations in the designated safe areas.\textsuperscript{66}

Thorvald Stoltenberg of Norway, who replaced Vance Cyrus as U.N. mediator and Lord David Owen proposed a new peace plan in June 1993. The Owen-Stoltenbrg plan called for dividing Bosnia into 3 ethnic regions. Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat forces intensified offensive operations against the Bosnian government in order to increase their holdings in the event of partition. The Owen-Stoltenberg plan was accepted by Croatia and Yugoslavia, but the Bosnian government rejected the plan due to territorial disputes with the Bosnian Serbs.\textsuperscript{67}

The second half of 1993 saw an increase of violence by Bosnian Croats. In August, they besieged the town of Mostar and refused to allow humanitarian convoys access to the Muslim town. President Clinton ordered additional aerial deliveries of food and medical supplies to the besieged Bosnian Muslims there. In October, the U.N. military command in Bosnia reported the rape, torture, and


massacre of Bosnian Muslims in the town of Stupni Do. U.N. officials believed that Bosnian Croats were responsible for the atrocities. In addition, Bosnian Croats fired upon U.N. forces before allowing them to enter Stupni Do.\textsuperscript{68}

In early 1994, the violence in Bosnia increased. In February, Bosnian Serbs began shelling U.N. safe areas. They launched a mortar strike into bread lines in a marketplace, killing 68 civilians. In response, the U.S. and France threatened the Bosnian Serbs with airstrikes if the Serbs did not remove their heavy weapons from the vicinity of Sarajevo. Russia intervened to ensure the Bosnian Serbs complied. Later that month, NATO shot down 4 Bosnian Serb aircraft for violating the U.N. no-fly zone.\textsuperscript{69} Bosnian Serbs renewed their shelling of U.N. safe areas in April. The town of Gorozade fell under Bosnian Serb control. Russia criticized the Bosnian Serb aggression and NATO responded with more airstrikes, forcing Bosnian Serb forces to withdraw from Gorozade.\textsuperscript{70}

In mid 1994, the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives voted to unilaterally lift the U.N. arms embargo against the Bosnian government, increasing tensions between the U.S. and its NATO allies. France threatened to withdraw their

\textsuperscript{68} Clark, \textit{Bosnia: What every American Should Know}, 101-103.


\textsuperscript{70} Clark, \textit{Bosnia: What every American Should Know}, 106-107.
peacekeepers from UNPROFOR if the embargo was lifted.\textsuperscript{71} President Clinton vetoed the measure and the move to unilaterally lift the embargo failed.\textsuperscript{72}

In June 1994, U.N. mediator Yashui Akashi secured a one-month ceasefire, but fighting erupted again before the end of the month. The U.S., Britain, Germany, France, and Russia formed a “contact group” and proposed a new peace plan in July. The Five Powers Peace Plan was based on a territorial division of Bosnia where the Bosnian Croats and Muslims would control 51% of the country, while Bosnian Serbs would control the remaining 49%. Furthermore, the contact group threatened to multilaterally lift the arms embargo against the Bosnian government if the Bosnian Serbs rejected the plan. The Bosnian Serbs called the contact group’s bluff and rejected the peace plan, and the U.N. failed to lift the arms embargo. Later that month, NATO recommenced airstrikes against Bosnian Serb targets in response to a Bosnian Serb attack on U.N. personnel.\textsuperscript{73}

In September, Bosnian government forces launched offensive operations against Bosnian Serbs in and around Sarajevo. The U.N. threatened to withdraw peacekeepers and to recommend airstrikes against the Bosnian government if the Bosnian government were to continue offensive operations. In October however, Bosnian government forces attempted to move through a U.N. demilitarized area in

\textsuperscript{71} Clark, \textit{Bosnia: What every American Should Know}, 107.


\textsuperscript{73} Malcolm, \textit{Bosnia} 258-259.
order to attack Bosnian Serb forces. The U.N. forces repelled the Bosnian attack.\footnote{Clark, \textit{Bosnia: What every American Should Know}, 109-110.}

By November 1994, the Bosnian Government, Bosnian Croat, and Bosnian Serb forces were again locked in combat. Bosnian Serbs again violated the U.N. no-fly zone and again attacked a U.N. safe area; this time in Bihac. NATO aircraft attacked the airfield from which the Serb planes launched, damaging the runways. Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic refused to meet with U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali in Sarajevo to discuss the Bosnian Serb attack on Bihac.\footnote{Malcolm, \textit{Bosnia} 258-260.}

Despite previous failed attempts at peace in Bosnia, mid-December 1994 offered an unexpected and hopeful turn of events. Karadzic extended an invitation to former President Carter to visit Bosnia in the hopes that the two could broker some sort of peace agreement. President Carter insisted he had no intentions of being a permanent negotiator, but he hoped his trip might provide an opening to move toward a cessation of hostilities. Carter arranged a 4-month cease-fire, which proved to be the most successful bid for peace in Bosnia to that point. The Peace Carter brokered gave all sides hope for a permanent solution, but only proved to be the calm before the storm.\footnote{The Carter Center, Official Website, \textit{President Carter Helps Restart Peace Efforts in Bosnia-Herzegovina}, (Atlanta: September, 1, 1994) http://www.cartercenter.org/news/documents/doc214.html}
Clinton’s Policy Ambitions: A New Vision for the Post Cold War World

Upon entering the White House, Bill Clinton enjoyed a brief “honeymoon” period with his public. The American people, for the most part, were optimistic about the future and direction of the country. During the election campaign, Clinton had focused primarily on domestic issues, but he saw a weakness in George H. W. Bush’s Balkan policy.77

Though they were hardly surprised by its breakup, the Bush Administration viewed the crumbling of Yugoslavia with a “wait and see” attitude, and understandably so.78 Yugoslavia’s collapse and the subsequent violence occurred during the last year of Bush’s single term in office. With the multitude of other issues populating American headlines (German reunification, the breakup of the Soviet Union, and missions in Iraq in support of Operation Desert Shield/Desert

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78 Several in the administration warned of Yugoslavia’s break up years before it occurred. The Director of Central Intelligence officially reported that the fragmentation of Yugoslavia in October 1990. The National Intelligence Estimate report titled “Yugoslavia Transformed” that Yugoslavia would “cease to function as a federal state within one year” and would “probably dissolve within two.” Furthermore, the report asserted that “Economic reform will not stave off the breakup” and that there was "little the United States and its European Allies can do to preserve Yugoslav unity," and that Yugoslavs would see such efforts as "contradictory to advocacy of democracy and self-determination." Director of Central Intelligence, “Yugoslavia Transformed,” October 10, 1990, National Intelligence Estimate. William J. Clinton Presidential Library, (Hereafter CPL,) accessed June 14, 2015, Online: http://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/12289
Storm to name a few,) the breakup of Yugoslavia was an attractive issue to place on the back burner.79

During his presidential campaign, Clinton chose Bosnia on which to make his foreign policy stand, and within his first three months as president, Clinton had kept his promise to take a more aggressive position than the U.S. had previously taken.80 As the first president elected after the Cold War, He took office with a new, expanded vision for America’s position in the world. Clinton believed that the United States was a European power, whose presence was “essential to maintaining stability and peace throughout the Euro-Atlantic region.” He claimed “the critical lesson of this century is that our security is inextricably linked with Europe.”81 He said European peace and stability were central to American prosperity. The “first task” of the U.S., therefore, was to “help build, for the first time, an undivided Europe. When Europe is stable, prosperous, and at peace, America is more secure.” The central objective of Clinton’s broader vision was to “build a peaceful, integrated Europe within a New Atlantic Community that can effectively manage the security challenges of the 21st century.”82


Ensuring stability and spreading democracy were central to Clinton’s vision. He sought to enhance the security of all European states, to strengthen democratic and market reforms in Central and Eastern Europe, and to prevent the establishment of “dividing lines” in Europe that would recreate the European disunion of the Cold War. Clinton believed that “in a Europe without dividing lines, all states would share greater commonality of interests and objectives, former adversaries will continue to work together to tackle new challenges that threaten shared interests.”

Clinton’s vision for the U.S. role in the post-Cold War world differed markedly from that of his predecessor. George H. W. Bush understood American interests in a narrower terms. He felt that the U.S. should resist the urge to “tackle every international problem as its own.” Where Clinton was willing to accept that European issues could constitute American problems, Bush felt that the U.S. should not “postpone addressing our own domestic imperatives while we devote attention and resources to international demands.”


The publication of George H. W. Bush’s final National Security Strategy was delayed until January 1, 1993, just before Clinton’s inauguration. As may be expected for any White House document produced in an election year, the 1993 NSS focused on past accomplishments of the administration more than the future of national security. By the time the document was nearing publication, it was clear that President Bush would lose the election. The NSS was an attempt to shape the legacy of the 12-year Republican reign and prepare the field for the Clinton administration by setting the standards by which his foreign policy would be judged. When Clinton’s NSS was published in July 1994, it clearly represented a change in ideas for post-Cold War foreign policy. Clinton’s vision of national security is remarkably different and much broader than that of his predecessor.
Bosnia not only presented a glaring roadblock to Clinton’s vision for Euro-American stability, the issue also represented a clash between Bush’s narrow, Cold-War vision and Clinton’s more encompassing view of U.S. foreign policies. The Bush administration’s aversion to a real commitment in the Balkans had drawn criticism by many on both sides of the political spectrum. During the 1992 presidential campaign, Clinton saw this as an opportunity to gain some ground on the foreign policy front. During the campaign, he was critical of the Bush administration’s failure to address the human rights abuses in the Balkans. In response, Bush insisted that he was not willing to commit American combat forces into a potential Bosnian quagmire.

Clinton sought a greater U.S. role in Bosnia, but he assured a skeptical American population that he was not prepared immediately to send American combat troops into Bosnia. He was, however, committed to doing more than the previous administration to solve the Bosnian problem. Clinton advocated a “lift and strike” policy; a policy of lifting the arms embargo, which was hindering the war efforts of the Bosnian Muslims and Croats, and conducting airstrikes against Bosnian Serb forces.

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After the election, Clinton continued his emphasis on a stronger U.S. role in the Balkans. In Dec 1992, he publicly stated, “Anything we can do to try to turn up the heat (in Bosnia) to try to reduce the carnage is worth trying.”87 The Bush administration’s “hands-off” approach to Bosnia combined with their recent decision to kick the proverbial hornet’s nest in Somalia created a foreign policy predicament that was certain to test the new president right away. Somalia was the most immediate issue, but because of Clinton’s strong stance on the Balkans, Bosnia loomed ominous – like the 600 lb. gorilla in the Oval Office.

Clinton has been accused of hesitating on making many foreign policy decisions.88 However, evidence suggests this was not the case for Bosnia. Clinton’s mind was made up in this regard as it made for European security. He entered office with a very clear goal of a greater U.S. involvement in the Bosnian peace process. Bosnia constituted the most glaring issue preventing the implementation of Clinton’s vision for success within the “New Atlantic Community.”89


89 The New Atlantic Community is a term that many in the Clinton administration would use to describe the post-Cold War community of the European Union and the United States. It was later described in a speech by Warren Christopher as a community that would “transcend the artificial boundaries of Cold War Europe, and “give North America a deeper partnership with a broader, more integrated Europe on this continent and around the world.” Warren Christopher, “Speech in Commemoration of Secretary of State James Byrnes’ 1946 Speech of Hope,” September 6, 1996. Federation of American Scientists – Military Analysis Network, Accessed June 15, 2015. http://fas.org/man/nato/offdocs/us_96/dos960906.htm.
Clinton carefully selected a foreign policy team to deal with the Balkan crisis. Clinton surrounded himself with personnel who were supportive of a larger U.S. foreign policy role in the Balkans – some, like Vice President Al Gore and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright, were very quick to push for military intervention. Others, like Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) General Colin Powell, were more wary of using military force. Powell was the lone holdover from the Bush administration. He had offered to resign his position, but Clinton preferred to keep Powell on board until his tenure as CJCS was complete. Powell was the hugely popular hero of Operation Desert Storm, and the president knew keeping Powell bolstered the foreign policy and military credibility of his staff.

On the Bosnia issue, Powell remained committed to his policy of not risking American lives where he saw no U.S. interests at stake. He insisted that involving U.S. combat forces in Bosnia was the wrong move, as it could lead to a quagmire. Powell remained Clinton’s only resistance (from within his inner circle) in this respect.90

Countering Powell’s objections were the influential voices of Albright and Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who urged President Clinton to use military force to resolve the conflict as early as February 1993, though it was not a popular course of action at that time. Christopher recognized, long before his contemporaries, that American military intervention was not only needed, but

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90 Powell and Persico, My American Journey, 562.
would involve a major commitment. He argued that the Bosnian conflict represented U. S. interests and that America could not afford to ignore it.\textsuperscript{91}

Albright had personal motivations for wanting to halt the violence that plagued Europe. She immigrated to the United States from Czechoslovakia when she was eleven years old. Having witnessed firsthand the horrors of Nazi occupation of Eastern Europe, Albright attacked the Bosnian issue with vehemence. Her personal history was never far from her mind with regards to Bosnia.\textsuperscript{92}  Like Christopher, Albright actively sought a greater U.S. military participation in the Bosnian War. She stated that an American military presence in Bosnia might “intimidate the Bosnian Serb militia and their patrons in Belgrade.”\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{91} Though Christopher was not immediately the most ardent public supporter of American military intervention in Bosnia, he was among the most committed to finding an American solution to the European problem. Though the Clinton’s foreign policy team did not agree that the Vance-Owen peace plan represented the best chance for success in Bosnia, Christopher was certainly ready to support it, with U.S. military force, if necessary. In February 1993, Christopher led peace in Bosnia directly with U.S. interests – a stance that had not previously been taken. Christopher stated, “Bosnia tests our ability to adopt new approaches to foreign policy in a world that has fundamentally changed. It tests our democracy…It tests our willingness to help our institutions of collective security, such as NATO, evolve in ways that can meet the demands of a new age. It tests what wisdom we have gathered from this bloody century, and it measures our resolve to take early, concerted action against systematic ethnic persecution…We cannot afford to miss any further opportunities to help pursue a resolution to this conflict.” Warren Christopher, \textit{In the Stream of History: Shaping Foreign Policy for a New Era}, (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1998) 343-345.

\textsuperscript{92} Albright mentions being particularly horrified by her visits to mass graves and sites of atrocities in Bosnia and Croatia during several trips to the Balkans. She visited mass gravesites in Vukovar, Mostar, Brcko, and Bihac among others. She likens what she saw in such places to other Europeans being led away to “other unfamiliar, hard-to-spell places such as Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Dachau.” Albright draws parallels between the “ethnic cleansing” in Bosnia and the “political housecleaning” that took place in Nazi-occupied Poland. Such experiences fueled Albright’s fervor to solve the Bosnian crisis and explains her willingness to support American intervention in the Balksins. Albright, \textit{Madame Secretary} (New York: Hyperion, 2003) 179-194.

Further support from the inner circle came by the end of September 1993, when Powell’s tenure as CJCS ended. Clinton selected General John Shalikashvili as the new CJCS. Shalikashvili, like Albright, immigrated to America from Eastern Europe. Also like Albright, Shalikashvili was supportive of U.S. military intervention in Bosnia. Powell, had remained steadfast in his opposition to using military force in Bosnia, admitted to feeling like a “skunk at the picnic.” Powell spurned Secretary of Defense Les Aspin’s viewpoint that the Bosnian problem could be solved using airstrikes and high-tech weapons alone; he knew that solving a crisis like Bosnia would involve ground forces. Powell’s stance occasionally led to heated arguments with others, especially Madeleine Albright.

Clinton attempted to emulate Franklin D. Roosevelt’s style of making decisions. He regularly asked his advisors to debate a particular question in front of him. Unlike Roosevelt, however, Clinton could not resist jumping in. He often presented his own opinion and took an active part in forming policy. In such meetings, Clinton exhibited a willingness to go it alone and make decisions regardless of the advice he received. Some of his major policy decisions offer evidence of this habit, for instance his initiative to allow homosexuals to serve in the

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military, and later his decision to invade Haiti. In the administration’s early days, Clinton’s unorganized and decentralized decision-making process yielded a trial-and-error approach to foreign policy, which soon taught the president some painful lessons notably in Somalia and Rwanda.

Clinton concentrated the lion’s share of his foreign policy resources on Bosnia, which his team viewed as the most crucial crisis for U.S. foreign policy. From the very first meeting of the Clinton staff, Bosnia was their primary foreign policy concern. The violence in Bosnia represented the European instability that Clinton desired to abolish in order to usher in his new vision for the U.S. in the New Atlantic Community. Furthermore, it was the international issue about which candidate Clinton had most sharply criticized Bush, and now as president, Clinton was determined to handle the situation.

In February 1993 - less than a month after taking office - Clinton reasserted his commitment to U.S. involvement in the Balkans. He stated that the U.S. needed to take a bolder stance against Serbian aggression. Specifically, Clinton said, “We’ve got to get the heavy weapons out of utilization…we’ve got to toughen the embargo.

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98 Political Scientist Stanley Renshon argued that Clinton’s “freewheeling staff system without clear lines of authority” indicated a certain degree of control that Clinton exercised over his staff – Clinton ensured his control over the situation by establishing an impromptu system of decision making with no clear “lines of authority.” Stanley Renshon, High Hopes: The Clinton Presidency and the Politics of Ambition (New York: New York University Press 1996) 260.


100 Powell and Persico, My American Journey, 576.
against the Serbs. We ought to open a United Nations war crimes inquiry, and we ought to enforce the no-fly zone against Serbian aircraft, strongly.”

Clinton asserted, perhaps rightly, that the U.S. would have to take the lead in order to force any real change in the Balkans, but he lacked the political power to act alone. Anticipating the pushback for committing U.S. resources to the Bosnian War, Clinton argued that European peace was best for U.S. national interest. In so doing, Clinton sent a clear message that his administration would take a much bolder stand on the Bosnian War.

I do not believe that the military of the United States should get involved unilaterally there now. We have to work with these other countries. And I might say that that's the position that General Powell and our foreign policy folks have taken. But this is a much more aggressive position than the United States has taken...We're not going to make peace over there in a way that's fair to the minorities that are being abused unless we get involved. And if we don't get involved and the thing spreads all over creation over there, then we'll be pulled into it in horrible ways that could be very dangerous to our people. So we ought to do what is right now. It's also what is safest for the United States.102

Just two weeks later, on February 25, 1993, President Clinton took the first step toward an American solution to the Balkan problem. In an effort to “create a somewhat better climate for negotiations,” and to encourage “good-faith negotiations” among the warring parties in Bosnia, Clinton announced that the U.S. would begin a campaign of aerial delivery of humanitarian supplies to the people of

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Bosnia. The Clinton administration made it clear that these humanitarian air drops were in response to an emergency situation in Bosnia and that the air drops could not substitute for the ground-relief convoys that were delivering supplies to the Bosnians. At the time Clinton was considering how he might use this humanitarian effort to increase the U.S. role in Bosnia.

In March 1993, Clinton announced that the United States was prepared to participate in the implementation of a negotiated peace settlement in Bosnia. He also hinted that U.S. combat troops could be used to enforce a negotiated peace in the region. He stated publicly that it would be an “error for the United States to introduce troops to become embroiled in the conflict,” but that the U.S. “should be prepared to make our contributions” to ensuring peace in the region. On March 12, 1993, Clinton told the sailors and Marines aboard the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Theodore...


104 In a memorandum from Tony Lake to President Clinton, Lake stated that Clinton’s foreign policy team was considering how the U.S. would “increase its longer-term goal in the humanitarian effort. In fact,” Lake wrote, “we should try to use this action as leverage with the parties on the ground to cease interference with relief convoys and relief agencies (and their UNPROFOR escorts) to be more assertive in getting the convoys through.” Memorandum from Anthony Lake to President William J. Clinton, “Presidential Decision on Humanitarian Air Drops for Bosnia,” February 19, 1993. CIA Historical Collection, accessed June 15, 2015. online at http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/1817859/1993-02-19C.pdf


Roosevelt that “human suffering . . . may not threaten our shores, but still they require us to act.”

Later that month, during a press conference with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Clinton publicly supported the ongoing Vance-Owen Plan - though most in the administration did not have much faith in its success. Clinton’s goal was to secure an agreement from the Serbs to end the fighting, either diplomatically, or through the pressure of increasing the restrictions on the Serbians. Later in the conference, the president reaffirmed his willingness to enforce any peace plan in Bosnia, stating “the United States would be prepared to participate in a multinational effort to help keep the peace.”

In April 1993, Clinton directed the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to explore “whether Americans should intervene and fight in the Serbian-Bosnian war” as they had concluded “negotiations will not resolve this issue.”


108 Of the four ill-fated peace plans aimed at ending the violence in Bosnia, the Vance-Owen Plan is the most well known. The plan called for Bosnia-Herzegovina to be segmented into 10 semi-autonomous regions. The plan was initially agreed upon by the Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims, but the Bosnian Serbs hesitated and eventually refused to sign.


During Clinton’s first 3 months in office, he had kept his promise to increase America’s responsibility in the Balkans. He succeeded in pressuring the United Nations to enforce a no-fly zone on Serbian aircraft (which U.S. pilots would help NATO to enforce,) he and to tighten their sanctions on the Serbs. More importantly, he had established the U.S. as a player in the Bosnian peace process. Clinton continued to push his Bosnia policy throughout the first two years of his presidency, and behind the scenes, Clinton designated the Bosnia issue as his foreign policy team’s top priority.

Clinton exhibited his determination to solve the Bosnian problem early on, despite the previous administration’s reluctance to get involved. Bush had stayed out, and the Balkan crisis had become a catastrophe. Clinton was determined to use his presidency to get the Bosnian War under control. As he envisioned a broader role for the U.S. on the world stage, he felt that history had proven that “an unstable Europe eventually imperils vital American national security interests.” Still, providing an American solution to the Balkan problem would not be an easy task for the new president. Clinton would encounter formidable resistance on several fronts that would challenge his vision for the future of the New Atlantic Community.


International Challenges: The Hour of Europe and Russian Democracy

The European Community presented a challenge to Clinton’s vision for Euro-American stability. Though Clinton saw the U.S. and Europe as “inextricably linked,” the Europeans did not necessarily in see it that way. As the European Community evolved into the European Union, the Europeans believed that their star was on the rise and preferred the U.S. keep out of European affairs. Many European leaders envisioned a cohesive and active Europe that would establish a sphere of influence – proving that the EU in itself could be an international actor. Their vision of the post-Cold War world included one of a prominent European state that could compete with the U.S. in power and influence. The Europeans were committed to this vision. They were willing to risk their own soldiers defending it, as long as they would deploy under a European flag. The Europeans felt the time had come for Europe to handle its own problems without the assistance of the U.S. The Bosnian War represented a perfect opportunity for the Europeans to prove their case.

The idea that Yugoslavia represented a uniquely “European problem,” added to the chaos surrounding the Bosnian War. During the first year of the war,

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116 Many blame the idea of the “European problem.” This idea of a European problem has served as discussion for David Rieff, James Gow, Richard Holbrooke, and countless other politicians, journalists, and historians who have covered the apprehension of the West to react appropriately to the breakup of Yugoslavia. Among the most effective and stinging narratives remains Brendan Simms’ *Unfinest Hour: Britain and the Destruction of Bosnia*. In this work, Simms admonishes Prime Minister John Major administration and illustrates how Britain is especially guilty, not only for its own inaction, but
European leaders encouraged the U.S. to keep out of Bosnia; the Bush Administration happily obeyed, and for the first time since World War II, the U.S. would allow the Europeans to handle a major security issue entirely on their own. With the Soviet Union gone and Germany recently united, the Bush administration viewed situation in Bosnia as an opportunity for the European Community to establish themselves in the “new world order.” Bush’s Secretary of State, James A. Baker III claimed it was time to “make the Europeans step up to the plate and show that they could act as a unified power. Yugoslavia was as good a first test as any.”

In reality this was a questionable “first test,” as the stakes for international security were high, and the European Community had never shown that they could act as a “unified power” without U.S. leadership. As a result, hostility erupted throughout the region as Yugoslavia central government crumbled and the country spiraled into war. Despite the violence, there was not much American public support for a military intervention. In 1991, describing the administration’s attitude toward Yugoslavia, Baker said, “We got no dog in this fight” The Balkan crisis elicited little attention from the White House.

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for preventing other nations from getting involved as well. Simms accuses the Brits of having done “more than any other major Western country” to obstruct military assistance to Bosnia.


119 The dynamic situation brewing in Yugoslavia was in its infancy (or still developing) when Reagan left office, and Bush continued to support a unified Yugoslavian government until its breakup was imminent. Bush insisted in three separate phone conversations with Yugoslavian leaders, that the
The Americans were not alone in this respect. Most European leaders did not favor American role in any quandary on European soil. As European Community President Jacques Delors stated in 1991, “We do not interfere in American affairs; we trust America will not interfere in European affairs.”

Jacques Poos, the chairman of the European Community’s Foreign Affairs Council stated this case more pointedly, “This is the Hour of Europe – not the hour of the Americans . . . If one problem can be solved by the Europeans, it is the Yugoslav problem. This is a European country, and it is not up to the Americans.”

Poos’s confident words were a sign of Europe’s growing independence from the U.S. With the Cold War now over, Europe felt an increasing burden to carry its share of the security load, especially on their continent. The Bush administration had made it clear that they welcomed Europe’s leadership role in the “new world

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United States and Yugoslavia shared a “special relationship” and pledged American support (in the form of finances and equipment) even as the legally recognized Yugoslav government was crumbling.


120 Holbrooke, To End a War, 21.

order.” As far as Poos was concerned, the European Community was accepting the challenge that the post-Cold War world presented. In fact, among many in the European Community, the Yugoslav crisis was viewed as a welcome challenge for the Europeans.

This sentiment was understandable considering the European Community was growing both in size and in influence. After the fall of the Soviet Union, East Germany joined the European Community as part of a reunited Germany, while other Eastern European countries clamored to join the EC. In November 1993, the twelve nations of the EC signed the Maastricht Treaty and officially established the European Union. Three more nations joined the EU within three years of the signing. Being well on their way to becoming an all-encompassing supranational entity, the Europeans saw their potential as endless. Having spent the previous 45 years sitting at “ground zero” of any conflict between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War brought a sense of liberation to Europe.

While the European desire to handle the Bosnian crisis alone may have been reasonable, they made no progress toward actual peace in the region. When President Clinton took office, the European position remained firm, despite the energy that the new president exhibited toward solving the Balkan problem. Early research into the Bosnian War gave Clinton reason to doubt that the Europeans were up to the task of resolving the conflict.

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A December 1992 intelligence report, ordered by Clinton’s transition team, indicated that the Europeans had not adequately enforced the U.N. sanctions against Serbia. The report detailing the sanctions indicated that though the sanctions did hurt the Serbian economy, “loopholes and violations of the UN sanctions regime have allowed Serbia and Montenegro continued access to energy and key industrial imports.” The report highlighted the numerous land and water routes that connected Serbia with its neighbors provided “numerous opportunities for circumventing sanctions” and suggested that the international sanctions monitors were neither sufficiently manned nor funded to stop the Serbs from outwitting the UN and the European Community.124

Clinton’s underscoring the immediacy of the Balkan crisis showed the Europeans that the U.S. wanted play a greater role in finding a solution. Not all of the Europeans were eager to have the Americans involved. Despite their new-found independence, by 1993, the European Community hadn’t been able to contain the Balkan crisis. The European nations realized that U.S. power, money, and influence could help bring about a lasting peace. Despite their desire to go it alone, the Europeans accepted the new administration’s role.

In February 1993, Clinton announced his policy toward the former Yugoslavia. The UK immediately welcomed the new American initiative. Prime

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Minister John Major and Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd “noted the importance of NATO planning and U.S. involvement in any ... durable settlement and ceasefire in Bosnia.” Major also stated “the willingness of the United States to participate in the implementation of a fair and workable agreement will give confidence, particularly to the Bosnian Muslims, that a lasting settlement is now a real prospect.”

Other members of the European Community were cautiously optimistic, and expressed relief at Clinton’s “emphasis on diplomacy.” They made it clear that they expected “more concrete assistance from Washington, including troops and money to support the peacekeeping force.” While smaller European nations like Spain and Belgium indicated that they would pull their troops from the UN peacekeeping force if U.S. involvement “increased the level of violence and risk to their troops.”

As European-initiated peace plans fell apart, and The European-led U.N. peacekeeping force had failed to keep any peace in Bosnia, the Clinton administration ascertained the Europeans were losing control of the situation in Bosnia. In February 1994, the Bosnian Serbs shelled a Sarajevo marketplace, killing dozens of innocent people. Ethnic cleansing was rampant, and enthusiastically carried out by all sides, though the Serbs were the worst perpetrators (responsible for more than 90 percent of identified cases of ethnic cleansing.) By April 1994,

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Bosnian Serb forces had seized control of roughly two thirds of Bosnia, “cleansing” more than 2,000 towns and villages.128

Also, Bosnian Serb forces regularly turned back UN aid convoys refusing to let the peacekeepers provide assistance to Croats and Muslims in the regions that they controlled.129 The situation was becoming increasingly dire, and any hope for a lasting peace was fading. It was evident that without some extreme motivation to halt their aggressions - which the Europeans were not able to provide, - the Bosnian Serbs would continue their hostilities.

Boris Yeltsin also gave Clinton pause. Though not part of Clinton’s New Atlantic Community, Russia represented an opportunity to “strengthen democratic and market reforms.”130 As it attempted to make the transition from communism to democracy, Clinton wanted to assist Yeltsin in this process while building a friendly relationship between the U.S. and Russia. In a January 1993 memorandum from Clinton to Aspin, Clinton articulated the importance of assisting the Russians in making this transition. He stated, “the political and economic transformation of the former Soviet Union into peaceful market-oriented democracies will directly reduce the security threat to the United States and lead to substantial savings in the cost of


the defense of the United States.”

Clinton described the budding relationship between the U.S. and Russia as a “partnership of mutual respect based on a shared commitment to democracy...and working together to make the 21st century a time of greater peace and greater freedom and greater prosperity for all the people of the world.” As a result of this partnership, Clinton carefully considered the Russians when making foreign policy decisions toward the Balkans.

The Balkan situation was not so simple for Yeltsin, however. Russia’s historical ties to Serbia complicated the situation. Yeltsin faced his own domestic pressure to show strong support for the Serbs. As a result, Yeltsin was willing to assist Clinton in working for peace in the region, but insisted the Serbian concerns received adequate attention.


133 The sentiment that Russia was on the wrong path during the immediate post-Cold War years was popular among many Russians. They felt that Yeltsin did not represent their vision for the future of Russia. People voicing these concerns looked for reasons to pounce on Yeltsin’s policies and embraced the Serbian cause. There were some in favor of a hard-lined coup. This sentiment represented a genuine threat to Yeltsin’s administration’s cooperation in the Bosnian peace process and to democracy in Russia.
The Clinton administration was legitimately concerned that their actions could push the Russians toward providing greater support for their Serbian cousins. A January 1993 CIA Intelligence memorandum titled “Moscow’s Yugoslav Policy Reaching Critical Juncture,” stated that “Yeltsin would be under increasing domestic pressure to break with the West on Yugoslavia if the international community decides to press a military solution to the conflict.” The memorandum later explained “military action in the Balkans almost certainly would provoke Russian nationalist groups to seek a closer alliance with Serbian hard liners” and possibly “send large numbers of volunteers to the region.” Additionally, these groups would also “move more vigorously to rally public opinion against Yeltsin” potentially damaging the Russian transition to democracy.\textsuperscript{134}

With his vision for the New Atlantic Community, Clinton saw Russia as an involved partner in European prosperity with as much to gain from European stability as the U.S. Clinton wanted to “ensure that Russia remains an important player in European security affairs and does not become marginalized or isolate itself.”\textsuperscript{135} Clinton was careful to involve Yeltsin in many key decisions affecting the Balkans. After the Clinton administration announced their official policy on Bosnia, Yeltsin communicated that “Russia was flattered to be drawn in as a major player and it supports a new diplomatic effort” but expressed a “desire to avoid

\textsuperscript{134} Memorandum from Director of Central Intelligence, “Moscow’s Yugoslav Policy Reaching Critical Juncture,” January 23, 1993, Office of Slavic and Eurasian Analysis, CPL. Accessed June 15, 2015, Online http://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/12302

exacerbating the conflict.” Because of domestic political pressure, Yeltsin remained “opposed to any use of force.” Moscow also wanted a “balanced approach that does not single out the Serbs for criticism or pressure.” Furthermore, the Russians called for “rewarding Serbia for its cooperation by lifting some of the sanctions.” Still, whether or not these conditions were met, the administration felt that “Russia would probably contribute to an expanded peacekeeping force.”

By 1993, it had become clear to the Europeans and the Russians that the Americans would play a significant role in any solution to the Bosnian crisis, European problem or not. Still, the Europeans maintained a disdain for American involvement that manifested from time to time. One example of such friction involving the U.S., Europe, and Russia was the debate on whether to lift the 1991 United Nations arms embargo. The Americans believed the embargo only prohibited the Bosnian Muslims and Croats from defending themselves, while favoring the Bosnian Serbs, who were already well armed with the stockpiles of weapons formerly possessed by the Yugoslavian Army. The Americans believed lifting the embargo would more quickly bring the war to a conclusion than the status quo. The Clinton administration attempted to convince the Europeans to lift the arms embargo. The Europeans, especially the British, vehemently resisted lifting the

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137 Bill Clinton, “Ending the Bosnian War”, Bosnia, Intelligence, and the Clinton Presidency, 2-8.
embargo (though Germany supported multilaterally lifting the embargo.) They saw lifting the embargo as an effort to “level the killing field,” which would only result in more violence. They also believed any lifting of the arms embargo would encourage the Croats and Bosnian Muslims to seek a military solution rather than a peaceful one. As a result, the European Community rejected American efforts and the arms embargo remained in place.138

Initial objections and continuous friction from the European Community combined with pressures from a Russian transition to democracy proved formidable foreign barriers to Clinton’s designs for peace in Bosnia, and to his visions for the post-Cold War world. A European reluctance to whole-heartedly participate in his New Atlantic Community led to friction in the Bosnian peace process. Despite the European Union’s expanding role in the “new world order” and Russia’s reluctance to abandon their historical ties with the Serbs, Clinton pressed forward. The resistance Clinton encountered from overseas was only half of the problem. His greatest opposition came from the home front.

Domestic Challenges: Political Adversaries, Media, and the American Public

The challenges posed by the European Community were minor compared to domestic ones. Clinton could persuade or pressure the Europeans to comply (or even act unilaterally, if necessary) with his actions in the Balkans. The bigger impediment would come from the American people and their elected representatives. These challenges posed the greatest challenge to Clinton's vision of the U.S. in the post-Cold War. Though Bush was out of office, there were still many who shared his narrow, Cold-War era view of foreign policy. These political adversaries resisted American intervention in Bosnia as there was no threat to American borders and no commercial interest to be gained by involving U.S. forces.

More importantly, the American public was largely apathetic toward the Balkans. The conflict did not occupy the headlines, and it was happening thousands of miles away. The public did not see Bosnia as an American problem. To make matters worse, Clinton's political adversaries continued to warn of impending doom if America did not steer clear of the Balkan problem. The American public resisted intervention in Bosnia for several reasons: the fear of involving U.S. forces in a European quagmire (post-Vietnam syndrome) the feeling that the mission would prove futile (due to ancient hatreds shared among the Bosnian people,) and American apathy toward a European crisis.
Clinton’s most direct domestic opposition came from his political rivals (mostly Republicans and a few fellow Democrats) who opposed intervention early on. Somalia had shown many policy makers the risks of committing American combat forces in areas with no American interests at stake. Although Clinton had not ordered the intervention in Somalia, he was clearly in charge by October 1993, when 18 soldiers were killed attempting to apprehend tribal warlords. American bloodshed and the lack of tangible U.S. interest in Somalia encouraged Clinton to withdraw American forces. The resulting media nightmare had cost the U.S. credibility and led to the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the region. Moreover the loss of American lives in Somalia had sobering effect on many Americans, and they had no desire to see a similar episode play out in the Balkans.\(^\text{139}\)

Republican Senator Bob Dole, Representative Newt Gingrich, and presidential contender Pat Buchanan were among Clinton’s most prominent opponents warning of a prolonged conflict in Bosnia. Even the popular General Powell had warned against a potential quagmire in Bosnia.\(^\text{140}\) Clinton’s opponents would agree to humanitarian assistance, lifting the arms embargo, or even backing


NATO airstrikes, but they proposed to fight tooth-and-nail to oppose the
introduction of American ground forces in Bosnia.\textsuperscript{141}

The arms embargo became a point of contention between Dole and Clinton.
Both Clinton and Dole supported lifting the embargo. Clinton however, desired a
multilateral lift in cooperation with Russia and the European Community, whereas
Dole wanted to lift the embargo unilaterally. In 1994, when the Europeans resisted
lifting the embargo, and Clinton refused to act unilaterally, Dole proposed legislation
that would allow the U.S. to unilaterally export arms to the Bosnian forces on the
battlefield.\textsuperscript{142}

The mid-term elections in 1994 resulted in a commanding victory for the
Republican Party, as they seized control of both the Senate and the House of
Representatives. In full control of congress and with the American public seemingly
losing faith in the president, the GOP had reason to be optimistic.\textsuperscript{143} Bosnia
appeared to be an issue through which Dole could oppose Clinton while connecting
with the American people. Dole had consistently called for a more aggressive policy
toward Bosnia (especially in terms of lifting the arms embargo,) but he resisted the

\textsuperscript{141} Hamilton, \textit{Bill Clinton}, 490-491.

\textsuperscript{142} Clarkson Hine, Press Release, April 21, 1994, “Lift Bosnia Arms Embargo: Dole/Lieberman
Amendment Requires Termination of U.S. Arms Embargo Against Bosnia.” \textit{Robert J. Dole Special
Archive and Collections, University of Kansas}, accessed June 24, 2015, Online:

\textsuperscript{143} Gallup Poll, “Bill Clinton’s Presidential Job Approval,” Presidential Approval Ratings -- Bill Clinton,
\textit{Gallup}. Accessed June 14, 2015, Online: http://www.gallup.com/poll/116584/presidential-
approval-ratings-bill-clinton.aspx
introduction of ground forces into Bosnia.\textsuperscript{144}

By 1995, Dole had garnered considerable support in Washington for a unilateral lift. In June 1995, 112 members of congress had written Clinton urging him to unilaterally lift the arms embargo. They argued that Bosnia was a sovereign, independent country whose citizens possessed an “inalienable right to defend themselves against Serbian aggression.” The embargo, they insisted, denied them of this “fundamental right.” They asserted that the U.S., as the “leader of the free world,” must, for the sake of their “national conscience” act unilaterally and lift the arms embargo. The representatives further argued that our European allies did not recognize that the embargo was only hurting those it was meant to protect. “Those who argue that [the U.S.] cannot act unilaterally to lift the arms embargo,” they argued, “fail to see the basic difference between the arms embargo on Bosnia, a victim of aggression, and embargoes on renegade countries such as Iraq and Libya.”\textsuperscript{145}

Clinton responded to the representatives by insisting that a unilateral lift would “make a difficult situation even worse.” First, he insisted that such a move would trigger the UN to abandon their operations in Bosnia, resulting in a significant NATO commitment of ground forces. Next, Clinton stated that a unilateral lift would

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prompt the Bosnian Serbs to go on the offensive before the Bosnian government could acquire additional arms. Clinton then stated that increased fighting resulting from unilateral action could spill over into other regions of the former Yugoslavia. Also, Clinton argued that such action could encourage other states to ignore mandatory UN sanctions. Most importantly for Clinton was the fact that the U.S. would bear the sole responsibility for the consequences should such actions occur.146

Clinton steadfastly opposed Dole's bill and threatened to veto it should it pass. Clinton agreed that the embargo should be lifted, but he believed doing so unilaterally would have "serious implications going far beyond the conflict in Bosnia itself." Clinton believed a unilateral lift would undermine the UN efforts in Bosnia, strain his relationship with his European allies, damage the relationship with the post-Soviet Russian government, and most importantly, a unilateral lift would likely prove a tactical blunder.147

Clinton's assessment was based on a 1994 CIA intelligence report titled "Ending U.S. Compliance with the Bosnian Arms Embargo," which details the pros, cons, and likely reactions of unilaterally lifting the arms embargo. The report concluded that any U.S. decision to suspend compliance with the embargo and arm

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Bosnian government forces would only intensify the fighting in Bosnia. It would “not make a substantial difference on the battlefield unless heavy weapons, extensive training, and logistic support were included.”

The report further stated “Outside ground and air force intervention would be needed to defend vulnerable Bosnian positions until government forces were prepared to conduct effective multi-unit offensive operations.”

The report warned of additional problems for U.S.-European relations and the future of Russian cooperation. “The unilateral lifting of the embargo would “damage allied confidence in Washington’s leadership of the NATO alliance.” Russia would condemn such a move and “break its pattern of cooperation with the United States on the Yugoslav problem,” while possibly providing their own arms to the Serbs. Moreover, these “U.S. actions would legitimize Iran’s role in the region as an arms supplier to the Bosnian government.” The only positive to come out of the U.S. unilaterally supplying arms to the Croats and Muslims was that the move “would be welcomed in the Muslim world, especially by Turkey.”

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Dole’s unilateral lift proposal caused concern among European leaders, most notably Major and French President Jacques Chirac, who felt a unilateral lifting of the arms embargo by the Americans would not only undermine the efforts of the UN and cause damage within NATO, but also provoke a Serb onslaught in advance of the lift before the Croats and Bosniaks had a chance to arm themselves. Clinton had several conversations with European leaders assuring them that he had no intention of allowing a unilateral lift of the arms embargo to pass. Most notable was his conversation with French President Jacques Chirac, in which he bluntly told Chirac that he “vehemently opposed a unilateral lift” and should Dole’s proposal pass in congress, he would veto it.

Dole’s legislation to unilaterally lift the arms embargo was voted on and approved by Congress; both houses passed the bill by a two-thirds majority. Keeping with his promise to his European counterparts, Clinton vetoed the bill in August 1995. Clinton said of his decision, “I know that members of Congress share my goals of reducing the violence in Bosnia and working to end the war, but their

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vote to unilaterally lift the arms embargo is the wrong step at the wrong time.”

The arms embargo remained in place in all of the territories of the former Yugoslavia until January 2006, when the European Union agreed to completely lift the embargo.154

Despite domestic problems chipping away at his approval ratings, Clinton persisted. Not willing to “kick the can down the road,” Clinton constantly weighed the option of committing American combat forces (in the air or on the ground) to halt the Bosnian atrocities.155 In December 1994, Clinton pledged 20,000 American combat troops as part of a NATO effort to evacuate the U.N. peacekeeping force in


154 The European Union lifted the embargo on arms to the former Yugoslavia gradually in three different measures. In July 1999 the EU agreed to lift the embargo on exports of small arms to the police forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (EU Common Position 1999/481/CFSP.) In October 2001 they lifted the arms embargo on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as well as removing other restrictive measures (EU Common Position 2001/719/CFSP. In January 2006 EU the EU agreed on Common Position 2006/29/CFSP, which completely lifted the arms embargo. 


155 Hamilton, Bill Clinton, 490.
Bosnia, “if the allies decide to withdraw in the face of increased harassment and hostage-taking by nationalist Serbian forces.” This was in response to international concern (bolstered by a DCI National Intelligence Council estimate) that the U.N. might withdraw its forces “if there were a major deterioration in the security situation.” They believed that a U.N. withdrawal would “worsen the bloodshed, further discredit the United Nations and regional organizations, and cause a backlash [throughout Europe.]” Many feared the establishment of an Islamic peacekeeping force in Bosnia.

Clinton’s proposed commitment of U.S. combat forces to NATO would not be limited solely to the scenario of a U.N. withdrawal; they would be used to enforce any negotiated peace settlement in Bosnia. Clinton was making good on his 1993 promise that the United States was prepared to participate in the implementation of any negotiated peace settlement in Bosnia. Clinton stated in a December 1993 speech that his intention was to “use that occasion to reaffirm the strength and the durability of the transatlantic relationship” and to “make concrete progress in

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adapting NATO, one of the most successful military alliances in all history, to the new realities and opportunities it faces.”

With Congress and the American public opposed to military action in Bosnia, and with the situation posing no immediate security threat to the United States, the President would not unilaterally order military action. Clinton did not give up, but continued to face stiff resistance from his political rivals. In June 1995, Clinton engaged in discussions with European leaders about involving American ground forces in Bosnia as part of a multi-national, UN Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) of 12,500 personnel. While technically part of the UN Protective Forces, the RRF was not meant to fill a sustained combat role, but only to be deployed in the event that a situation on the ground proved too much for the UNPROFOR to handle. If the RRF were to deploy, they were only to remain on the battlefield until the UNPROFOR could effectively take control again.

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160 Clinton was somewhat restricted as far as ordering American troops into combat by the War Powers Respolution, which reads in part “The constitutional powers of the President as Commander-in-Chief to introduce United States Armed Forces into hostilities, or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances, are exercised only pursuant to (1) a declaration of war, (2) specific statutory authorization, or (3) a national emergency created by attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces.” The 93rd United States Congress, “Joint Resolution Concerning the War Powers of Congress and the President,” November 7, 1973, Lillian Goldman Law Library, Yale Law School, The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy. Accessed June 15, 2015. Online at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/warpower.asp

Despite some European support from French President Jacques Chirac, Senator Dole and Speaker Gingrich steadfastly refused to fund American participation in any proposed reaction force. Clinton attempted to use international pressure to convince his rivals, calling on French President Jacques Chirac to “break the stonewall.” Neither Dole nor Gingrich was willing to budge (Dole was eyeing a potential presidential run, and Gingrich was concentrating on a budget fight.\textsuperscript{162}

The RRF issue would resurface again at the end of June 1995, when having exhausted efforts to overcome Republican opposition, Clinton notified lawmakers that he would “draw down” $15 million from the emergency fund (previously appropriated for the Bosnia Mission) to provide airlift capability and equipment for the RRF.\textsuperscript{163} The RRF eventually deployed with French, British, and Dutch troops on the front lines, while the Americans played a support role donating money, equipment, and supplies.\textsuperscript{164}

\textsuperscript{162} Hamilton, \textit{Bill Clinton}, 490-491.


\textsuperscript{164} A collection of letters between Clinton, Dole, and Gingrich illustrates heated exchange. Dole and Gingrich admonished the president for providing U.S. resources for a “bloated and failed operation” while subjecting U.S. air crews to “greater risks than are necessary because of political sensitivities.” Later the congressmen referred to the entire Bosnia operation as a “costly failure.” Clinton stood by his decision claiming it was in the national interest to make a “voluntary contribution” to our NATO allies who would “deploy the forces, bear most of the burden, and take most of the risks.” He accused the two statesmen of harboring hopes that the UN mission would collapse; Clinton asked them to consider if Bosnia would then be better off.


Of course, Clinton’s opponents did not applaud his commitment of U.S. ground forces to the NATO effort. Dole, Powell, Buchanan, Gingrich and other critics of intervention warned the American public that U.S. ground forces in Bosnia would likely end up in a quagmire – more closely resembling Vietnam than Desert Storm.

Aside from the fear of involving U.S. forces in a long conflict, the idea of ancient hatreds did much to discourage Americans from supporting a greater U.S. role in halting the Bosnian War. Clinton’s political foes played heavily on this concern. Their conviction that the hatred shared among the Balkan combatants was so intense and interwoven into the history of the region that the U.S. (or anyone) could do nothing to prevent the fighting, led many to oppose U.S. involvement in the Balkan crisis.165 This idea was particularly popular with many politicians who did not want to entangle American forces in the Balkan conflict, especially when they could not prevent the Balkan people from killing each other. Ancient hatreds gave

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165 “Ancient Hatreds,” (the idea that the different cultural groups in the Balkans have hated each other so intensely and for so long that nothing will stop them from fighting) has played an interesting role both in the Clinton administration’s decision to intervene and in the historiography of the Bosnian War. Richard Holbrooke calls this phenomenon the “Rebecca West Factor,” because he blames the influence of Rebecca West’s seminal work *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia* on the history of the region. Holbrooke asserts West’s reliance on ancient hatreds as an explanation for violence in the Balkans as influenced other authors – most notably Robert Kaplan, who wrote the popular *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, which shaped many policy makers’ opinions of the Bosnian issue. Holbrooke considers Noel Malcolm’s *Bosnia: A Short History*, to be a superior work as it debunks the idea of ancient hatreds by highlighting long periods of Bosnian history where Serbs, Croats, and Muslims coexisted peacefully.

Powell remained one of staunchest critics of Clinton’s Bosnia policy. Aside from his warning against a European quagmire, Powell cited ancient hatreds as another reason for his apprehension. Even after his retirement from the Clinton foreign policy team, Powell persisted that his stance against American intervention was the correct one. For Powell, both experience and history influenced his perspective.

What I saw from my perch in the Pentagon was America sticking its hand into a thousand-year-old hornet’s nest with the expectation that our mere presence might pacify the hornets. When ancient ethnic hatreds ignited in the former Yugoslavia in 1991 and well-meaning Americans thought we should “do something” in Bosnia, the shattered bodies of Marines at the Beirut airport were never far from my mind in arguing for caution. There are times when American lives must be risked and lost. Foreign policy cannot be paralyzed by the prospect of casualties. But lives must not be risked until we can face a parent or a spouse or a child with a clear answer to the question of why a member of that family had to die. To provide a “symbol” or a “presence” is not good enough.\footnote{Powell and Persico, My American Journey, 291-292}

The American public agreed. They felt the ethnic groups in the Balkans had constantly been at war for thousands of years, and they would likely be fighting for thousands more, so there was no sense in spilling American blood trying to stop the inevitable. An honest look into Balkan history would have contradicted the myth of
ancient hatreds, but in the mid 1990s, few among the American public concerned themselves with such details.168

The fear of ancient hatreds did not grip everyone, however. There were several within the administration, who saw ancient hatreds as a misunderstanding of Balkan history. Madeleine Albright, Warren Christopher, and Richard Holbrooke are examples. In his book, To End a War, written about his experience in the Balkans, Holbrooke blames the widespread belief and fear of ancient hatreds on authors who have written about the Balkans. He bemoans their influence on many Americans, including some in the Clinton administration. Holbrooke regrets works like Noel Malcolm’s Bosnia: A Short History didn’t have more influence on policymakers.”169

Balkan Historian and current chairman of the Bosnian Institute in London, Noel Malcolm has written extensively on ancient hatreds, which he calls “misinformation.” He explains that to claim everything that occurred in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995 as an expression of ancient ethnic hatreds is absurd and short-sighted. He acknowledges that tensions certainly have existed in Bosnian history, but they were neither absolute not unchanging. Nor were they the inevitable consequences of the mixing together of different communities.170 The main basis of the hostility, Malcolm claims, was not religious or ethnic, but

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169 Holbrooke, To End a War, 22-24
economic; it varied as the economic conditions in Bosnia changed. Ancient hatreds were not built into the psyches of the Bosnian people; they were product of history and changed as history developed.\textsuperscript{171}

Most importantly, Clinton himself did not buy into the myth of ancient hatreds. In July 1995, he wrote a letter to Edward Damich, the president of the National Federation of Croatian Americans. In his correspondence, Clinton acknowledged that the “fighting between the Croats and Serbs only surfaced during World War II.” He mentioned that tensions between Serbia and Croatia was a recent development, and noted their history of cooperation in forming the Yugoslav Republic.\textsuperscript{172}

Despite historical examples debunking the myth, ancient hatreds remained a persuasive rhetorical tool in keeping the U.S. out of the Balkans. The Clinton administration could not convince their political adversaries of the feasibility of a U.S. intervention in the face of centuries of hostility, so Clinton made his case directly to the American people. If Clinton could convince the American people that intervention was in their best interest, their elected officials would have no choice but to side with their constituents. Public opinion polling revealed that the majority of Americans were not paying much attention to the state of affairs in Bosnia; even those who were following the situation indicated that the “post-Vietnam syndrome” was still prevalent among the American public. Though the memories of the recent

\textsuperscript{171} Malcolm, \textit{Bosnia}, xxii.

victory over Iraq remained present in their minds, so did the loss of 18 soldiers in Somalia. They preferred that Clinton stay out of foreign entanglements abroad. After all, they did elect him to concentrate on domestic affairs, and Bosnia was a European problem for the Europeans to sort out.\textsuperscript{173}

At the end of 1994, Serb aggression persisted in the Balkans, as did Clinton’s desire to find a solution. Clinton himself later admitted that his options were constrained by public opinion. In spite of everything, he was elected to serve the people. Clinton was also aware of his own sinking poll numbers. Still, he knew that if he could somehow turn public opinion in favor of a Bosnian intervention, he could gain much in the way of public favor.\textsuperscript{174}

The American media gave Bosnia very limited attention other than to say that it was happening. This coverage did not facilitate a real connection between the American people and a conflict that was happening thousands of miles away. As a result, the American public largely did not pay much attention to happenings in the Balkans. Those who did follow the Bosnian War did not like what had occurred, but they did not see it as their problem to solve, so their elected officials had little incentive to potentially risk American lives (and their jobs) sorting out a European

\textsuperscript{173} Public opinion polling showed that Americans were not necessarily opposed to any action in the Balkans – they favored air drops of humanitarian supplies, support for U.N. peacekeepers, and even airstrikes – assuming the risk to American pilots was low. For the purposes of my argument, I am using the numbers for committing American combat forces on the ground in Bosnia. Richard Sobel, “Trends: United States Intervention in Bosnia,” \textit{The Public Opinion Quarterly} Vol 62, No.2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the American Association for Public Opinion Research, Summer, 1998)

\textsuperscript{174} Bill Clinton, “Ending the Bosnian War”, \textit{Bosnia, Intelligence, and the Clinton Presidency} 6.
issue. This made for a domestic political scene that resisted Clinton’s efforts in Bosnia. It seemed that nothing the administration tried could resonate with the American people on the Bosnia issue.175

Adding to Clinton’s domestic woes, his approval ratings approached their all-time low (about 44%) during the summer of 1995.176 This would concern any elected official, but for a first-term president facing re-election, especially so.

Furthermore, Clinton’s efforts in taking on a greater American role in Bosnia had thus far done little to actually halt the violence; the president’s Balkan policy appeared politically vulnerable.177

By mid-1995, the opposition to Clinton’s vision for American prosperity through European stability seemed to be succeeding. International friction combined with domestic apathy and fear (of a quagmire or of futility of Balkan intervention) had posed formidable barriers to Clinton’s vision of post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy. Failure in Bosnia may well have doomed Clinton’s foreign policy overall. Clinton needed to turn things around, and a foreign policy victory in Bosnia

175 I touch on this in a later section, but American media had not yet established any real connection between the Bosnian War and the American people. This did not occur until after the U.S. became more involved in Bosnia. Media coverage of the shoot-down and rescue of Scott O’Grady and of the Srebrenica Massacre increased American attention significantly. For example, in 1992, there were just over 100 articles about the Balkan crisis published in major American periodicals. In 1995, there were more than 1,000. The Washington Post published 77 articles covering the Bosnian War in July 1995, but only nine of those were published before Srebrenica. For a more detailed breakdown of these numbers, see Appendix 3.


could help him do so quickly. Led by his vision, Clinton had managed to push his Bosnia initiative through the extreme events of the Bosnian War - heartbreak in 1992 when tragic episodes of ethnic cleansing ripped Bosnia apart; enforcement in 1993 with the introduction of U.N. peacekeepers, the beginning of Operation Deny Flight, and the establishment of U.N. safe havens for victims of Bosnian Serb atrocities; disappointment of 1993 and 1994 when numerous peace initiatives failed; retribution in 1994 when expansion of Deny Flight meant NATO airstrikes in on Bosnian Serb targets; and anguish of seeming political defeat at the hands of his political rivals. Clinton continued to push, but his persistence had yet to pay off, and his vision had yet to be realized. The summer of 1995, however, would prove pivotal, as a horrific event in a small Bosnian town would change everything.
Balkan Calamity: The Massacre at Srebrenica and the European Problem

The Srebrenica massacre forced the world to pay attention to what it had been ignoring. Srebrenica displayed to the world that the Bosnian war had become the worst European atrocity since World War II. Furthermore, it proved that the Europeans were not capable of handling the situation. Until July 1995, the Europeans had been handling the Balkan crisis under the authority of the United Nations. The Massacre displayed to the world that the U.N. was not up to the task of implementing any lasting peace in Bosnia. When the Serbs murdered more than 7,000 civilians, the world lost faith in the U.N. It was then apparent that in order for the Serbs to halt their atrocities, they would need to be forced to stop and brought to their knees if necessary.

Upon the establishment of the U.N. safe haven in Srebrenica in April 1993, General Philippe Morillon, commander of United Nations forces in Bosnia, hoisted a United Nations flag above a makeshift headquarters and vowed not to leave until the inhabitants were safe. The U.N. provided a protection force of 7,600 troops charged with ensuring the safety of the safe areas. Still, the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) lacked adequate firepower to ensure the safety of the refugees, who were now pouring into the small Bosnian towns. Srebrenica, for example was a

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town of about 8,000 inhabitants before the war, but by the summer of 1995, there were more than 40,000 refugees, most of them crammed into prefabricated concrete apartments and makeshift shelters without water or electricity.\textsuperscript{179}

The idea of a U.N. protected safe area was appealing, especially for Muslim refugees fleeing from Serbian cruelties (mass displacements, rapes, and murders.) In reality, however, the safe areas were always a myth. The first NATO airstrikes, officially part of “Operation Deny Flight,” in April 1994 were in response to Bosnian Serbs shelling the town of Gorazde. Later that year, the Serbs initiated new fighting in Bihac, also a U.N. safe area. NATO again responded with airstrikes and expanded its range into Serb-controlled Croatia.\textsuperscript{180}

“Operation Deny Flight” was originally intended to enforce the U.N. no-fly zone over Bosnia, denying Bosnian Serb aircraft the ability to attack their weaker enemies from the skies. After continued Bosnian Serb aggression, Deny Flight was expanded to allow NATO aircraft to fly air-support sorties and coercive airstrikes as well. The operation began in April 1993 and marked the first entry of U.S. combat personnel (as part of a multi-national NATO force) in the Balkan theater. Operation Deny Flight consisted of 109,000 sorties, only 63 of these flights actually dropped ordnance in response to 10 incidents. During the 42 months of the operation, NATO lost only three aircraft; among them Air Force Captain Scott O’Grady’s F-16, which

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was shot down by a Serb surface-to-air missile on June 2, 1995, south of the Bosnian city of Banja Luka. O’Grady evaded capture by Bosnian Serb forces for six days before his rescue by a Marine Corps search and rescue team with multinational support six days later.\footnote{Kurt F. Miller, \textit{Deny Flight and Deliberate Force: An Effective Use of Airpower}? (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1997)}

As fighting in Bosnia raged on, there seemed to be no end in sight. Despite previous failed attempts at peace in Bosnia, mid-December 1994 offered an unexpected and hopeful turn of events. Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic extended an invitation to former President Carter to visit Bosnia in the hopes that the two could broker some sort of peace agreement. President Carter insisted he had no intentions of being becoming a permanent negotiator, but he hoped his trip might provide an opening to move toward a cessation of hostilities.\footnote{The Carter Center, Official Website, “President Carter Helps Restart Peace Efforts in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” \textit{The Carter Center}, September, 1, 1994, Accessed June 15, 2015. Online. http://www.cartercenter.org/news/documents/doc214.html}

While in the Balkans, Carter spoke with the president of Croatia, the U.N. special representative for the former Yugoslavia, the current and former U.S. representatives, U.N. commanders, representatives of relief agencies and human rights groups, and leaders of the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina and of the Bosnia Serbs. After two days of talks, the leaders of Bosnia’s Muslim-led government

and the Bosnian Serbs reached mutual agreements. Before he departed Bosnia, President Carter secured a pledge from Karadzic to reopen the Sarajevo airport, institute a temporary cease-fire in and around Sarajevo, the release of some Muslim prisoners, and to allow unrestricted movement of all U.N. convoys, as well as a promise from the Bosnian Serb leader to honor basic human rights.\textsuperscript{183}

Within 72 hours of President Carter’s departure from Bosnia, a nationwide cease-fire was implemented and negotiations began on an agreement for a total cessation of hostilities. On Dec. 31, 1994, a cease-fire was finalized. For the first time since the outbreak of the ethnic hostilities, there was a sincere hope for sustained peace in the former Yugoslavia.\textsuperscript{184} The cease-fire seemed promising, but began to unravel about four months later. By the next summer, the Bosnian Serbs, Croats, and Muslims were once again engaged in full-scale combat. What followed was a nightmare.

Once the truce that Carter had brokered fell apart, Bosnian Serbs continued to assault the U.N safe areas without regard for potential NATO retaliation. In Srebrenica, they shelled the town and barred food convoys while the refugees survived on roots, berries and vegetables they were able to farm from hillside plots. The Bosnian 28th Division (a force of about 2,000 government soldiers armed with machine guns, anti-tank weapons, and wooden clubs) dug in to defend Srebrenica.


\textsuperscript{184} Clinton, My Life, 669.
A lightly armed U.N. force of several hundred Dutch peacekeepers supported the 28th Division. Though sworn to protect the safe areas, the U.N. forces imposed the safe areas on Bosnian government’s military commanders on the ground without consulting them. As a result, they never demilitarized, and the Bosnian army continued to conduct offensive military actions out of the safe areas. A move that was certain to incite Serbian ire.

On July 9, 1995, elements of the Bosnian Serb Army surrounded the U.N. outpost at Srebrenica, and detained seven Dutch peacekeepers. Within two days, the Serb forces had broken through the Dutch-U.N. and Bosnian Army defenses. Once in control of the town, the Bosnian Serb forces took their reign of terror to a new level. They rounded up more than 7,000 Bosnian Muslim civilians (mostly men and boys) at gunpoint. They leveled their automatic rifles and butchered their helpless prisoners. Without allowing the families to mourn their losses, the

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185 Honig and Both, Srebrenica, 3-26.


Bosnian Serb invaders dumped the lifeless bodies into mass gravesites. They then proceeded to rape and terrorize the women and girls of the Bosnian town.\(^{189}\)

These atrocities occurred in plain sight of the Dutch-U.N. peacekeepers, who were powerless to do anything. After Srebrenica, the Bosnian Serbs continued their violent takeover of the Bosnian towns of Zepa, Bihac, and Gorazde - all of which had previously been declared U. N. safe havens.\(^{190}\) Because of the difficulty in locating some of the mass gravesites, Bosnian citizens are still discovering and burying victims’ remains Almost 20 years after the massacres.\(^{191}\)

What made Srebrenica particularly horrific was not simply the fact that the Serbs massacred more than 7,000 people in a small Bosnian town, but the manner in which they carried out their atrocities. They stormed a U.N. safe zone with complete disregard for U.N. authority. They captured several peacekeepers and butchered the refugees in the safe areas. They had the audacity to use their superior military capabilities to force the Dutch peacekeepers to back down. With

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\(^{189}\) Honig and Both, Srebrenica, 48-66.

\(^{190}\) Honig and Both, Srebrenica, 48-66.

\(^{191}\) Intelligence reports confirm the discovery of the first bodies of the Srebrenica massacres. One report states that because mass graves are difficult to locate – most are situated in obscure areas, densely wooded forests, or abandoned mine shafts making any kind of aerial search methods difficult –remains will likely turn up for months or even years. The most efficient way to locate these grave sites are physical searches. A 2013 Fox News article confirms that remains are still being located almost 20 years after the massacres.


this action, and those in the days that followed, the Bosnian Serbs proved that they would take any measure within their means to carry out their policy of ethnic cleansing. Srebrenica proved that only a force that was militarily superior to the Serbs could force them to comply with any negotiated peace settlement. The European-led U.N. force could not accomplish this. Srebrenica made it clear that a NATO force led by American military might was necessary.

A Dutch official report on the actions of Dutch peacekeepers during and after the fall of Srebrenica, which pointed out misconduct on the part of peacekeepers, only further damaged the perception that the Europeans’ ability to handle the European problem. The controversial “Official Report on Dutch Actions During and After the Fall of Srebrenica” described the military limitations under which the Dutch peacekeepers operated. The report also highlighted transgressions committed by Dutch peacekeeping troops to include the selling of weapons, extreme right-wing sympathies, and the repeated mistreatment of women – both civilians and fellow peacekeepers. Other reports indicated that the Dutch even covered up evidence of human rights atrocities committed by Serbs against the Muslim refugees under U.N. protection.

One account of the fall of Srebrenica was particularly damning. A report

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from Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, detailed the events of the Srebrenica massacre, from the Serb atrocities to the embarrassing conduct of the Dutch peacekeepers.

The report was based on an investigation by Human Rights Watch representatives conducted immediately after the massacre (July 31 - August 23, 1995.) They recorded the events leading up to, during and immediately after the fall of the Srebrenica safe area, “including gross violations of humanitarian law, as has been typical of Bosnian Serb military conduct to date. Abuses attending the occupation of the “safe area” included the terrorization of women, children and the elderly and the premeditated mass executions of men and boys.” Their report displayed to the world, the ineptitude of the U.N. and the European Community.194

The fall of the town of Srebrenica and its environs to Bosnian Serb forces in early July 1995 made a mockery of the international community’s professed commitment to safeguard regions it declared to be “safe areas” and placed under United Nations protection in 1993. United Nations peacekeeping officials were unwilling to heed requests for support from their own forces stationed within the enclave, thus allowing Bosnian Serb forces to easily overrun it and — without interference from U.N. soldiers — to carry out systematic, mass executions of hundreds, possibly thousands, of civilian men and boys and to terrorize, rape, beat, execute, rob and otherwise abuse civilians being deported from the area.195

The Srebrenica Massacre was significant for several reasons. First, it demonstrated that the Serbs did not respect the authority of the U.N. They would have to be forced to halt their aggressions, and a militarily superior force would be needed to do so. Second, Srebrenica highlighted the inefficiency of the U.N.


peacekeepers in Bosnia. The UNPROFOR was overmatched by the Serb aggressors, and the Dutch U.N. peacekeepers backed down at the first sight of any real challenge to their authority. Srebrenica proved that the European Union was not up to the task of handling their European problem.

The fact that the massacres occurred during the “hour of Europe” and well within European-controlled, U.N. safe havens underscored this fact. Without the military might of the Americans, the Europeans were helpless to stop the violence in the Balkans. The breakup of Yugoslavia, though a European problem, was too big for Europe to handle alone, and the “Hour of Europe,” for the purposes of solving the Balkan problem only highlighted their inability to do so.

Finally, the Srebrenica massacre provided Clinton with an opportunity to take the lead on the Bosnia issue. Furthermore, it provided him with the leverage (both foreign and domestic) to do so. After Srebrenica, redoubled his efforts in Bosnia.\textsuperscript{196} The massacre - horrible an event as it was - allowed Clinton to fully employ his Bosnia policy and thereby attain his vision for post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy.

Winning the American Public and the Dayton Peace Accords

The importance of the massacre at Srebrenica for Clinton’s vision for the post-Cold War world cannot be overstated. The massacre provided Clinton with the ability to simultaneously destroy the barriers to his vision of a new post-Cold War human rights regime and of Euro-American guaranteed stability. Srebrenica proved that the European Union was incapable of handling the Bosnian War without the military might and international influence of the United States. It demonstrated to the world, the need for the U.S. to take the lead and offered the Clinton administration valuable leverage with their European allies. Even Yeltsin could not defend the Bosnian Serb actions after Srebrenica. Also, it put Clinton’s domestic political opposition back on their heels. Though they might not support an American intervention, further resistance to it would make them appear callous to oppose peace in the face of such a massacre. Most importantly, Srebrenica made the American public pay attention. They began to view the Bosnian War as an American problem; they lost faith in the UN and European Union’s ability to end the war, and U.S. intervention became a genuine option.

Clinton recognized the tragedy of the event, but also its utility. More importantly, he took advantage. Armed with this leverage over the Europeans, Clinton took the lead in Bosnia. Regardless of the control the Europeans were willing to grant him, Clinton convinced the Europeans of his sincerity and of the utility of American power and
influence. Persuading the American public would prove more difficult. He went to work immediately convincing the American public of the need for American leadership in the Balkans.¹⁹⁷

While Clinton realized the potential political capital that Srebrenica offered, he could not sit idly by waiting for the American people to buy into his plan. While working to sell his public on his plan, Clinton pressed forward. In late July, Clinton decided that the changes on the ground and NATO's new resolve provided the basis for an all-out diplomatic effort to end the conflict. In early August, he sent his National Security Adviser, Anthony Lake, to present a U.S. peace initiative to the NATO Allies and the Russians.¹⁹⁸

The Massacre at Srebrenica gave Clinton the political influence that he needed to implement his Bosnia policy. Clinton seized the opportunity to assert his leadership on the Bosnia issue. He took action almost immediately. Responding to the fall of the safe areas of Srebrenica and Zepa, Clinton demanded that NATO and the UN honor their commitment to protect the remaining safe areas. The European Community agreed to U.S. insistence that NATO take decisive action. Clinton warned of broad-based airstrikes if any safe areas were attacked again.¹⁹⁹

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¹⁹⁷ Bill Clinton, “Ending the Bosnian War: The Personal Story of the President of the United States”, Bosnia, Intelligence, and the Clinton Presidency: The Role of Intelligence and Political Leadership in Ending the Bosnian War (Little Rock: William J. Clinton Presidential Library 2013) 7-9.


¹⁹⁹ Clinton, My Life, 668-669.
In August 1995, Clinton intensified his efforts when Bosnian Serbs tested this ultimatum. NATO began a month-long bombing campaign officially called “Operation Deliberate Force.” The airstrikes took place over from August 29 through September 14, 1995. In all, NATO forces flew 3515 sorties, 2470 of which were penetrating sorties, which included attacks on 48 target complexes (consisting of 338 individual targets within target complexes). Clinton pushed for NATO airstrikes in order to forward several objectives: to punish the Bosnian Serbs for their atrocities, to strike targets in an effort to weaken their ability to make war, to help defend the remaining Bosnian Muslim enclaves, to demonstrate the will and commitment of the U.S. in preventing further ethnic cleansing, and most importantly to force the Serbs to negotiating a lasting peace agreement. The airstrikes led to battlefield withdrawals of Bosnian Serb forces and forced them to turn over their remaining heavy weapons in and around Sarajevo.

Clinton’s initial reactions to Srebrenica did not yet reflect the will of his public, but he was willing to take unpopular actions to halt the violence. In 2013, at a forum entitled “Bosnia, Intelligence, and the Clinton Presidency,” Clinton reflected on his actions in those early days following Srebrenica. “Often times when a proposed course

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201 In a memorandum for the National Security Advisor, Ambassador Albright, arguing for a greater U.S. military presence in Bosnia, detailed seven strategic objectives of U.S.-led NATO airstrikes.


of action is unpopular, it’s not exactly like the voters are telling you not to do it.”

Realizing the gamble he was taking, (facing a reelection campaign against a popular GOP rival in Senator Dole) he considered the will of the public a warning, but not a barrier.

“It’s basically like a giant, blinking yellow light,” he stated.203

As Clinton proceeded with caution, his Interagency Balkan Task Force contemplated and planned for an American-led military intervention, despite their near certainty that any intervention force would sustain “significant casualties and would need to remain in the region for years.” They considered military intervention a viable option as early as July 13, 1995 – just three days after Srebrenica.204

Aside from highlighting the absurdity that Bosnia was “just” a European problem, more importantly, and perhaps surprisingly for Clinton, the war in Bosnia caught the attention of the American public. Carter’s failed peace attempt, the shooting down of U.S. Captain O’Grady, and now Srebrenica thrust the Bosnian War onto the headlines of American media outlets, and the American public was paying attention. Media coverage of the Bosnian War increased significantly as the U.S. became more involved, creating a connection between the American people and what was formerly a European problem. For example, in 1992, there were just over 100 articles about the Balkan crisis published


in major American periodicals. In 1995, there were more than 1,000. The Washington Post published 77 articles covering the Bosnian War in July 1995, but only nine of those were published before Srebrenica. The increased U.S. media coverage of Bosnia after Srebrenica allowed Clinton to make a case for U.S. intervention to the American public. The public responded. Polling indicated that when the administration took a clear position against Serbian aggression, (most notably in August 1995 – one month after Srebrenica) the poll numbers reflected a greater degree of American support for military action in Bosnia.

Srebrenica, and the subsequent media coverage of Bosnia, encouraged the American public to become more compassionate toward Bosnia; it thrust the Bosnian War onto the headlines of American media outlets and to the forefront of public opinion. With actual military involvement, the issue would remain among the nation’s top news stories – keeping the Bosnia issue in the minds of the U.S. public, further convincing the American people that peace in Bosnia was in America’s best interest, and sending American combat troops to enforce peace was worth the risks.

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205 Some of these articles were duplicates, but this does not dispute the fact that American media coverage of the Bosnian War increased significantly after the Srebrenica massacre. James J. Sadkovich, The U.S. Media and Yugoslavia, 1991-1995 (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 1998) 110-121.


Greater media coverage of Bosnia also affected those who opposed American involvement. Clinton recognized that the media surge following Srebrenica would make his political opponents appear callous if they continued to argue against stopping human rights violations occurring in Bosnia. As American public opinion shifted, so did that of many politicians. Suddenly, policy makers who had opposed Bosnian intervention found themselves backpedaling and publicly stating that the president should be allowed to make his case before judging. Even Dole softened his stance on intervention. He agreed that Clinton should be able to make his case to the American people. He stated that he would like to support the president on his decision to intervene.209

Not all of Clinton’s rivals remained silent, however. Powell still opposed deploying U.S. ground forces, and Buchanan, ever the isolationist, held true to his non-interventionist stance. Many Republicans adopted an attitude of “support the troops, but not the plan” and vowed to make any intervention involving ground troops a difficult road for the president.210 In October 1995, the Republican-controlled House of Representatives passed a resolution stating that the United States should not send, or even pledge, American peacekeepers without permission from Congress. The resolution had no legal effect, but expressed a strong congressional opposition to the president’s


plan to involve American combat forces in the Balkans.\textsuperscript{211}

Getting his message across to the American public became central to Clinton’s strategy for winning congressional support for sending U.S. combat troops to Bosnia. In November 1995, Clinton addressed the nation. He told Americans that only the U.S. could prevent the resurgence of a grisly four-year war that had produced more than 100,000 casualties and 2,000,000 refugees. Clinton also linked US national interest to stability in Europe, the loss of which had drawn the US into two world wars in the 20th century. Clinton stated that the risks were acceptable because the mission had clear goals and limited duration and because US troops were being deployed to guarantee a peace treaty, not to end a civil war. "America’s role will not be about fighting a war," Clinton said. "It will be about helping the people of Bosnia secure their own peace."\textsuperscript{212}

Clinton’s assurance that US troops would be part of a 60,000-member NATO contingent, which would be deployed immediately after the finalization of a peace agreement, assuaged public apprehensions of unilateral U.S. action. His assurance of clear goals and limited duration further eased American trepidation. Finally, Clinton’s linking U.S. national interests to European peace and stability allowed the president to successfully make his case to the American public.\textsuperscript{213} Clinton showed that Bosnia had


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become an American problem. Though there were no tangible American interests at stake in Bosnia, ending the human rights abuses became its own American interest. In light of the massacres, the American people became willing to risk the lives of their sons and daughters to secure peace for the Bosnian people.

The U.S. Defense Department believed “Operation Deliberate Force” demonstrated the decisive role of air power when serving clear, achievable policy objectives. Furthermore, they felt the bombing campaign saved lives and helped pave the way for a negotiated peace settlement in Bosnia. Operation Deliberate Force was the crucial step in bringing the warring parties to the negotiating table at Dayton, leading to the peace agreement.214 The Bosnian Serbs capitulated after the bombing campaign – they were astonished and terrified by the ability of the missiles to navigate the local street grid and pick out specific targets.215

Clinton deployed his Bosnia Contact Team led by Ambassador Holbrooke and General Wes Clark in hopes of negotiating a lasting peace. On August 19, 1995, this group, traveling in two French armored combat vehicles met with disaster as the inadequate Bosnian road gave way sending one of the vehicles tumbling down a mountainside. Three members of the contact team, Bob Frasure, Joe Kruzel, and Air Force Colonel Nelson Drew, perished in the accident. President Clinton later


described the deceased as “patriotic public servants and good family men who died too young trying to save the lives of innocent people a long way from home.” The deaths of the three diplomats served to further inspire the efforts of the negotiators and harden the stance of the Clinton administration. At this point, the Bosnia Contact Team, as well as the Clinton Administration, was more determined than ever to ensure a lasting peace in Bosnia.

After months of intense negotiations, President Clinton’s team and the leaders of the Bosnian belligerents reached a tentative agreement on peace in Bosnia. By the end of October 1995, all sides agreed to meet in Dayton, Ohio to discuss an end to the fighting. Clinton’s Bosnia team informed the president, “This is the best chance we’ve had for peace since the war began.” President Clinton briefed the press on October 31, 1995 and said, “It may be the last chance we have for a very long time.” Twenty one days of emotional negotiations in Dayton left the Bosnian Serbs, Croats, and Muslims reaching an acceptable peace agreement.

On December 7, 1995, Clinton made phone calls to several world leaders and influential Americans in an effort to garner support for the Dayton agreement and a follow on NATO Implementation Force (IFOR.) Among those contacted were former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Colin Powell, and former Presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, and George H.W. Bush. Clinton stated that America’s participation in

216 Clinton, My Life, 668.-669.


218 Chollet, The Road to the Dayton Accords, 132

219 Chollet, The Road to the Dayton Accords, 180-181.
the mission was “vital to the future of NATO and America’s leadership role in the alliance.” That leadership role, Clinton asserted remained essential to securing peace and ending the Bosnian War. Clinton also mentioned that it was “critical for members of congress, from both sides of the aisle, keep an open mind” as they learned of the terms of the Dayton agreement. He asked for their assistance in making a case for IFOR. Powell told Clinton that his stance had not changed, and expressed concerns about the mission and America’s legacy, but that he would support the president’s decision.220

Three weeks later 20,000 Americans formed part of a 60,000 strong NATO Implementation Force (IFOR) that arrived in Bosnia to ensure that the Dayton Peace Accords were enforced by all sides. U.S. military participation in IFOR proved vital. Had the American’s left the implementation up to the Europeans, the Dayton agreement could have ended in renewed violence, similar to the previous peace plans employed by the U.N. and the European Community. Instead, the region continues to enjoy peace a decade after the last American combat forces left Bosnia.221

220 Talking Points with notes, “Securing Peace in Bosnia: Talking Points for Calls to Former Presidents Bush, Ford, and Carter; Margaret Thatcher; Colin Powell; and Elie Weisel,” File: FG001-08, Folder: 14346955, OA/ID: 21807 Clinton Presidential Records, WHORM, CPL.

221 U.S. combat forces officially left Bosnia in late November 2004. More than 100,000 U.S. personnel served in Operation Joint Endeavor since U.S. troops crossed the Sava River into Bosnia at the end of December 1995. Thousands more supported the service members from bases in Croatia, Italy, Germany and Hungary.

In the end, Srebrenica proved Clinton’s vision for American post-Cold War foreign policy to be the correct one, but Clinton’s realization of the opportunity that Srebrenica offered, and his ability to take advantage of the situation allowed for his success in implementing his vision. The Europeans were not ready to handle any major crisis, even one on their own continent. It took Euro-American cooperation to negotiate, implement, and enforce peace in the Balkans. The narrow, Cold-War views of American foreign policy were also proven inept. Had Clinton followed such a vision, Srebrenica would have forced some kind of action he would have been completely unprepared for. More importantly, it would have forced him to change his paradigm and adopt a wider view of U.S. foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. Finally, Srebrenica forced an apathetic American public to see a European problem as an American one.
Conclusion – Victorious Vision

Intervention in the Bosnian War would ultimately prove to be one of the Clinton administration’s boldest and most successful accomplishments. After combat forces were deployed to enforce the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords, public opinion for the mission soared. In 1998, just over two years after the deployment of U.S. soldiers to Bosnia, the Washington Post reported that American public support for the NATO mission in Bosnia had “never been higher.”222 Clinton would eventually admit that he felt it was a miracle that war had not resumed in Bosnia.223 Reflecting years later on America’s role in stopping the Bosnian War, Clinton stated “Bosnia in some ways became a metaphor for the struggles of the 21st century,” as it shaped both his presidency, and his foreign policy going forward.224

Today, an exhibit displaying Clinton’s efforts in the Balkans stands among the most extravagant in the William Jefferson Clinton Presidential Library. When he

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entered office, the American people, for the most part, were optimistic about the future and direction of the country. After three years, however, economic issues and domestic problems caused trouble at home, and Clinton’s foreign policy team had blundered affairs in Somalia and Rwanda. With his approval ratings nearing their all-time low and facing a re-election bid in 1996, the value of a foreign policy victory in the Balkans was not lost on the president. Reading the memoirs of Clinton, Albright, or Christopher would lead one to believe that that the administration’s chief incentive for their Bosnia policy was a moral one; they wanted to stop the violence because it was their only ethical option. While this may or may not be true, it is not enough.

It may be nearly impossible to prove exactly what motivated Clinton to push for an America intervention in Bosnia, but his motivations were certainly multi-faceted. It is true that Bosnia represented a weakness in Bush’s foreign policy, and Clinton campaigned heavily on it. This does not mean that his motivations were entirely politically motivated. It is true that Clinton’s poll numbers were lower before the Dayton Peace Accords than after their implementation, but this does not mean Clinton was only trying to turn around his public image. While Clinton’s role in halting Europe’s worst atrocities since World War II will certainly be fondly remembered, this is not proof that Clinton was motivated by his legacy. What is certain is Clinton entered office with a very different idea of America’s role in the post-Cold War world than that of his predecessor. Clinton’s view was more

encompassing view of American foreign policy that placed a higher premium on Euro-American cooperation in the New Atlantic Community and regarded instability in Europe as an American issue.

The post-Cold War world was one of quickly developing challenges for the world’s lone superpower. It was also a period of clashing ideals as the old, narrow vision for the U.S. was forced to make way for a more incorporating idea for U.S. foreign policy; in this world, where the world was becoming increasingly more connected, a more encompassing foreign policy was necessary for the world’s preeminent military power. Bosnia - more specifically Srebrenica - proved this to be the case. Bosnia presented the first Euro-American foreign policy challenge, and Clinton’s new vision for the U.S. in the post-Cold War world proved superior to all of that of his opponents. With his intervention into the Bosnian War, Clinton charted a new course for American foreign policy. In an age of increased American power, authority, and responsibility, the Clinton administration made a clear statement that catastrophes such as the Bosnian war were most effectively met with cooperation, and a foreign policy that considered the problems of one’s partners as important as their own.
### Appendix 1: Bosnian War Death Toll – Casualty figures according to the Demographic Unit at the ICTY
(Reported February 1, 2010)

<table>
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<th>Total</th>
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<td>104,733</td>
<td>Serbs</td>
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<td>Croats</td>
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<td>36,703</td>
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<td><strong>Total soldiers</strong></td>
<td>68,030</td>
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Appendix 2: Operation Deliberate Force Summary DATA

- Total sorties flown: 3515
  - Penetrating sorties (CAS, BAI, SEAD, RECCE, SAR/CSAR): 2470
  - Support sorties (NAEW, ABCCC, ELINT/ESM, AAR): 1045
- Total bombs dropped: 1026
  - Precision munitions: 708
  - Non-precision munitions: 318
- Airstrikes were conducted on eleven days during the period 8/29–9/14 1995
  - 48 target complexes
  - 338 individual targets within target complexes

DELIBERATE FORCE SORTIE BREAKDOWN:
FROM 29 AUG 95 - 14 SEP 95

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<th>NATION</th>
<th>TOTAL SORTIES</th>
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<td>GERMANY</td>
<td>59</td>
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<td>ITALY</td>
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<td>NETHERLANDS</td>
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<td>SPAIN</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>TURKEY</td>
<td>78</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNITED KINGDOM</td>
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<td>UNITED STATES</td>
<td>2318</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO (NAEW)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>3515</strong></td>
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Appendix 3: Media Coverage of the Bosnian War

**New York Times** Stories Covering Bosnia

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**Washington Post**

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**Significant Events Affecting U.S. Media Coverage**

December 1994 - Carter's peace agreement in Bosnia

January 1995 - Dole introduces embargo legislation

June 1995 - USAF Capt. Scott O'Grady aircraft shot down

July 1995 – Srebrenica

December 1995 - Dayton Peace Accords signed

Late December 1995/January 1996 - U.S. troops deployed
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