REACTING TO ATROCITIES:

UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY AND HUMANITARIAN

INTERVENTION IN THE 1990S

by
JOHN ROBINSON-WILSON

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Dr. Craig Parsons

In the period from 1991 to 1995, three major humanitarian crises took place; in the former Yugoslavia, in Somalia, and in Rwanda hundreds of thousands of people were killed. This period coincides with the end of the Soviet Union and the consequent advent of American hegemony. This paper explores why the United States did not intervene in these crises, or did not do so until the crisis was well advanced. It examines the domestic, personal, and international constraints and considerations acting on U.S. policymakers that led to their adopting specific policies of non-intervention.

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Introduction

This paper examines United States foreign policy during the early 1990s in terms of three case studies: the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, especially Bosnia, Somalia, and Rwanda. The central question of this paper is why, in light of the end of the Cold War and the United States' consequent hegemony, paired with the outbreak of these three crises, did the United States under either President Bush or Preseident Clinton not adopt a foreign policy more willing to take an active role in ending these conflicts? I examine this question by analyzing the attitudes and actions of those decision makers, from the President down through the bureaucracy, who influenced policy during this time, and the forces, both domestic and international, which affected their actions.

It is important today to understand why the United States did not act during the crises in the early 1990s, because the international system has changed little since then; the United States is still able to exercise its power to stop conflicts that create humanitarian crises. Better understanding how the United States acted in the past when confronted with humanitarian crises will both help predict future patterns and aid those who wish to push for a more activist policy. In addition, these crises help to reveal how the United States responds to conflicts that are not of immediate import.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 marked the transition to a new era in the international system. No longer were two superpowers almost constantly at odds, complicating to the point of near impossibility any attempt to intervene in humanitarian crises. Despite the memory of the Holocaust, regimes such as the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia were allowed to kill millions of their own people. The Cold War

was the unquestioned priority for the United States, and tragic as it may have been, the Khmer Rouge's genocide did not threaten to upset the balance of power, and was consequently unimportant. But even had the United States been willing to act in such situations, there was a constant threat that the Soviet Union might counter an American intervention, leading to yet another regional war, or even another World War.

Therefore, interventions during the Cold War took place mostly in states where the United States saw a threat to its national interest, or there was minimal threat of Soviet retaliation. For the reasons explained above, policymakers did not consider humanitarian crises in general – even genocide – as worthy of the risks that accompanied intervention. The end of the Cold War brought with it an opportunity to change the paradigm through which foreign policy is viewed. With the United States the sole remaining superpower, and Europe not yet united under the European Union, there was an opportunity to make good on the promise of "never again" that presidents have issued repeatedly since the Holocaust.

That did not happen, however. President Bush was unwilling to change his and his administration's view of the duties and interests of the United States in relation to the rest of the world. Even after the breakup of the Soviet Union, he was unwilling to take the lead in ending the wars in Croatia and Bosnia.[1] The result was a rejection of precisely the kind of humanitarian intervention that the end of the Cold War made possible. President Bush's actions in Somalia, while on the surface appear to be precisely the kind

[1] Throughout this paper, the former Yugoslav territories are referred to as both Bosnia and Yugoslavia. This is because the crisis as discussed here involves three states: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia. When discussing events affecting two or more of the states, Yugoslavia is used. However, from 1992 until the summer of 1995, most of the events discussed occurred in Bosnia, so that state is referred to frequently in isolation from the others.

of intervention it rejected in Bosnia, were never an attempt to resolve the crisis; rather, they attempted only to alleviate the immediate suffering in response to domestic political concerns and to restrict Clinton's freedom of action once he took office. Despite his claims to the contrary, Bush's actions during 1991 in both the former Yugoslavia and Somalia were clearly influenced by election year politics.

President Clinton's handling of the Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda crises rebuked any hope for a foreign policy that took humanitarian crises seriously. As a liberal and the first post-Cold War president, Clinton could have brought a fundamentally different perspective to American foreign policy. However, Clinton's disinterest in foreign policy and unwillingness to sacrifice domestic priorities for causes which the public was at best marginally concerned with, led his administration away from intervention.

This pattern is especially apparent in Bosnia, where Clinton's initial policy choice – which was based on humanitarian principles – was deemed too difficult, and unceremoniously abandoned. Thereafter the United States distanced itself from the conflict, until it was no longer politically advantageous to do so. When Bosnia finally appeared to be jeopardizing Clinton's other priorities, an interventionist policy was quickly drafted and put into practice. Neither Somalia nor Rwanda could have had anything but a negative effect on Clinton's political position, and so his administration effectively ignored both conflicts. In Somalia, the Clinton administration made the decision to withdraw the troops as quickly as possible immediately after the disastrous firefight in Mogadishu, when public opinion turned so sharply against the operation. Intervention in Rwanda was never really a consideration, given the humiliation in

Somalia the previous year and the utter unimportance of the country in the international system.

The three conflicts examined in this paper – Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda – are indicative of the United States' treatment of difficult humanitarian crises during the 1990s. Though the United States did intervene elsewhere during this period – most notably Haiti and Kosovo – those conflicts were less controversial for the Clinton administration than intervention in the other three would have been. The United States' actions in Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda reflected the post-Cold War political realities in foreign policy more than did Haiti and Kosovo. The intervention in Haiti was relatively unsurprising, given its proximity to the United States; which both placed it within the U.S.'s natural sphere of influence and created the threat of a massive refugee exodus. Kosovo, by nature of its geographic location and the Albanian population's persecution by the Serbs, presented a situation similar to that in Bosnia. Given that similarity, it would have been politically difficult for the United States to stay out of Kosovo, and even more so had it destabilized other states in the region, as it nearly did Macedonia.

By contrast, none of the three crises examined in this paper presented a reason to intervene, at least initially, not based on humanitarian concerns. Bosnia was only a national interest concern if the conflict there spilled over to Kosovo and threatened to destabilize the region, Somalia lost its strategic significance even before the end of the Cold War, and Rwanda was never much of a concern. Each of these case studies represents a point that could have signaled a definitive change in policy, but for various reasons did not. During the early 1990s, without concerns about national interests,

intervention in these places should only be considered in terms of humanitarian or political considerations. Both the Bush and Clinton administrations showed some concern for humanitarian principles, but were at best reluctant to deal with the political challenges of solving the crises.

Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia was an artificial creation held together by its charismatic dictator, Tito, a former communist partisan; it was comprised of the republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro. Bosnia was the most ethnically integrated of the republics, with a Muslim plurality and sizable minority Serb and Croat populations. It declared independence in March 1992 in response to Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's increasingly nationalist policies. Croatia and Slovenia had declared their independence the previous summer, which led the Croatian Serb population, with the support of Milosevic, to secede and set up its own mini-state in large areas of northeastern Croatia.

Yugoslav National Army (JNA) forces and Bosnian Serbs quickly attacked Bosnia's Muslim and Croat populations, and gained control of about seventy percent of the country by August 1992. That same month, journalists discovered Serb-run concentration camps in Bosnia. The Bush Administration protested, but did little. Bill Clinton, then a presidential candidate, criticized President Bush for not taking a more forceful stand.

Srebrenica, which the UN declared a "safe area" in April 1993, fell to the Serbs in July 1995. The Serbs massacred thousands of Muslim men. Despite international outrage, and sporadic NATO bombings, neither Europe nor the United States exerted serious pressure on the Serbs. Not until August 1995, in response to Serbian shelling in Sarajevo, did NATO finally began intensive bombing, which together with economic sanctions, military defeats at the hands of the Bosnians and Croats, and general war

weariness, forced Milosevic to negotiate a peace treaty. In December, Milosevic, the Croatians and the Bosnian Muslims signed the Dayton Accords in Paris, ending the Yugoslav wars.[2]

The Bush Administration

The Bush administration's policies on Yugoslavia evolved through two distinct phases: supporting "unity and democracy," or holding the country together, as long as it was governed democratically; and letting the European Community take the lead on policy after the conflict started in June 1991. The "unity and democracy" policy was the United States' initial position, and was only abandoned when war broke out in mid 1991. After that point, the Bush administration tried to stay out of the conflict, and refused even to participate in peace negotiations. Consistent throughout both of these policy phases was a refusal to even consider the use of military force, driven by both the Pentagon's and the administration's views of the conflict and its effect on the national interest.

Ending the Cold War: "Unity and Democracy"

As the first battles in Slovenia and Croatia were fought in the summer of 1991, the Cold War was drawing to a close. Human rights activists hoped that the world's attention would turn to humanitarian crises, instead of being fixated, as it had for the previous forty-plus years, on crises strictly defined by national security, political and

[2] Roger Cohen, Hearts Grown Brutal: Sagas of Sarajevo, (New York: Random House, 1998), xl-xlix; Laura Silber and Allan Little, Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation, (New York: Penguin Books, 1997).

economic interests. Those hopes were quickly dashed by the Bush administration's lack of interest in stopping the conflict in Yugoslavia. Further complicating the situation, the easing of Cold War tensions and the subsequent reduction of Yugoslavia's strategic importance – and the foreign aid that came along with it – helped the rise of nationalist parties in each of the Yugoslav republics.[3]

President Bush's top foreign policy priority after the Persian Gulf War was to bring the Cold War peacefully to an end. Until the Soviet Union's dissolution at the end of 1991, U.S. foreign policy in the Balkans was at best secondary to relations with the Soviet Union. Warren Zimmerman, the last U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia, recalled that his instructions upon being appointed in 1989 were to tell the Yugoslav government that they were no longer important; more forward-looking former Warsaw Pact states, such as Poland and Hungary, were now the United States' priorities in Eastern Europe.[4] The administration's attention, so much as the White House and the State Department had limited resources for dealing with major crises, was dedicated to the Soviet Union, which clearly raised national interest concerns. There was simply little time or desire in the White House or among senior State Department officials to address the complicated and difficult issues in Yugoslavia.[5]

So much as the Bush administration did spend time on Yugoslavia; its goal was minimizing the impact of events there upon the Soviet Union. David Halberstam observed that U.S. foreign policy during 1991 was "Gorbo-centric," because "what was

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[3] Warren Zimmermann, "The Last Ambassador: A Memoir of the Collapse of Yugoslavia," Foreign Affairs 74, no. 1 (1995): 2-3.
[4] Ibid, 2-3.
[5] Richard Holbrooke, To End a War (New York: Random House, 1998), 26.

good for Mikhail Gorbachev and American-Soviet relations" was important, not what was good for the emerging republics in Yugoslavia.[6] Of central importance to Gorbachev was holding together the Soviet Republics. The Bush administration recognized the parallels between the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the potential disintegration of the Soviet Union. Secretary of State James Baker observed in the fall of 1991 that if the Soviet Union were to break up, the situation would resemble "Yugoslavia with nukes."[7] Baker feared a situation where the federal Soviet government would use force to keep the country united, as the Yugoslav National Army was doing in Croatia. At the time, several of the republics within the Soviet Union had nuclear weapons stationed on their soil. The Bush administration was clearly worried about the fate of these weapons and their potential use if a conflict started between the republics.

Because of the parallels between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, the Bush administration could not support the dissolution of one state while opposing it in the other. If the United States recognized Slovenia and Croatia, which had declared independence in June 1991, it would have to do the same for any Soviet Republics which wished to secede. Concerned with bringing the Cold War to a final, peaceful end, Bush and his administration were openly hostile to the unilateral dissolution of Yugoslavia.[8]

President Bush and his foreign policy advisors also feared that a breakup of the Soviet Union would imperil Gorbachev's hold on power and lead to the rise of a

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[6] David Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton and the Generals (New York: Touchstone, 2002), 34, 32.
[7] Richard Johnson, "Serbia and Russia: U.S. Appeasement and the Resurrection of Fascism," The Conceit of Innocence: Losing the Conscience of the West in the War Against Bosnia, ed. Stjepan G. Mestrovic (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 186.
[8] Andrei Edemskii, "Russian Perspectives," International Perspectives on the Yugoslav Crisis, eds. Alex Danchev and Thomas Halverson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 31.

government from the reactionary right.[9] The possibility of a coup by the far right was an event the Bush administration wished to avoid at all costs, as it could have reignited the Cold War. Gorbachev was also very aware of the effect the breakup of Yugoslavia might have on his state. He recognized that what happened in Yugoslavia, where forces loyal to the individual republics fought the federal Army, might happen in the Soviet Union.[10] The Soviet Republics were exhibiting separatist tendencies, and Gorbachev needed to keep them together. Bush understood this, and formulated his policy accordingly.[11] President Bush's obligingly "Gorbo-centric" policy on Yugoslavia helped keep the Soviet Union together and Gorbachev in power throughout the summer of 1991.

The attempted coup in Moscow in August 1991 and the final dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of December 1991 spelled the end of the Soviets' automatic hostility to the Yugoslav Republics' independence. As the Soviet Union peacefully disintegrated, it removed the necessity for the United States' policy.[12] However, the United States did not immediately reevaluate its policy and recognize Croatia and Slovenia. Though Russia itself recognized the two new states in February 1992, the United States did not follow suit until April. Russia, after gaining its independence, did not take an active role in the Yugoslav conflict for several years, as it turned inward to deal with domestic issues and resolve disputes with the other former Soviet Republics. The United States, had it chosen to intervene in early 1992, was at the height of its

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[9] Halberstam, 33.
[10] James Gow, Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 186.
[11] Edemskii, 30.
[12] Gow, 187; Susan L. Woodward, Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995), 177.

potential influence in the region, because "there was not even a theoretical possibility of converting the conflict into a clash between Communist East and democratic West" as there had been for so long during the Cold War.[13]

The Bush administration's initial policy on Yugoslavia was known as "unity and democracy."[14] It supported the unity of Yugoslavia - even as it became increasingly evident it would not survive - to support Gorbachev's position in Moscow. However, Bush could not completely abandon the ideals of democratic self-determination. So when Secretary of State Baker visited Belgrade on a one-day stop in June 1991, he warned the Yugoslav leaders that "If you force the United States to choose between unity and democracy we will always choose democracy."[15] The groundwork for this policy had been laid in January of 1991, when Zimmermann told the Yugoslav leaders that the United States would not recognize the legitimacy of the use of force to hold the country together.[16] However, as Ambassador Zimmermann observed, "the United States had given no consideration to using force to stop a Serbian/JNA attack on Slovenia or Croatia."[17] Baker restated that the U.S. would not accept the use of force to hold the country together during his visit, while at the same time warning Tudjman and Kucan, the leaders of Croatia and Slovenia respectively, not to declare independence unilaterally.[18] Without the threat of force to back up his policies, Baker had almost no influence on the Yugoslav leaders. When Croatia and Slovenia unilaterally declared independence on

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[13] Edemskii, 32.
[14] Richard Sobel, The Impact of Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy Since Vietnam: Constraining the Colossus (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 179.
[15] Zimmermann, 12.
[16] Susan L. Woodward, "International Aspects of the Wars in Former Yugoslavia: 1990-1996," Burn This House, eds. Jasminka Udovicki and James Ridgeway (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 221.
[17] Zimmermann, 11-12.
[18] Ibid, 11.

June 25, 1991, the United States did not recognize either state, and pushed its allies, especially in the European Community, to refrain also.[19]

Germany, however, newly reunited and testing its political clout, pushed for recognition of the new states. To Germany, the "victory of the principle of self-determination of peoples as an act of democratic will" was more important than the United States' concerns about the Soviet Union's breakup.[20] The "principle of self-determination of peoples" was the catalyst for German reunification, and was an idea German foreign policy planners ardently believed in; having used it to justify their reunification, they could not ignore the wishes of the people in Slovenia and Croatia for independence.

The rest of the European Community did not support recognition, but their options were limited. During the summer of 1991, the Treaty of Maastricht, which formed the European Union, was being finalized. In addition to a monetary union, one of its pillars was a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). If Germany forced recognition of Slovenia and Croatia, while the rest of the EC refused, Maastricht would be a dead letter.[21] When Germany did recognize the two new states in December of 1991, the rest of the EC was forced to choose between two bad options: the abandonment of the principle that Yugoslavia should remain a single state and a split within the EC just

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[19] Steven Hurst, The Foreign Policy of the Bush Administration: In Search of a New World Order (New York: Cassell, 1999), 216; James Baker, The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War, and Peace, 1989-1992 (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), 639.
[20] Woodward, Balkan Tragedy, 153.
[21] Holbrooke, 31.

as it was supposed to be coming together. In the end, the EC chose to recognize Croatia and Slovenia, which it did unanimously on January 15 1992.[22]

The United States was not pleased with the EC's decision, because it made the dissolution of Yugoslavia inevitable.[23] Recognition by the leading Western European states meant Slovenia's and Croatia's independence would be permanent, and ended any hopes for a united Yugoslavia. The United States officially recognized Slovenia and Croatia on April 7, 1992. It recognized Bosnia, which had declared its independence on March 3, at the same time.[24] The Bush administration hoped recognition would keep the Serbs from committing further acts of aggression, especially in Bosnia, where war was about to start. The United States knew after the conflicts in Slovenia and Croatia that "Bosnia's ethnic diversity and the Muslim plurality's defenselessness would make the next war the deadliest of all."[25] However, the Serbs ignored the message Washington sent by recognizing Bosnia, and began their assault the next day.[26] The Serbs knew the recognition of Bosnian independence was "a formal act bereft of the practical consequences that would ensure independence and territorial integrity."[27] The United States and the EC were simply not prepared to defend the new state from aggression.

President Bush's Yugoslav policies aided in the peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, but they came at the expense of the people of Yugoslavia, especially the Croats and Bosnian Muslims. For Bush's foreign policy team,

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[22] Woodward, Balkan Tragedy, 188.
[23] Hurst, 216.
[24] Wayne Bert, The Reluctant Superpower: United States' Policy in Bosnia, 1991-95 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 143.
[25] Samantha Power, "A Problem from Hell": America and the Age of Genocide (New York: Perennial, 2003), 252.
[26] Silber and Little, 222.
[27] Joseph Joffe, "The New Europe: Yesterday's Ghosts," Foreign Affairs 72, no. 1 (1996): 3; Power, 249.

the national interest question was paramount, and events in Yugoslavia were just not important enough to force a realignment of foreign policy goals. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the U.S. still clung to its "unity and democracy" policy, trying to preserve the fiction of Yugoslavia as a single state. When the Bush administration finally reversed its policy, it did so without a commitment to guaranteeing the new states' integrity. The lack of a clear commitment to stop the conflict emboldened the Serbs, and they embarked on the ethnic cleansing of Bosnia.

"We Don't Have a Dog in this Fight"

After the Persian Gulf War, human rights activists hoped the Bush administration had ushered in a new era of respect for human rights, one where the imperilment of "vital American interests *or* cherished values" would be sufficient cause for intervention in humanitarian crises.[28] However, the Bush administration refuted that hope, or at least the idea that "cherished values" included humanitarian missions, when Secretary of State Baker declared, "[The United States] cannot and should not be expected to be, the world's policeman."[29] Despite the end of the Cold War, and the gradual but steady gains human rights had made in the international community's consciousness since World War II, the Bush administration was not prepared to take on purely humanitarian causes, especially if they appeared to entail significant political or military risks.

[28] Power, 260-1.
[29] Baker, 651.

Brent Scowcroft, President Bush's national security advisor, acknowledged that the administration was "heavily national interest oriented."[30] Though he personally believed there was a need for a more aggressive policy, Scowcroft was "wary of being pulled into so ancient a struggle," particularly one without any other advocates within the administration pushing for intervention.[31] Scowcroft had served as an Air Force attaché in Belgrade, and so was familiar with the country. He met daily with President Bush, and the two men even wrote a memoir together after leaving office, so Scowcroft's potential influence on Bush cannot be discounted, had he chosen to exercise it.

President Bush was known as a foreign policy president, and was firmly grounded in the realist national interest school, to which the rest of the senior administration officials also subscribed.[32] Scowcroft summed up the administration's attitude on Bosnia in terms of the interests involved:

> We could never satisfy ourselves that the amount of involvement it would take was justified in terms of U.S. interests involved.[33]

Bosnia in and of itself was just not a threat to what the Bush administration perceived of as the United States' interests. Only a widening of the war could prompt U.S. action. Continued Scowcroft,

> Bosnia was of national interest concern only if war broke out in Kosovo, risking the involvement of our allies [Greece and Turkey] in a wider war. If it stayed constrained in Bosnia, it might have been horrible, but it did not affect us.[34]

Scowcroft also acknowledged that preventing genocide was in the United States' interest, but ethnic cleansing – which was how the State Department chose to refer to Serb

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[30] Power, 288.
[31] Halberstam, 43.
[32] Hurst, 10.
[33] Power, 288.
[34] Ibid, 288.

treatment of Bosnian civilians – was not. Further, stopping genocide was not an interest of the United States for any intrinsic moral reason, but "because the United States needs to appear to be upholding international law."[35] At the time, whether or not Serb actions in Bosnia constituted genocide was debatable, but the State Department and administration steadfastly resisted attempts by the press corps to describe atrocities in Bosnia as genocide without modifiers such as 'acts of genocide' or 'tantamount to genocide' which were used throughout both the Bush and Clinton administrations.[36]

Intervening in a conflict as complex as the one unfolding in Yugoslavia that did not involve any clear interests of the United States was decidedly not part of Bush's foreign policy philosophy. Bush, according to Scowcroft, never really understood the conflict there; the names, places and rivalries were all new and more complicated than he was prepared to deal with. Every time Scowcroft would brief the president, Bush would instruct him to "tell me again what this is all about."[37] In describing why the United States refused to take a more active role in Yugoslavia, Bush characterized the situation as "a complex, convoluted conflict that grows out of age-old animosities and centuries-old feuds."[38] He believed this despite the opinion of those who watched the region and

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[35] Ibid, 288. The United States is a signatory to the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which according to some interpretations requires action to prevent or stop genocide from occurring.

[36] Richard Johnson, "The Pinstripe Approach to Genocide," The Conceit of Innocence: Losing the Conscience of the West in the War against Bosnia, ed. Stjepan G. Mestrovic (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 66.

66. The Hague Court prosecuting war crimes in Bosnia ruled in April 2004 that genocide had taken place in Bosnia. See Marlise Simons, "World Briefing Europe: The Hague: Court Affirms Genocide in Bosnia," The New York Times, April 20, 2004, sec. A.

[37] Halberstam, 44.

[38] Power, 282.

the conflict closely, that it was really a grab for power – which exploited, but was not driven by, those "age-old animosities."[39]

Baker took his cue on the importance of Yugoslav policy directly from the President. He "had no great philosophical vision of foreign policy" which he might have used to influenced the administration's policy on intervention.[40] Baker was content to follow Bush's lead and not to question the President's overarching foreign policy philosophy, especially on an issue with little priority within the administration. Like Bush, Baker's personality did not lend itself to solving the complicated and intertwined problems of Yugoslavia. As David Halberstam noted:

> [Baker] was not fond of difficult, dangerous places, filled with bitterly aggrieved people who presented political and human questions that, if not exactly insoluble, were as close as you could get.[41]

Reflecting both his "penchant for winnable contests" and the lack of importance he assigned Yugoslavia, Baker placed Lawrence Eagleburger, an Assistant Secretary of State, in charge of Yugoslav policy.[42] Eagleburger was a natural choice to head up policy on Yugoslavia, because he served as ambassador there in the 1970s. However, Baker's delegation of responsibility still revealed the lack of importance the Bush administration assigned the conflict; he would have placed himself in charge if it were a critical question.

Eagleburger, the State Department's most senior expert on Yugoslavia, had a very fatalistic attitude about the conflicts erupting there. He was appalled by the violence,

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[39] Woodward, Balkan Tragedy, 92.
[40] Halberstam, 65.
[41] Ibid, 44-5.
[42] Woodward, Balkan Tragedy, 155.

especially the killing of civilians, in a country he by all accounts was very fond of.[43] In a sense, he wrote off Yugoslavia:

> It is difficult to explain, but this war is not rational. There is no rationality at all about ethnic conflict. It is gut, it is hatred; it's not for any common set of values or purposes; it just goes on. And that kind of warfare is most difficult to bring to a halt.[44]

Eagleburger might have known better about the origins of the conflict. Having spent several years in Yugoslavia, he must have known that the different ethnic groups were not constantly in conflict; most of the time they lived in peace, and even had a relatively high rate of intermarriage, especially in Bosnia. It appeared that he had developed what Susan Woodward described as "a New World fatalism about Old World nationalism" which influenced his thinking on the conflict.[45]

Another influence on Eagleburger's attitude towards the dissolution of Yugoslavia was the fact that he had spent most of his time in Belgrade, the capital of both Yugoslavia and the Serbian Republic. He, along with most of the other State Department officials, was more familiar with Belgrade, and the Serbian people and leaders, than with Zagreb and the Croatians or Sarajevo and the Bosnians.[46] During his time in Belgrade, Eagleburger developed a social relationship with Milosevic, and had maintained ties to government officials in the 1980s when he served as president of Yugo America, the American division of the Yugoslav car manufacturer.[47] These relationships, as well as a general nostalgia for Tito's Yugoslavia, help explain his reluctance to push for intervention during the early stages of the conflict.

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[43] Halberstam, 43.
[44] Power, 282.
[45] Woodward, Balkan Tragedy, 155.
[46] Halberstam, 91.
[47] Gow, 205n.

Eagleburger took a trip to Yugoslavia to visit Milosevic in February 1991 to warn him against using violence if the country broke apart. Upon returning, Eagleburger was convinced that "It is going to be bloody as hell." However, he also believed that Yugoslavia was now Europe's problem, and that there was no solution which would succeed; indeed, even getting involved in Yugoslavia, Eagleburger thought, would harm the United States.[48] As the United States' top official in charge of Yugoslav policy, Eagleburger at least initially viewed the situation as hopeless, which fit perfectly with the President's desire to stay out of conflicts which did not directly affect the country's interests. With higher officials all disinterested in or equally fatalistic about the Yugoslav conflict there was no vocal high-level support for an interventionist policy.

Though no high-level officials were pushing for intervention, lower level officials in the State Department, particularly at the country-desk level, were actively pushing for a more activist policy. These officials dealt with the conflict on a daily basis, and knew more about what was happening there than anyone else. So Eagleburger was at a kind of fulcrum in policy; he was being pushed from below to take a more active role, while those above were unwilling to consider a change in policy.[49]

James Baker resigned as Secretary of State in order to become a political advisor to Bush in the last months of his 1992 reelection campaign. Eagleburger was promoted to Acting Secretary of State, where he had, at least theoretically, more ability to influence policy on Yugoslavia than he had before. The prediction Eagleburger made in early 1991 about the war being "bloody as hell" turned out to be truer than he expected. After the

[48] Power, 253.
[49] Halberstam, 13.

war spread to Bosnia in April 1992, he realized that it turned out to be even worse than he had initially anticipated. To some extent, he had expected a traditional conflict, fought between armies, not the campaigns against civilians which marked the majority of the fighting in Bosnia.[50] As it became more and more clear what was happening in Bosnia, Eagleburger became uncomfortable with State Department policy, but didn't see any alternatives. After President Bush lost the 1992 election, Eagleburger at least talked about the situation in Bosnia more honestly:

> We have, on the one hand, a moral and historical obligation not to stand back a second time in this century while a people faces obliteration. But we have also, I believe, a political obligation to the people of Serbia to signal clearly the risk they currently run of sharing the inevitable fate of those who practice ethnic cleansing in their names.[51]

Eagleburger, in talking of the "inevitable risk" the people of Serbia were taking, was not referring to military action, but rather to a United Nations tribunal, which was eventually set up and has prosecuted many of the people indicted on war crimes charges.

Eagleburger was encouraged to make even this relatively timid statement – he was, after all, at this point working for a lame-duck administration – by several junior State Department officials, such as Jim Hooper, Richard Johnson, Bill Montgomery, Jon Western and John Fox.[52] Elie Wiesel, the prominent Holocaust survivor and advocate of an interventionist Bosnian policy, also met with Eagleburger and encouraged him to take a harder line on the Serbs.[53] What the lower level State Department officials really hoped to push Eagleburger to do was acknowledge that Serb atrocities in Bosnia amounted to genocide. They believed doing so would force some sort of more forceful action from

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[50] Ibid, 136-7.
[51] Power, 291.
[52] Halberstam, 134, 140.
[53] Power, 291.

the United States and the international community, or at the very least make the political figures believe there would be some sort of price to pay in terms of world and public opinion if the conflict were allowed to continue.[54]

At least privately, Eagleburger eventually came to agree with them. However, he could not make a public statement to that effect, because he believed, according to Samantha Power, "that it would be unfair for the Bush administration to issue a finding of genocide just as the next administration was taking over."[55] The Bush administration's caution and desire to stay away from the Yugoslav conflicts extended right to the end, when a finding of genocide, no matter how "unfair," might have forced action by the incoming Clinton administration.

The Bush administration actually did acknowledge that genocide was being committed in Bosnia, however tangentially. In December of 1992, the U.S. supported a United Nations resolution which described Serb atrocities in Bosnia as "genocide." The State Department, however, did not consider this resolution to be official policy, and it had no effect upon the administration's policies.[56] After the election, Eagleburger went so far as to become the first vocal advocate in government of a "lift and strike" policy: lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims so they could defend themselves, and striking Serb targets to force them to the negotiating table.[57] Eagleburger attempted to sell the plan to the United States' European allies, without success.

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[54] Ibid, 289.
[55] Ibid, 292. Apparently, however, it was not "unfair" for the Bush Administration to deploy tens of thousands of troops in Somalia after losing the election. See the discussion in this paper on Somalia.
[56] Johnson, "Pinstripe," 67-8.
[57] Halberstam, 154-5.

The Bush administration, starting with the president, and continuing down throughout the political appointee ranks of the State Department, never had any intention of intervening in Yugoslavia, at least until its last months, after Bush lost the election. Those junior officials who did push for intervention went largely unheeded, at least until the end, at which point Eagleburger felt taking action would bind the incoming Clinton administration to an activist policy, which would be "unfair." Had Eagleburger initially been less fatalistic about the situation in Yugoslavia, he might have been an effective proponent of action within the administration; his experience in and knowledge of Yugoslavia would have at least made it impossible to ignore his recommendations. Overall, however, the Bush administration was, as Scowcroft said, "heavily national interest oriented" and ideologically unwilling to consider becoming involved in the conflict in Yugoslavia.

To minimize the United States' involvement, the Bush administration encouraged the European Community to take the lead in ending the conflicts in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia. President Bush had many motives for wanting to avoid becoming involved, but two stood out as excellent reasons to let Europe take the lead. The first was that early U.S. proposals to deal with the crisis through NATO had been rejected by the Europeans. They wished the conflict to be dealt with through EC-U.S. diplomatic channels, and not the military alliance. The EC wanted to step onto the global stage as an independent, unified power, and exert its influence over European affairs. Secondly, the Bush administration itself wished to avoid entanglement in the conflict. Having just finished the Persian Gulf War and with an election rapidly approaching, in 1991 the Yugoslav

conflict did not present any easy solutions, and could only hurt the administration politically.[58]

Diplomatic use of NATO, though the European Community opposed it, would have lent a much needed threat of force to back the diplomacy carried out in 1991 and early 1992. According to David Gompert, a staff member of Bush's National Security Council, the United States' willingness to go along with the Europeans' policy of not involving the alliance,

> … contradicted and undermined its declaratory policy regarding the centrality and purpose of NATO in post-Cold War Europe, [which] implied NATO responsibility to respond to precisely the sort of conflict by then raging in the Balkans.[59]

The Bush administration had asserted that NATO and the United States would continue to take active interest in European affairs. In keeping itself out of the conflict in the Balkans, the United States very quickly broke that promise. Part of the impetus was that the conflict was viewed within the administration as a regional dispute, and not something which was critical for the United States to take an active role in.[60]

Baker's brief trip to Belgrade in June 1991 reinforced the administration's belief that the conflict should be handled regionally. His advice was ignored by all the leaders he met with, and embittered him to the whole region. After that trip, he had little or no interest in dealing with Yugoslavia, and discouraged attempts at dealing with the conflict inside the administration. He strongly believed it was Europe's problem, and should

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[58] Gow, 204.
[59] Holbrooke, 28.
[60] Hurst, 215.

remain that way.[61] He commonly expressed his frustration with and desire to stay out of the conflict by saying "We don't have a dog in this fight."[62]

"The Hour of Europe"

The Europeans themselves were initially enthusiastic about taking on the Balkan conflict. On the eve of an EC diplomatic mission to Belgrade, Luxembourg's foreign minister declared "The hour of Europe has dawned."[63] Secretary of State Baker recalled that,

> It was time for the Europeans to step up to the plate and show that they could act as a unified power. Yugoslavia was as good a first test as any.[64]

Unfortunately, Europe was not up to the task. This became strikingly clear when Germany forced the rest of the EC to recognize Slovenia and Croatia in late 1991. Despite the promise of Maastricht, the Europeans did not have a common foreign policy, though their desire to maintain the appearance that they did forced them to reluctantly recognize the new Balkan states. The European states could agree that "maintaining a united front was more important than any particular outcome in the Balkans," but little else.[65]

Gompert recalled that the failure of the European Community only strengthened the United States' desire to stay out of the conflict:

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[61] Silber and Little, 201. Baker's account of this meeting in his autobiography is sharply at odds with all other accounts. Though he presents himself as knowledgeable about the conflict and its players, accounts from both the Yugoslav leaders he met with and other State Department officials suggest that he knew little of the area and its issues.
[62] Ibid, 201.
[63] Ibid, 159.
[64] Power, 259.
[65] Woodward, "International Aspects," 217.

> Washington wanted the EC to succeed, but the clearer it became that the EC could not, the less eager the United States was to see the alliance [NATO], and thus itself, saddled with a no-win problem.[66]

The Bush administration was so anxious to stay out of Yugoslavia that it refused even to send an observer to the peace talks held in late 1991, because doing so might imply U.S. involvement.[67] As a result, the Europeans formed policy on the Balkans, while Washington stood back and watched. However, without the backing of American diplomatic and military power, the Europeans could not effectively resolve the conflict.[68] They were divided, with the British and French sympathetic to the Serbs, and the Germans favoring the Croats and Slovenes.[69] Additionally, Europe was not used to making major foreign policy decisions on its own; for the past forty-five years, the United States led the way and more or less informed Europe what it would be doing and asked for its support, while making it clear that it would go ahead anyway.[70]

So by the spring of 1992, as the conflict spread to Bosnia,

> Most American decisionmakers had come to recognize that there was no "European" diplomacy to speak of. … Yet anxious to avoid involvement themselves, they persisted in deferring to European leadership that was nonexistent.[71]

The pattern held throughout most of the remaining year of Bush's term; the only notable exception is the attempt by acting Secretary of State Eagleburger to sell a "lift and strike" plan to the Europeans just as the Bush administration was leaving office. Other than that last minute, half-hearted effort, though the United States publicly called for an end to the

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[66] David Gompert, "How to Defeat Serbia," Foreign Affairs 73, no. 4 (1994): 36.
[67] Holbrooke, 30.
[68] Halberstam, 87.
[69] Woodward, "Balkan Tragedy," 149, 164; Halberstam, 90.
[70] Halberstam, 226. Notable exceptions are the 1956 Suez Canal War, in which Israel, France and the United Kingdom attempted to reverse Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal, and the 1982 Falkland Islands War fought between Great Britain and Argentina.
[71] Power, 259.

fighting, and pressed for better humanitarian access, it deferred to European attempts to halt the conflict.

Those in the State Department who pushed for a tougher line thought they were making headway in July 1992 when reports of concentration camps first found their way to the press. However, the administration, stressed State Department spokesman Richard Boucher, never considered using force, either to end the conflict or liberate the camps.[72] President Bush's pledge, to "not rest until the international community has gained access to any and all detention camps," carried no threat of force, and was made in response to domestic outrage, not a desire to do anything about the situation.[73] So even when presented with evidence that events which appeared similar to the Holocaust were taking place in Europe, Bush was so anxious to stay uninvolved that he refused to do more than call for "access" to the camps. The European Community was supposed to take the lead in Yugoslavia, to fill the vacuum left by the United States, but it was unable to do so. President Bush was simply not interested in what happened in Yugoslavia, and continued deferring to European diplomacy, even as its failure became more and more apparent.

Electoral Politics

President Bush was a foreign policy president. It was his and his administration's, "area of expertise, interest, and passion."[74] That overwhelming interest became one of Bush's largest vulnerabilities during his reelection campaign in 1992. Bill Clinton, with his famous "It's the economy, stupid" mantra, was criticizing Bush for not

[72] Ibid, 273.
[73] Ibid, 279.
[74] Halberstam, 57.

paying enough attention to domestic issues, especially the economy. Though Bush was recognized and respected as a world leader, he was vulnerable as an American leader.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States had almost carte blanche influence in the Balkans; without the threat of Soviet intervention, Bush would have had almost no serious international opposition to solving the Balkan crisis. By early 1992, Bush was forced to take into account domestic pressures against intervention, mostly coming indirectly from Clinton. While Clinton advocated taking a harder line on Bosnia – including military action – he also kept up his criticism of Bush for neglecting domestic problems.[75] President Bush was caught in a no-win situation. Becoming involved in the Yugoslav conflict to the extent necessary to stop the war would require a serious commitment, and the attention of the administration – precisely the kind of attention Clinton was criticizing him for not directing towards domestic affairs. At the same time, the administration remained convinced that military intervention would lead to a Vietnam-like "quagmire."[76] Finally, President Bush did not want a second war during his first term in office.[77] The highly successful Persian Gulf War had just been completed, and Bush did not want to lead the country through another war, especially one which had the potential to be much more complicated and treacherous for U.S. forces, in a place he knew and cared so little about.

Clinton's calls for action, however, mixed with the advocacy of some in the media and human rights organizations, were embarrassing President Bush. Especially after the Serbs' concentration camps had been revealed to the public in August 1991,

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[75] Power, 274-5.
[76] Halberstam, 32.
[77] Ibid, 32.

Bush was accused by some of allowing another Holocaust to happen in Europe, of breaking the "never again" promise.[78] Bush, despite domestic criticism of his policies, vowed to "not make one decision based on American politics, election politics '92."[79] Such a claim is highly suspicious; presidents facing reelection will almost always evaluate their policies in light of the upcoming election. This is doubly true if the policy area is not ideologically or personally important – as Yugoslavia was not within the Bush administration.

Evidence of Bush's concern about American politics comes from analysis of public attitudes during the conflict. President Bush believed the public identified with the crisis as a humanitarian disaster, not a war of aggression, and tried to reinforce that view.[80] He then concentrated on providing humanitarian relief, and not pressing for military action. Public opinion, however, moved ahead of Bush and by August 1992 over half favored including U.S. troops in a peacekeeping mission in Yugoslavia. By winter, the percentage was over two-thirds.[81] President Bush still refused to participate in a peacekeeping mission, believing it would inevitably draw the United States deeper into the conflict, and damage his reelection chances. Secretary of State Baker summed up the administration's aversion to military action, and its strategy to cite what it believed was strong public backing for staying out of Yugoslavia, when he asserted that in any military intervention in Yugoslavia, the cost in American lives

[78] Power, 277-8, 511.
[79] Sobel, 196.
[80] Ibid, 199.
[81] Ibid, 197, 199.

> "would have been staggering … the necessary support by the American people for the degree of force that would have been required in Bosnia could never have been built or maintained."[82]

Yugoslavia was simply not important enough to Bush for him to consider any military action, especially in an election year.[83]

Though the Bush administration had plenty of reasons not to become involved in Yugoslavia, the election, and the criticisms leveled by Clinton, certainly reinforced those reasons in the minds of Bush and his advisors. Though public opinion by late 1991 supported participation in a United Nations peacekeeping force, the administration's determination not to become involved remained absolute. The main objective of Bush's policy on Yugoslavia after war had started in Bosnia to keep the United States from becoming involved.

"The Vietnam Syndrome"

The military, though it is not as an institution a formal member of the President's foreign policy-making group, can have a large amount of influence; especially when represented by someone as respected and popular as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell was during the Bush and early Clinton administrations. The military's almost complete monopoly on military planning and expert estimates for force requirements allow an activist leadership to exert influence on policy out of proportion to their official duties. The military's, and specifically Colin Powell's, experiences during

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[82] Warren Bass, "The Triage of Dayton," Foreign Affairs 77, no. 5 (1998): 98.
[83] President Bush did agree to enforce "No-Fly" zones over Bosnia in early January 1993 after he lost the election, three months after they were officially created. See Sobel, 199.

the Vietnam War influenced the Pentagon's position on intervention in Yugoslavia, which in turn greatly influenced the Bush administration's policies and rhetoric.[84]

After Vietnam, the United States' attitude on interventions of any sort shifted. Whereas during the first part of the Cold War, foreign policy planners worried about "another Munich" – appeasing an aggressor which eventually leads to a worse situation than confrontation – or "another Pearl Harbor" – being caught unawares and unprepared by an enemy – successive administrations have been more worried about "another Vietnam."[85] Throughout the Yugoslav wars, interventionist arguments were countered by the threat of another Vietnam; a war which drew the United States into ever deeper involvement without clear objectives or an exit strategy. This worry was prevalent within the Bush administration. Larry Eagleburger thought intervening in Bosnia would be like a "Vietnam – the tar baby. Something that started out small but kept growing."[86] Richard Cheney, then Secretary of Defense, said of intervention, "It's not clear … that it could be done at an acceptable cost in terms of U.S. casualties."[87] In general, this attitude has been called the "Vietnam syndrome."[88]

Several similarities, or perceived similarities, between Bosnia and Vietnam helped reinforce the Pentagon and administration's comparisons. First was the topography.[89] Bosnia is a very mountainous and densely forested country; only a relatively small portion of which is suitable for farming or large-scale development. Its

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[84] Hurst, 217-8.
[85] Bert, 114.
[86] Halberstam, 32.
[87] Sobel, 208.
[88] Power, 261.
[89] Ibid, 282-3.

rugged terrain resembles Vietnam rather than Iraq and Kuwait with their open expanses of desert. So rather than encouraging favorable comparisons to the recent overwhelming victory in the Gulf War, Bosnia conjured up images of Vietnam.

Second was the prospect of a limited intervention – air strikes only – becoming a full-scale war. Military planners were worried about what would happen if the United States used air strikes, and they failed to halt the conflict.[90] In order to avoid being seen as impotent, the United States would almost certainly have to deploy ground troops, expanding its involvement in the conflict. Similarly, General Powell objected to any military involvement in Bosnia, even enforcing a United Nations no-fly zone or using the military to deliver humanitarian aid.[91] He was worried about aircraft being shot down, and having to mount rescue attempts, further drawing the U.S. into the conflict, and the vulnerability of lightly armed troops and aircraft delivering humanitarian aid. Either of these situations could have led to direct military action against the Serbs, drawing the U.S. further into the conflict than it wished or planned to be.

The third similarity to Vietnam which worried administration and Pentagon officials was the possibility of a guerrilla war. This was the most important lesson the Bush administration took from Vietnam. As President Bush said, "I do not want to see the United States bogged down in any way into some guerrilla war. We lived through that once."[92] Planners perceived a very real possibility of a guerrilla war developing if the United States invaded Bosnia. The tenacity and effectiveness of Tito's partisans

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[90] Halberstam, 35.
[91] Power, 285.
[92] Hurst, 217.

during World War II against the Italians and Germans was legendary.[93] In addition, the Yugoslav Army's (JNA) defensive strategy was to mount a delaying action, buying time for the Territorial Defense Forces (TDF) to organize and mount a partisan campaign against the attackers.[94] Policymakers in the Pentagon remembered the effectiveness of the Vietcong's guerrilla tactics and had no desire to become involved in a similar conflict.

Another lesson of Vietnam which influenced the military's views on the Yugoslav conflict was the

> all too personal understanding of what happens, first, when the architects of an interventionist policy underestimate the other side, and second, when so many of those in the political process who were its architects soon orphan their own handiwork and go on to other jobs, leaving the military to deal with a war that no one could get right.[95]

For the military as an institution, the bureaucratic battles of the Vietnam War led to the realization that they would be forced to deal with the consequences of military involvement in Yugoslavia, especially if it became politically unpopular. Political leaders could again place the blame on the Pentagon for mishandling a war the military did not want in the first place.

General Powell's response to these possibilities was to test the Bush administration's commitment to intervention, while trying to scare them away at the same time. He did that by providing very high estimates for the number of troops required to stop the conflict. When the Bush administration asked for estimates, he proposed numbers as high as 400,000 troops just to enforce a cease-fire.[96] Ambassador

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[93] Halberstam, 329-330.
[94] Cohen, Hearts Grown Brutal, 122-3.
[95] Halberstam, 37.
[96] Power, 283.

Zimmermann, an advocate of a more proactive, if not interventionist, policy observed, "[the Pentagon] just tossed around figures on what it would take that were both unacceptable and, because of who was supplying them, uncontestable."[97] By quoting extremely high numbers, Powell hoped to discourage the administration from intervening if they were anything less than fully committed.[98] Advocates for intervention always backed away when presented with such high figures.[99]

Ensuring the political leaders fully supported intervention, and were willing to stand behind it at all costs, was one of the central tenets of the Powell Doctrine, which broadly laid out acceptable circumstances for the use of force. Developed in response to what Powell believed were the political and strategic lessons of the Vietnam War, it was the model for the Persian Gulf War, and guided the Pentagon and Bush administration's thinking on intervention in Yugoslavia. Other features of the doctrine – which Powell himself has never systematically defined, but is drawn from his speeches and writings – are the use of overwhelming force and a clear set of objectives and an exit strategy.[100] Secretary Cheney, arguing against intervention in Yugoslavia, invoked two of the questions raised by the Powell Doctrine, asserting that, "It's not clear what [the soldiers'] mission would be. … It's not clear how you would get them out when it is over …"[101] The lessons of Vietnam, in the form of the Powell Doctrine, guided and limited the policy options for Yugoslavia considered by the Bush administration. Clearly the Gulf War had

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[97] Ibid, 284.
[98] Halberstam, 42.
[99] Ibid, 36.
[100] Cohen, Hearts Grown Brutal, 242.
[101] Sobel, 208.

not, as President Bush claimed, "buried once and for all" the shadow of Vietnam.[102] Interestingly, the same thinking did not apply to Somalia, where Powell backed the use of American troops in violation of almost all the doctrine's principles.[103]

There was one source of dissent within the Joint Chiefs of Staff against General Powell's beliefs about intervention in Yugoslavia. Air Force Chief of Staff Tony McPeak believed air strikes alone could slow, if not stop, the Serb offensives in Bosnia. He had no illusions about defeating the Serbs from the air alone, but believed air strikes might be used to balance the Serbs' overwhelming superiority in arms against the Bosnians, or even force them to negotiate an end to the conflict.[104] McPeak argued that technological advances, primarily in "smart" weaponry, could overcome the obstacles posed by weather, terrain, and the heavy forest cover in Bosnia. Whereas the other Joint Chiefs' frame of reference for using airpower was the largely ineffective bombing in Vietnam, McPeak looked to the just-completed Gulf War as an example of what the Air Force could do in Bosnia. McPeak, however, was alone in the Pentagon in advocating any sort of interventionist policy. He was never able to convince any of the other Joint Chiefs to support his position, because of the towering influence of General Powell and the parallels that were constantly drawn to Vietnam.[105]

The Bush administration's refusal to consider the use of force had its roots in both the administration's and the Pentagon's lingering wariness of Vietnam, the upcoming election, the Persian Gulf War, and the administration's reading of public opinion. The

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[102] Power, 261.
[103] Jon Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention," International Security 26, no. 4 (2002): 140, 112. Also see the discussion on Somalia in this paper.
[104] Halberstam, 40-41.
[105] Ibid, 39.

Bush administration was very forthcoming about its non-intervention policy. At a press conference, Baker stated that "there will be no unilateral use – no unilateral use – of U.S. force … we are not, and we cannot be, the world's policeman."[106] Though at that point he only ruled out unilateral force, the administration's position quickly hardened into a refusal to use any force in the conflict. This was in part due to the European Community's squeamishness about taking sides in the conflict. Though several European nations deployed UN peacekeepers to Croatia in March 1992, and then to Bosnia after fighting started there in April, they had no mandate to stop the fighting.[107] They were there to keep the peace only, and were required to be impartial, even though there was little peace to keep in Bosnia and the Serbs were the overwhelming aggressors.[108] The Europeans had committed themselves to the extent they felt they were morally required to, and were unwilling to go further. The Europeans' refusal to consider using force to stop the conflict left the United States as the only country even considering the use of force in any capacity, which the administration quickly backed away from.

The retreat was so thorough that the Bush administration went out of its way not to even suggest it might use force in any context in Yugoslavia. As Wayne Bert observed:

> The Bush administration officials were not only unwilling to commit force to the conflict but they were also very careful to avoid specific threats of force, and to go out of their way to avoid leaving the impression that a threat was intended.[109]

So while President Bush and others in the government condemned Serb atrocities and concentration camps, they never threatened to use force to stop the killing of civilians or

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[106] Hurst, 217.
[107] Sobel, 182.
[108] Halberstam, 125.
[109] Bert, 119. See also Gow, 208.

open up the camps. Milosevic and the Serbs could do as they wished in Bosnia; it was perfectly clear that neither the United States nor Europe were willing to make the commitment necessary to stop the conflict. Humanitarian aid for the Bosnians and sanctions against the Serbs were as far as the international community was willing to go.

The few military actions the Bush administration took were designed to be militarily insignificant, or to become so due to procedural issues. Secretary of State Baker put together a plan for using force to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid in Bosnia, but it required both NATO and UN approval.[110] Effectively, military action under this system could be vetoed by any of the NATO members or the United Nations, whose officials in Bosnia were notorious for their caution and hesitancy to use force.[111] The second initiative, to enforce sanctions against Serbia and an arms embargo against the entire former Yugoslavia, necessitated the moving of U.S. naval forces to the Adriatic Sea, but they did not threaten to interfere in the conflict itself.[112] Diplomatically, the United States expelled the Yugoslav ambassador, withdrew Ambassador Zimmermann from Belgrade, and closed its two consulates in Yugoslavia, but these were punitive actions, not preliminaries to or threats of stronger action.[113]

Even Bush's move to enforce the "no-fly" zone over Bosnia just as he was leaving office did not promise an end to the conflict; it was a step more akin to the arms embargo because it left the Serbs free to do what they pleased on the ground; they just could not use their air force to help. So the Bush administration was involved as far as it

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[110] Baker, 649-50.
[111] Cohen, Hearts Grown Brutal, 258.
[112] Power, 263.
[113] Ibid, 263.

wished – minimally – and it ruled out using force to end the conflict. Lingering memories and fears of Vietnam combined with a general distaste for the conflict, the region, and the people, as well as a presidential election and the belief that the public would not stand for casualties, led the Bush administration to rule out the use of force in Yugoslavia. Given these attitudes and circumstances, it seems inconceivable with opposition from the Pentagon, the State Department – with the exception of a few junior officials and Eagleburger in the closing months of the administration – as well as President Bush, that the Bush administration would have ever used force to stop the conflict in Yugoslavia.

The Clinton Administration

President Clinton's apparent enthusiasm for ending the wars in Bosnia and Croatia quickly evaporated once he reached office. "Lift and strike," essentially the same policy that Eagleburger had tried to sell, was quickly deemed too politically difficult to implement. Having decided that his preferred policy was unworkable, Clinton reverted to a hands-off policy that discounted intervention as an option. Not until the summer of 1995 did Clinton begin to feel enough political pressure, both domestic and international, that intervention became a necessity. Clinton's did not base his decision to end the wars in Bosnia and Croatia on humanitarian concerns, but rather cold political calculations.

Lift and Strike: A "High Moral Standard on the Basis of Absolutely Zero Involvement"

During the 1992 presidential campaign, Clinton criticized President Bush repeatedly for not doing more to stop the conflict in Bosnia. During a campaign rally in St. Louis, he stated his belief that the United States had an obligation to stop the conflict.[114] Later, he went so far as to endorse using force to insure delivery of humanitarian aid and stop the shelling of Sarajevo.[115] In turn, Bosnians placed their hopes on Clinton's election; given his campaign rhetoric, they believed he would use the United States' military power to bring the war to a quick halt. Unfortunately for the

[114] Power, 274.
[115] Ibid, 275; Halberstam, 225.

Bosnians, once in the White House, Clinton turned out to be less of a hawk than he was on the campaign trail.

The first Bosnia policy decision the new administration needed to make upon taking office was whether to endorse the Vance-Owen Plan. Cyrus Vance, a former Secretary of State for President Carter, and Lord Owen, a former British Foreign Minister, represented the United Nations and the European Union, respectively. Together over four months they created the Vance-Owen Plan, which represented a best effort by the two international bodies most involved in resolving the crisis. The plan was based on realistic assumptions of what could and could not be done. It essentially divided Bosnia into ten provinces; each controlled by one of the three ethnic groups, with the exception of two, one to be controlled jointly by the Croats and Muslims, and Sarajevo to be controlled jointly by all three parties.[116] Because Vance and Owen knew neither Europe nor the United States was willing to use force to insure adherence to the plan, the provinces' borders closely followed the existing front lines. The plan was first presented in January 1993 at a peace conference in Geneva.

Richard Holbrooke, a former Carter administration official who would later join the Clinton State Department and be placed in charge of Bosnia policy, wrote about the Vance-Owen Plan to the new foreign policy team shortly after the inauguration. He warned that

> if the Vance-Owen plan is rejected, we must face the fact that the negotiating track is effectively dead – and that using it as an excuse for inaction or insufficient action is no longer acceptable.[117]

[116] Silber and Little, 276.
[117] Holbrooke, 52.

The Clinton administration, however, did almost exactly that. They denounced the Vance-Owen Plan as unacceptable, but presented no alternative and continued to maintain that negotiations could end the conflict. The Vance-Owen Plan, however, was the culmination of the best negotiation efforts of the United Nations and the European Union, and represented the best hope for a negotiated solution.

The Clinton administration refused to support the Vance-Owen Plan because it allowed the Serbs to retain territory they had acquired by force, in violation of the UN Charter. [118] Clinton specifically rejected the plan because it did not "[stand] up against the principle of ethnic cleansing."[119] In part, his campaign promises forced Clinton to take this position; having attacked Bush for not stopping Serb aggression, he could not now legitimize its gains. The weakness of the plan, however, was the uncomfortable reality that neither Europe nor the United States would intervene militarily to enforce compliance with a peace agreement. In the end, it a lack of will on the part of the U.S. and Europe forced a plan that was morally unacceptable to the Clinton administration.

Lord Owen pointed out in an interview with Foreign Affairs that "the fundamental [weakness] of America's criticism of Europe … was that you were employing your high moral standard on the basis of absolutely zero involvement."[120] Clinton's "high moral standard" was not a policy in itself, because the United States was unable to propose an alternative to Vance-Owen. Instead, it was a stand on principle for political, not practical, reasons, which led to the death of the best peace proposal yet offered. Had

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[118] Halberstam, 198.
[119] Jonathan Clarke, "Rhetoric Before Reality: Loose Lips Sink Ships," Foreign Affairs 74, no. 5 (1995): 7.
[120] "The Future of the Balkans: An Interview with David Owen," Foreign Affairs 72, no. 2 (1993): 4.

there been a policy behind Clinton's rejection of Vance-Owen, the plan's rejection might have been a positive step towards a more just solution, instead of a purely negative act.

Despite promises made during the campaign, and aside from the rejection of Vance-Owen, no effective policy on Bosnia was forthcoming when the administration took office. While in its first month the administration still talked passionately about solving the problems in the Balkans, they presented no policy. Warren Christopher, Clinton's Secretary of State, said on February 10 that Bosnia was "an early and crucial test of how [the world] will address the critical concerns of ethnic and religious minorities in the post-Cold War world."[121] The administration certainly saw itself as having responsibilities to stop the conflict; it was just unsure of the best way to go about doing so. Indicative of this was that Christopher, despite calling the conflict a "crucial test," did not threaten to use force, or propose any other initiative.[122] Though Clinton had called for intervention during the campaign, the consequences of actually making that decision were weighing on the new administration.

Although the Clinton administration had not yet formulated a policy on Bosnia, at least it appeared to recognize that it was a problem – that the United States did have an interest in stopping the conflict. This admission in itself was a step further than the Bush administration was ever willing to go, and appeared a hopeful sign to those advocating intervention. Though the use of force was apparently not being considered at that

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[121] Marshall Freeman Harris, "Clinton's "European" Bosnia Policies," The Conceit of Innocence: Losing the Conscience of the West in the War against Bosnia, ed. Stjepan G. Mestrovic (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 241; Power, 295.
[122] Harris, 242.

moment, Clinton had called for it during the campaign, and so it could not have been entirely out of the question.

Tony Lake, Clinton's National Security Advisor, admitted that the first few months after taking office were very frustrating. He was an advocate of intervention, though a quiet one. Lake and his national security staff,

> kept looking for something – reading and rereading everything there was about the area – and it just wasn't there. So we would go back and try again, looking for some as yet undiscovered opening, for something new that we could do, and it wasn't there.[123]

Militarily the administration was stalemated by Europe, much as the Bush administration had been. Unless the United States committed troops to UNPROFOR, Europe was unwilling to allow the United States to use air power to stop the conflict. The Europeans would not allow their troops to be put in greater danger by the United States unless it was willing to share in the consequences. With several thousand troops in Somalia at the time, courtesy of President Bush, Clinton was in no position to make a troop commitment to Bosnia, even if he were inclined to.

Still, there were voices trying to convince the administration to adopt an activist, interventionist policy in Bosnia. Among them was Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor and prominent activist. At the opening of the Holocaust Museum in April, discarding his prepared notes, he turned and spoke directly to President Clinton:

> Mr. President, I cannot *not* tell you something. I have been in the former Yugoslavia last fall. I cannot sleep since what I have seen. As a Jew I am saying that. We must do something to stop the bloodshed in that country.[124]

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[123] Halberstam, 199.
[124] Power, 297.

Wiesel knew he was seeing genocide happen again, in Europe, despite the "never again" promise which had been repeated ever since the end of World War II. That Wiesel addressed Clinton at the opening of the Holocaust Museum, which in part was an acknowledgment of the United States' unwillingness to take action before and during the war to save the lives of Jews in Europe, should have driven home to Clinton the seriousness of what was happening in Bosnia. Instead, Clinton called for an end to the conflict, but remained unwilling to commit the United States to anything:

> Ethnic cleansing is the kind of inhumanity that the Holocaust took to the nth degree, I think you have to stand up against it. I think it's wrong. That does not mean that the United States or the United Nations can enter a war.[125]

In the absence of an easy policy option, Clinton called for the world to "stand up against" what was happening in Bosnia, but did not lay out a plan, or even suggest an option, for stopping the conflict. As the war in Bosnia became a year old, the administration continued to dodge any responsibility to intervene in the conflict.

In May of 1993, about four months after assuming the Presidency, Clinton finally decided on a course of action. The administration's policy was "lift and strike," almost the same plan junior officers in the State Department had tried to sell to Eagleburger in the closing days of the Bush administration and were still pushing.[126] The policy entailed lifting the arms embargo on the Bosnian Muslims, while keeping it in place against Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs, and using air strikes to force the Serbs to negotiate a solution. Clinton believed the plan could be sold to the public if he could convince the

[125] Ibid, 297-8.
[126] Ibid, 302.

Europeans to go along with it.[127] Selling the plan to the Europeans, however, was the problem. When Eagleburger had promoted a similar policy in the last days of the Bush administration, he was met with stony resistance. The British argued that lifting the arms embargo would actually widen the war, while the UNPROFOR nations maintained that air strikes would put their troops at risk unnecessarily.[128]

Despite the international opposition, Clinton's policy did receive domestic backing from a somewhat unlikely source. Bob Dole, then the Senate minority leader and a passionate advocate for intervention in the Balkans, supported "lift and strike." He argued that several American interests were at stake in Bosnia, specifically the threat that Milosevic, if not stopped, would turn on Kosovo; that Islamic fundamentalists were using the West's inaction in Bosnia to recruit followers; and that "the United States and its allies had signaled that borders could be changed by force with no international consequence."[129] With at least some bipartisan support, Clinton sent Christopher to Europe in May to sell the new policy to the United States' allies.

Christopher's mission to Europe was not in the usual spirit of post-World War II transatlantic relations concerning vital American interests. Usually, when such a senior figure came to Europe, it was to announce a policy the United States had decided to adopt, and to ask for European approval, and if necessary, help. However, the policy was usually already decided; a Secretary of State did not go to Europe to ask permission;

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[127] Sobel, 228.
[128] Bert, 182. The British claim that the war would spread if the embargo were lifted seems counterintuitive. Allowing the Bosnians to defend themselves would have helped keep the Serbs tied down, and encouraged them not to spread their aggression to Kosovo, which is where the war would have spread to. Additionally, lifting the embargo would have kept the Bosnians from turning to Islamic states in the Middle East such as Iran for weapons, and helped limit radical Islamic infiltration of Bosnia.
[129] Power, 303.

rather he came to inform. If the Europeans supported the proposal, all the better; if not, the United States had already decided on its course of action, and that would be that.[130]

This trip, however, was genuinely to 'consult.' Christopher's job was to sell the policy to the Europeans, who were not receptive. While the Europeans raised their usual objections about using American air power while their troops faced the risk on the ground, it became clear that Clinton was not fully behind his own policy. This was obvious to Christopher, who actively disliked the policy, and he consequently did a poor job convincing the allies to accept it.[131] The plan died in the middle of Christopher's trip, when Clinton himself reneged on the policy, pulling out whatever support was coming from Washington.[132] Clinton had reportedly read Robert Kaplan's book Balkan Ghosts, which left him with the impression that the hatreds and conflicts in the Balkans were inevitable and unsolvable.[133] Having been handed a good excuse not to pursue a policy that was receiving little support from the reluctant Europeans, Clinton quickly abandoned "lift and strike."

Upon returning to Washington, Christopher told Clinton that if the Europeans were to go along, they would have to be told "that we have firmly decided to go ahead with our preferred option and that we expect them to support us."[134] A European diplomat concurred with Christopher when he said that Clinton "should stop asking [Europe] their opinion on what he plans to do and start telling them instead what he plans

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[130] Bert, 199.
[131] Halberstam, 224-5.
[132] Ibid, 228.
[133] Jane M.O. Sharp, "Dayton Report Card," International Security 22, no. 3 (1997/1998): 110.
[134] Bass, 99.

to go ahead with, preferably with their support."[135] Essentially, the power relationship would have to return to the norm; "consulting" would not work when the Europeans were reluctant to act, they would have to be told. Clinton, who had lost interest in the policy by that time in any case, let the matter drop.

"Lift and strike" was to be the one interventionist policy which was even seriously considered within the White House until the summer of 1995. After the administration's disavowal of the Vance-Owen Plan and its initial dithering over adopting a policy, the abrupt end of "lift and strike" signaled the end of consideration of intervention for well over a year. It also crushed the hopes of those, in Bosnia, Europe, and the United States, who hoped Clinton would live up to his campaign promises by being more attuned to humanitarian causes, and would stand up to rulers like Milosevic. As Wayne Bert observed, "[Clinton's] bold statements during the campaign appeared in retrospect to reflect more the partisan needs of the moment than a well thought out policy."[136] It seems that Clinton, searching for any advantage against Bush, grabbed Bosnia as an issue without having a real commitment to solving the problem. So when obstacles developed to the Clinton administration's initial policy and it looked as it if reaching a solution would take a considerable amount of time and effort, Clinton decided to focus on other, primarily domestic, priorities.

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[135] Bert, 199.
[136] Ibid, 189.

Awaiting a Consensus

In terms of policy interests, Bill Clinton was almost the exact opposite of his predecessor. President Clinton was passionate about domestic politics – the issues on which he won the Presidency – while President Bush was passionate about foreign policy. In many ways, their differences marked perfectly the transition which took place at the end of the Cold War. Without the constant threat of the Soviet Union, American politics turned inward, and concentrated on domestic issues. Clinton's election was the indisputable signal of this change. As Governor of Arkansas, Clinton had almost no experience or interest in foreign policy. One of the major themes of his 1992 campaign was criticism of Bush's overwhelming interest in foreign affairs.

There were early signs of Clinton's disinterest in foreign policy, despite his criticism of Bush for neglecting the Yugoslav crisis and calls for an interventionist policy there. One of the earliest was Clinton's acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention in 1992, which included just 141 words on foreign policy, out of 4,200.[137] Once in office, it became clear that Clinton's main initial foreign policy goal was to avoid foreign policy. The administration's early hesitance on developing a policy for Bosnia reflected this, as did the relatively low priority it was given over the next few years. Much closer to Clinton's heart were his plans for domestic reform, which he feared would be superseded by an active and ambitious foreign policy agenda.[138]

Having little interest or experience in foreign policy, Clinton had little agenda of his own. Trade issues were the only foreign policy issue that seemed to grab his

[137] Halberstam, 193.
[138] Gow, 213.

attention. Clinton's lack of interest meant he largely left policy decisions to subordinates in the State Department and National Security Council. Those subordinates were largely policy-makers from the Carter administration, such as Warren Christopher, Anthony Lake, Sandy Berger and Richard Holbrooke.[139] Having been out of power for the past twelve years, there was a shortage of young, proven, Democratic talent in foreign policy circles. Reliance on these old hands, particularly Christopher, led to what was widely seen as a weak foreign policy team, in which Clinton consequently did not place a great deal of trust.[140] This situation suited Clinton perfectly; his foreign policy team would not be comfortable enough to push major policy initiatives that might undercut his domestic priorities. When foreign policy decisions had to be made, Clinton preferred to wait until his advisors formulated and agreed upon a plan.[141] He was not comfortable taking the lead on foreign policy decisions, and preferred to adopt mutually agreeable proposals instead of advocating one position.

A Secretary of State serving in an administration that does not place much importance on foreign policy has to be very loyal to the president and his desire not to let foreign policy become an issue. Warren Christopher was seen as being extremely loyal, "the perfect deputy, a man whose own personality and thoughts were always in the shadows."[142] He tried to read the president's wishes and act accordingly instead of taking initiative and pushing his own agenda. This attitude made him the perfect choice for Clinton's Secretary of State. He was relatively meek, deferring to others, a perfect fit for

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[139] Halberstam, 20, 170, 176.
[140] Ibid, 242.
[141] Bert, 197.
[142] Halbestam, 174.

a position that did not hold a great deal of importance in Clinton's administration. Richard Holbrooke commented on Christopher's interaction with other administration officials:

> "Christopher preferred to let others take the lead in recommending a course of action, while he focused on the risks it entailed. … Christopher reached his conclusions only after careful deliberations …"[143]

If Clinton wanted reasons not to intervene in Bosnia, Christopher was surely the person to provide them. His cautious and deliberative nature led him to reject calls for an interventionist policy from within the State Department, which he knew Clinton did not wish to adopt. Christopher, much as Baker had been before him, was attuned to the President's priorities, and would not push Clinton into adopting a policy he did not support.

With Clinton and Christopher disinterested in the Yugoslav crisis, the other senior member of the foreign policy team, National Security Advisor Anthony Lake, was the only one who supported intervention. The Third World was Lake's passion, and though he did not have experience in Yugoslavia as Scowcroft had, he was deeply concerned about the conflict. Situations like this – the tough issues with no easy solutions – were why Lake was involved in foreign policy.[144] However, Lake, like Christopher, responded to what Clinton wanted, which was to keep foreign policy below the radar and off the front page of the newspapers.[145] Lake was deeply frustrated by Clinton's policies, but remained a quiet advocate of intervention.[146] He knew if he spoke out too loudly, he

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[143] Holbrooke, 80.
[144] Halberstam, 284.
[145] Ibid, 196.
[146] Ibid, 284; Power, 316.

would lose whatever influence he had with Clinton, and that would not serve his purpose at all. Instead, he quietly researched and encouraged others in the National Security Council to think about possible solutions.

The only two other senior administration officials who advocated intervention were Vice President Gore and UN Ambassador (and future Secretary of State) Madeline Albright. Neither of these officials, despite their stature, was able to make a significant impact on Yugoslav policy. Gore, who gained considerable foreign policy experience in his twelve years as a Senator before becoming Vice President, refused to challenge Clinton in public. He would not question Clinton's policies during meetings, when he might have been able to garner support from others, but waited for private meetings with the President before stating his views.[147] Ambassador Albright, though a passionate advocate of intervention, was based in New York, and as such, was an outsider to the rest of the foreign policy team and did not carry a great deal of influence.[148]

With foreign policy viewed as a hindrance to the Clinton administration's objectives, and no one with influence in the White House willing to press the issue of intervention, an attitude developed where no policy could be agreed upon unless all the senior administration officials supported it. Clinton was unwilling to lead, and his obvious lack of enthusiasm for the subject kept others from making Bosnia an issue. Lake, in explaining why there was so little proactive movement on policy after "lift and strike" died, said "There was no unanimity within the government on the issue …"[149] Without a consensus on policy within the Cabinet, Lake was not willing to recommend a

[147] Halberstam, 196-7.
[148] Ibid, 197.
[149] Power, 316.

policy to a reluctant President Clinton. Neither Lake, Albright, nor Gore were willing to appeal to the public in an attempt to create a consensus, or at least create some pressure on Clinton and others who were wary of intervention. Instead of leading, "Clinton's foreign policy team awaited [a] consensus," which was never likely to appear.[150]

Adding to the absence of an effective, vocal supporter of intervention among senior foreign policy officials were the fundamental changes in political attitudes toward foreign affairs that came with the end of the Cold War. As David Halberstam observed:

> As the Soviet threat to the United States receded, so, too, did the political support for any kind of foreign policy issue that was not immediate in its import. A generation was coming of age in Congress who cared less about foreign affairs, elected by a generation of voters who cared less, and reported on by a media that paid less attention.[151]

This shift in attitudes, though it started during President Bush's term, did not have as great an impact upon him as it did upon Clinton. Clinton was of this generation, and fully represented it. He was less passionate about foreign affairs than the presidents who served during the Cold War, and was fully conscious of the waning support foreign policy enjoyed domestically.[152] As Stephen Walt pointed out, Clinton understood and responded well to the new domestic political attitude:

> The foreign policy of the Clinton administration has been well suited to an era when there is little to gain in foreign policy and much to lose. The American people recognize this and have made it clear they want neither isolationism nor costly international crusades. Bill Clinton is nothing if not sensitive to the vox populi, so he has given his fellow citizens the foreign policy they wanted – something they have clearly recognized and appreciated.[153]

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[150] Ibid, 305.
[151] Halberstam, 75.
[152] Walt, 65.
[153] Ibid, 79.

While Walt's characterization that "there is little to gain in foreign policy" is questionable – after all, maintaining the United States' standing as the only remaining superpower and using that power as a tool to make the world better seems like quite something to gain – his characterization of Clinton is correct. Clinton was very sensitive to public opinion, and his sense that what happened in Bosnia would not have serious domestic repercussions reinforced his desire not to become involved.

The downgrading of foreign affairs in general led to the importance of more mundane foreign policy priorities than solving the crisis in Bosnia. The priority when discussing Bosnia was, according to Gore, "The need for us to protect and preserve the alliance [NATO]."[154] That the top priority for the Clinton administration was the survival of NATO, despite the demise of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, which it was formed to counter, and not ending the conflict in Bosnia, was a sharp about-face from the humanitarian rhetoric of the campaign. But the Clinton administration's decreased interest in European affairs also reflected the Europeans' impatience with "their dependence on America … which [explained] their renewed effort to forge a more formidable defense capability," and their "growing recognition that Europe should handle most of its own regional security problems without calling for American assistance."[155] This attitude made sense until the European Union's split over recognition of Slovenia and Croatia in the summer of 1991. After that, the need for American leadership, no matter how much Clinton and the European Union pretended it was not needed, was apparent. The Clinton administration and its defenders might have cited Europe's desire

[154] Bob Woodward, The Choice, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 255.
[155] Walt, 68.

to handle the crisis without the United States' involvement, but it had obviously failed by the time Clinton took office.

Clinton was very well attuned to the political attitudes of the country, and with no overarching foreign policy agenda, allowed public reaction to foreign policy be his guide. The conflict in Bosnia did not have a significant impact on Clinton's political fortunes until much later. Until then the potential damage that an expensive, large-scale foreign policy initiative could do to his domestic agenda was the paramount concern.[156] Though some in Congress and the press were still calling for a more interventionist policy, not until 1995 did they create a situation where it became politically costly for Clinton to remain uninvolved. Those responsible for foreign policy, especially Lake and Christopher, were aware that Clinton's primary interest in foreign policy was how it affected him domestically, and so they handled Bosnia, like other issues, with a constant "awareness of the President's domestic political fortunes."[157] A State Department official admitted as much to Elie Wiesel, saying that, "the survival of the fragile liberal coalition represented by this Presidency" was more important than the atrocities in Bosnia.[158] The absolute importance of domestic politics in the Clinton administration made any interventionist policy unlikely to succeed; unless the country was united behind a desire to act, Clinton would not lead.

Public opinion seemed to back Clinton's desire not to intervene in Bosnia. Surveys indicated that public opinion would have supported air strikes, if they were

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[156] Halberstam, 204.
[157] Ibid, 241.
[158] Richard Johnson, "The Pinstripe Approach to Genocide," The Conceit of Innocence: Losing the Conscience of the West in the War against Bosnia, ed. Stjepan G. Mestrovic (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 20.

carried out jointly with other NATO members.[159] However, this was as much as most people would support, and in any case, the Europeans would not agree to air strikes while their forces were still on the ground and no Americans were present. As for sending in ground troops, Clinton felt that the public would not support any intervention if it produced casualties, unless there was a vital interest involved.[160] With nothing commonly identified as vital interests at stake in Bosnia, Clinton would not step onto a limb politically. It is possible Clinton could have made a difference in public opinion, however. Andrew Kohut and Robert Toth, in studying public opinion polls from the Gulf War, Somalia, and Bosnia, found that,

> The patterns of response suggest that early in a crisis the public will seriously consider the use of force, but that even when it feels the United States has a responsibility to act in its national interest, large percentages (sometimes majorities) will favor no action unless they are swayed by presidential leadership.[161]

Had Clinton wanted to intervene, it is possible he could have convinced the public, though it would have been a time consuming issue and a difficult political battle. Any intervention would have had to be "well planned and convincingly argued before the American public was likely to accept it."[162] As noted above, Clinton's interest in Bosnia was limited to domestic political repercussions, and in 1993 and 1994 there was little at stake politically if he did not act.

There was already some support for intervention, but it was very conditional. Air strikes had to be multilateral, and if the United States was to intervene, it had to win – there was a feeling, especially in Congress, that if intervention occurred, the United

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[159] Sobel, 186.
[160] Halberstam, 291.
[161] Andrew Kohut and Robert C. Toth, "Arms and the People," Foreign Affairs 73, no. 6 (1994): 47-8.
[162] Bert, 83.

States was not to leave before its goals were accomplished.[163] Additionally, there was public support for deploying ground troops as United Nations peacekeepers. However, there had to be a peace to keep; Clinton knew he could not deploy troops as peacekeepers into Bosnia while the conflict was continuing. American troops were pledged to deploy, as they eventually did, as part of a peacekeeping force, but only after a peace treaty had been signed. There was little support for putting American troops in Bosnia while the conflict continued.[164] Kohut and Toth found that

> … the public will be clearly disposed to act militarily in two situations: if it feels America's vital interests are at stake, and if American military force can provide humanitarian assistance without becoming engaged in a protracted conflict. The peacekeeper role evokes an ambiguous response, but the public strongly rejects the peacemaker goal.[165]

Faced with a situation where the military predicted a protracted conflict and the lack of perceived vital interests, public support for peacemaking, had it been seriously proposed, would have been minimal at best.

There was also continuing pressure from the military not to intervene. Until General Powell retired in October 1993, he maintained the same line on Bosnia that he had under President Bush: the conflict was apt to become another Vietnam, and the United States had no business intervening militarily, to say nothing of using ground troops.[166] Powell's unreasonably high estimates for the number of troops it would take to enforce a peace treaty did not decrease, because he was even more certain that Clinton did not have the will to see the conflict through than he was about Bush. The lack of will on Clinton's part made it even easier to use inflated troop projections to counter any push

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[163] Ibid, 187.
[164] Sobel, 186.
[165] Kohut and Toth, 47.
[166] Power, 316.

for intervention. Added to those advantages Powell had enjoyed over the Bush administration was the Clinton administration's lack of experience in military matters, and their wariness of the military in general.[167] Clinton, who had avoided military service in Vietnam, did not hold much moral authority in military matters, and his campaign promise to allow gays to serve in the military had further undermined his support in the Pentagon.[168]

The Clinton administration's problems with the military point towards a number of similarities with the Bush administration. Not only were Clinton and his advisors wary of getting involved in "another Vietnam," but they also began to talk about ancient ethnic hatreds and national interests, in much the same way Brent Scowcroft had under Bush. Secretary Christopher described the conflict as being motivated by "ethnic hatreds," and said: "The hatred between all three groups … is almost unbelievable. It's almost terrifying, and it's centuries old. That really is a problem from hell."[169] Though Christopher did not have the experience in Yugoslavia that Scowcroft or Eagleburger had, it should have been clear enough by 1993, almost two years after the conflict started, that any ancient hatreds involved had been resurrected for political advantage, and the conflict was not some natural occurrence which could not have been avoided and must simply be allowed to run its course. To the Clinton administration, however, this line was a convenient excuse for not taking action, just as it was for Bush.

After Clinton's brief consideration of the "lift and strike" policy and the humanitarian rhetoric that went along with it, his administration quickly turned to

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[167] Ibid, 304.
[168] Halberstam, 205.
[169] Power, 306.

echoing the Bush administration's national interest considerations. As Sarajevo seemed ready to fall to Serb forces in the summer of 1993, Secretary Christopher told a State Department press briefing that "The United States is doing all that it can consistent with its national interest."[170] While only two months before Christopher had been on a trip to Europe to sell the "lift and strike" policy, which would have directly aided the Bosnian government, he now suggested that any military action was out of the question, even when the existential survival of the Bosnian government was in question. It seemed that an almost complete reversal had occurred in the space of less than two months, and with it went all of the humanitarian rhetoric that marked Clinton's campaign and the first few months of his administration.

The Clinton administration defined their national security interests in the region very narrowly, and in a remarkably similar way to how the Bush administration defined theirs. First was, as Gore had said, the survival and credibility of NATO in Europe after the Cold War. Until 1995, credibility and survival were almost by definition conflicting goals, and survival of the alliance was deemed the more important of the two. The second security interest was containing the war – keeping it from spreading to Kosovo, which might bring Greece and Turkey into the conflict. Last was the deterrence of others who might want to exploit nationalist tensions in the new international system, though this goal does not seem to have been well served by allowing Milosevic and the Bosnian Serbs to continue their aggression in Bosnia.[171] These interests are notable mostly for the absence of any concern about respecting international law or the welfare of those in

[170] Power, 310.
[171] Bert, 69.

Bosnia. Scowcroft at least acknowledged that preventing genocide was within the national interest, while Clinton refused to do so.

In general, it seems that what happened in Bosnia was not deemed important enough to warrant the effort necessary to stop the conflict, but at the same time could not be ignored.[172] Therefore, the administration claimed to be doing what it could, "consistent with our national interest," which meant there was to be no use of force. The administration seemed willing to do little more than extend gestures, such as supporting the United Nations peacekeeping effort, because the conflict was not linked to national security.[173] The great hope for the rise of a humanitarian foreign policy, which had first shown itself and then been denied during the Bush administration, seemed not to have gained any greater traction during the first years of the Clinton administration.

As there was during the Bush administration, there were some dissenters within the government. Many were the same junior State Department officials who dealt with the conflict every day, knew it best, and had pushed for action under Bush. During the campaign and Clinton's first few months in office, they were hopeful, as the Bosnians had been, that the new President really meant to keep his promises and would reverse Bush's policy. By the time "lift and strike" fell apart in May 1993, however, they realized there would be no quick intervention.[174] These junior officials believed the United States did have interests at stake in the former Yugoslavia, and disagreed with their superiors' desire to keep the conflict out of the spotlight. Lord Owen summed up

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[172] Ibid, 65.
[173] Tony Smith, "In Defense of Intervention," Foreign Affairs 73, no. 6 (1994): 44-5.
[174] Halberstam, 200.

their argument on the interests involved in Bosnia during an interview with Foreign Affairs:

> You cannot be involved in Europe, as you are through the North Atlantic Treaty and other institutions, and simply walk away from the Balkans. Conflict here still has the potential to involve two countries that matter a great deal to America: Greece and Turkey. … Also, ethnic cleansing has created one of the biggest moral problems for the world since the Holocaust. Our collective shame about our handling of the Jews' plight means you, as the world's leader, and your values-based foreign policy, are now engaged in safeguarding Muslims – rightly and inevitably so.[175]

Owen and the state department officials pushing for intervention saw, first, that it was better to halt the conflict before it came any closer to spreading to Greece and Turkey, and second, that the moral questions raised by the conflict were a vital interest. Unfortunately, these views, though prevalent at lower levels in the State Department, were simply not being heard at the decision making level, or when they were heard, were quickly dismissed.

The policy Clinton and his foreign policy team adopted after the demise of "lift and strike" can best be described as 'containment.' Essentially, the Clinton administration decided to let the two sides fight, as long as the conflict stayed within the former Yugoslavia, with the exception of Kosovo.[176] Using much the same criteria for determining national interests as the Bush administration had done, the Clinton administration came up with a policy very much like Bush's. It was less costly politically for Clinton to do nothing about Bosnia, just as it was for Bush to ignore it during his reelection campaign. The only difference between the Clinton and Bush policies was the rhetoric that accompanied them.

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[175] "Future of the Balkans," 4.
[176] Halberstam, 230.

Clinton had criticized Bush for paying too much attention to foreign policy and too little to domestic issues during the campaign. At the same time, however, Clinton managed to outline a more ambitious, more humanitarian foreign policy than Bush ever practiced. Once in office, Clinton was forced to reevaluate, and it became apparent his goals were unattainable because of his mandate for domestic reforms.[177] Clinton simply could not accomplish an overhaul of both domestic and foreign policy with a reasonable expectation of success. Even though the policies did not change, the rhetoric the administration used was more appropriate to an ambitious, activist policy outlook. James Gow wrote of the relationship between Clinton's rhetoric and his policy:

> Instead of harmonising its policy preferences with both the degree to which it was prepared to make practical commitments and with its allies and partners in the international community, the [Clinton] White House had a tendency to pronounce on principle, prevaricate in practice and preempt the policies and plans of others.[178]

Clinton's talk about intervening in Bosnia during the campaign and in the first months of his administration conflicted sharply with the policy eventually adopted – to do nothing. Meanwhile, Clinton had undercut the United Nations' and the European Union's best effort at bringing the conflict to a close – the Vance-Owen plan. The Bush administration had at least made clear it was not considering intervening in Bosnia; they had been upfront about their policy from the start, while Clinton's administration had publicly proclaimed its desire to end the conflict, if necessary by using military force, then not followed through.

Although Christopher did not return from his European trip with any endorsement for lift and strike, he did agree to a policy with the Europeans. Sarajevo, Tuzla, Bihac,

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[177] David C. Hendrickson, "The Recovery of Internationalism," Foreign Affairs 73, no. 5 (1994): 42.
[178] Gow, 208.

Zepa and Gorazde, all Bosnian Muslim towns, were to be designated United Nations "Safe Areas," as Srebrenica had been in April 1993.[179] The idea was that Serbs could not attack these towns, most of which were under siege and threatened by the Serbs. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the UN Sercretary General, estimated that 30,000 troops would be needed to enforce the cease-fires in these towns. However, only a small number were actually deployed, and those troops were under-armed and had no mandate to protect the civilians in the safe areas.[180] The UNPROFOR troops had a traditional peacekeeping mandate that was completely inadequate for the situations in which they were placed in Bosnia. Their rules of engagement were limited to firing in self-defense, which allowed the combatants, usually Serbs, to do whatever they wanted to the civilian population; unless the UN soldiers were directly fired upon, they could not respond.[181] This situation was a travesty, which was made even worse by the name of the UN force – the United Nations Protection Force.

Despite the ineffectiveness of UNPROFOR, the United States voted for 89 resolutions in the Security Council which addressed Yugoslavia, including several which expanded UNPROFOR's mandate.[182] Clinton and his team had decided that by making the United Nations primarily responsible for the security of Bosnia, they could avoid having to take a direct, active role. Leaving the crisis to the United Nations, especially in the face of its inability to deal effectively with Bosnia, shows how desperate Clinton was to stay away from foreign policy in general, and Bosnia in particular. For the President in

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[179] Silber and Little, 274.
[180] Power, 303.
[181] Halberstam, 125.
[182] John Hillen, "Picking Up U.N. Peacekeeping's Pieces: Knowing When to Say When," Foreign Affairs 77, no. 4 (1998): 98.

1993, it appeared to be a no-lose situation. Domestic pressure was not sufficient to make nonintervention a problem, while forcing the United Nations to take the lead held little risk because the United States did not have troops on the ground in the former Yugoslavia.

This policy would, however, at best maintain the status quo. There was little real hope that the United Nations could stop the conflict on its own; the United States had already undermined its diplomacy, and its military forces were weak and did not have a mandate to impose a solution. The junior officials in the State Department who had been so hopeful when Clinton was first elected became increasingly frustrated. Richard Johnson and Jim Hooper talked about the need for the United States' active engagement and the use of military force at a State Department open forum:

> If the conflict reflected legal and constitutional differences over the breakup of Yugoslavia, creative diplomacy and split-the-difference negotiations would offer promise. … But the conflict is driven by a Serb bid for racial and national supremacy. As such, it can be halted, reversed, and defeated *only* by military force.[183]

Hooper and Johnson's position better reflected the realities of the situation than did the administration's reliance on the United Nations. As Marshall Harris, the desk officer for Bosnia, observed, "The Clinton policy was unrealistic, but nobody wanted to change it."[184]

Met with resistance coming from the Secretary of State and the White House when they tried to find new policy solutions, the junior officials knew they could accomplish little within the system. This realization led Harris to resign in August 1993

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[183] Power, 297.
[184] Ibid, 308.

in protest of the administration's handling of the conflict in Bosnia. He was determined that Clinton could overcome the obstacles to intervention if he tried:

> "I think the administration would be surprised what it could accomplish if it confronts this issue head on. When it adopts a defeatist mode … it's going to get defeatist results."[185]

Harris was soon followed by two others: Jon Western, who had analyzed intelligence on Bosnia since the war broke out in 1992, and Steven Walker, the Croatian desk officer. The three resignations were the largest ever defection from the State Department.[186] Even Vietnam had not provoked an exodus of this magnitude from the ranks of foreign service officers. The difficulty of entering the Foreign Service, and the consequent status of an elite group, made resignations on principle uncommon and very provocative.[187] Though the resignations did not force a change in the administration's policy, they did give the public a glimpse of the divisions within the State Department and embarrass Secretary Christopher.

Only when an event occurred which could not be ignored would Clinton momentarily become engaged in the conflict. Such an event happened in February 1994, when sixty-nine civilians were killed by a single Serb shell in a Sarajevo marketplace.[188] Clinton declared a heavy-weapons exclusion zone around Sarajevo, and threatened air strikes against the Serbs if they resumed shelling. In his speech announcing the exclusion zone, he even acknowledged that the slaughter of civilians in Bosnia "affects our interests."[189] The ultimatum worked, as the shelling of Sarajevo stopped for a time.

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[185] Ibid, 313.
[186] Ibid, 314-5.
[187] Ibid, 312.
[188] Silber and Little, 309.
[189] Power, 324.

However, the Serbs had negotiated away the exclusion zone – the artillery around Sarajevo remained in place, and was only nominally under UN 'control.'[190] The true test of the new US and NATO policy was to be how they responded if the Serbs opened fire again on Sarajevo, which they did a few months later. By that time, Bosnia was no longer on Clinton's list of priorities, and there were no air strikes.[191] A pattern had been set for the Clinton administration's engagement in Bosnia: Clinton would become interested and take an active role only during a crisis, and then his attention would wane as the crisis subsided, leaving no permanent change in policy.

The Bihac pocket in northern Bosnia became such a crisis in November of 1994. Despite being a UN-protected safe area, the Serbs were threatening to overrun it. It was obvious to all involved that UNPROFOR troops were neither capable nor had the mandate to stop the Serb advance. The administration and National Security Advisor Lake in particular pushed for air strikes against the Serbs threatening the pocket. Once again, the Europeans, who were unreceptive to air strikes unless the United States committed ground troops, rebuffed them.[192] Clinton was not willing to push the NATO allies enough to have the use of air strikes approved, so despite Lake's activism, air strikes were once again ruled out. Lake saw the pattern that had developed whenever air strikes were threatened, and concluded at the end of the year that, "The stick of military pressure is no longer viable."[193]

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[190] Silber and Little, 316. For a complete description of the NATO ultimatum and the Serb success at watering down its terms, see Silber and Little 309-18.
[191] Power, 324.
[192] Halberstam, 284-5.
[193] Ibid, 286.

If the administration was willing to push hard enough and get air strikes approved, as it did in a few cases during the spring and summer of 1994, the Serbs retaliated with atrocities carried out on Muslim civilians and by rounding up UNPROFOR peacekeepers.[194] The humiliation caused by the kidnapping of peacekeepers was especially indicative of how ineffective the UN force was – they were too lightly armed, had a weak mandate, and were led by generals and civilians who viewed the use of force with abhorrence, even to protect themselves or civilians. Lake understood that under current conditions, there was no reasonable option for a military solution imposed by NATO or the UN.

The Clinton administration did take one significant step towards ending the conflict in March 1994. It engineered a Muslim-Croat federation, stopping the fighting between the two sides that had broken out in October 1992.[195] The new federation allowed some weapons to be smuggled into Bosnia for the Bosnian Army and encouraged joint military operations against the Serbs.[196] The United States, as it had been when it rejected Vance-Owen, was once again working against the Europeans and the United Nations. Generally, the EU and UN favored a cease-fire at any cost, without consideration for the amount of territory held by either side. The United States was still seeking a morally equitable solution, and so favored arming the Bosnians and Croats in an attempt to role back Serb gains before achieving a final resolution. By the summer of 1995, the Muslim-Croat federation would begin to regain territory lost to the Serbs at the beginning of the war.

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[194] Power, 324.
[195] Silber and Little, 294.
[196] Bert, 213.

In sum, after the failure of the "lift and strike" policy, Clinton largely retreated from his ambitious campaign promises on Bosnia. A variety of factors, some new, but many the same that influenced Bush, kept the administration from following through with a more activist policy. Particularly influential was Clinton's sensitivity to the political cost of committing troops to what might be a costly and long-term peacemaking operation. Only when an atrocity occurred which created pressure for the United States to act would Clinton become engaged, but his attention would quickly shift. The Europeans' continuous refrain that the United States should not carry out air strikes without having troops on the ground frustrated the one policy Clinton was willing – at various points, though by no means consistently – to adopt. All three of these situations would have to change for a military solution to become a viable option again. A diplomatic solution seemed unattainable barring the surrender of the Bosnian Muslims; the British Lt. General Rose, in command of UNPROFOR, had learned from experience that all agreements, verbal or written, were worthless in the Balkans.[197] American intervention, which seemed the only viable way to end the conflict, was held back by several considerations, all of which would have to be overcome. It would take a series of significant crises and changes in priorities to change Clinton's policy, which did not happen in a meaningful way until the summer of 1995.

[197] Sibler and Little, 315.

Intervention: "Getting Creamed"

As the summer of 1995 approached and the Bosnian conflict entered its fourth year, pressure built on the United States to take a more active role. The United Nations and the European Union had proved spectacularly unable to end the conflict. Abroad, a new French President, Jacques Chirac, assumed office and immediately denounced the international community's, and especially the United States,' efforts in Bosnia. On the ground in Bosnia, UNPROFOR was becoming increasingly unviable; its troops were abducted at will by the Serbs and held as hostages to deter air strikes, and the European nations which made up the force were contemplating withdrawal. In the United States, Clinton began to feel the pressure of the 1996 election, which would take place in a little over a year, and changing public and congressional attitudes about the conflict. Inside the administration, Clinton's National Security Advisor, Tony Lake, was increasingly frustrated by the administration's inability to deal with the conflict, and set about to formulate a policy on his own. Late in the summer, the east Bosnian town of Srebrenica was overrun, leading to the massacre of about 8,000 Muslim men. Finally, in August, the Croatians recaptured the Krajina, which had been captured by the Serbs in 1991, and shattered the myth of the Serbs' military strength. All of these changes led to American intervention at the end of August 1995, which swiftly brought an end to the war.

But few of these pressures were immediately apparent in the spring of 1995. To be sure, the public was aware of the tragedy occurring in Bosnia, and the Europeans knew the status quo could not last, but the foreign policy decision makers in Washington were still floundering. At least some of the problem could be traced to Clinton, "whose

humanitarian instincts had, in the past, put him on one side [of an interventionist policy], but whose political caution had then brought him back to the other."[198] There was a recognition that something had to be done; Clinton's lack of will in Bosnia had

> surely contributed to a successful resistance to American power in Somalia, which in turn emboldened the Chinese, then the Haitians, next the Koreans, the Cubans, and finally the Iraqis to test American intentions.[199]

However, the realization that Bosnia was hurting the United States' standing in the world was still not enough to force the adoption of an interventionist policy on the still reluctant Clinton.

The first event that eventually triggered a more forceful policy was the election of Chirac in May 1995. Chirac, who had served in Algeria during the colonial war, had a very proper sense of how the French military should conduct themselves.[200] He would not stand for them to be captured without a fight, chained to Serb artillery and installations to prevent air strikes, and then negotiated for by the UN.[201] Chirac's sense of purpose in Bosnia was as much, if not more, related more to maintaining the honor of the French military and state as it did to genuine humanitarian concern.[202] Whatever his motivations, Chirac immediately pushed for a more active mandate for UNPROFOR, and became the public leader on the issue that had been missing for so long.

Chirac began criticizing Clinton for his lack of leadership. NATO, which had been effectively dormant for so long on the issue, was now looked upon as the best hope

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[198] Halberstam, 313.
[199] Smith, 41.
[200] Halberstam, 303.
[201] Ibid, 303-4.
[202] Brain Rathbun, "Continental Divide?: The Transience of Transatlantic Troubles," With US or Against US: European Trends in American Perspective, eds. Craig Parsons and Nicolas Jabko (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2005), 11.

of resolving the conflict. However, Chirac declared, "There is no leader of the Atlantic alliance," when asked if the United States was living up to its responsibilities, suggesting Clinton was the largest obstacle to intervention.[203] Suddenly the tables had turned on Clinton. The relatively comfortable position that he had assumed, that he wanted to do more, but was being held back by the Europeans, was turned around. Chirac genuinely wanted to resolve the conflict in Bosnia, and rightly called Clinton out for not doing more. In London, Chirac announced the new French policy on its involvement in Bosnia on July 21:

> We can't imagine that the U.N. force will remain only to observe, and to be, in a way, accomplices in the situation. If that is the case, it is better to withdraw.[204]

Chirac embarrassed Clinton by directly challenging his leadership of NATO and with his proactive Bosnia policy. Even more stinging than his comment about Clinton's leadership of NATO was another remark, that "the position of leader of the free world is vacant."[205] American presidents had held that unofficial title unquestioned among their allies since World War II. Chirac's comment was designed to force Clinton into taking a more active role; surely losing the respect of the rest of the world would have political repercussions domestically, even if Bosnia itself did not.

As the need to "protect and preserve" NATO was driving the United States' policy in Bosnia, French pressure changed the political calculation.[206] Suddenly, the best thing for NATO was not to allow the status quo to continue, but to find a way to extricate

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[203] Power, 436.
[204] Holbrooke, 71.
[205] Halberstam, 305.
[206] Woodward, The Choice, 255.

the NATO members from the former Yugoslavia. There were two basic ways to accomplish this: withdraw from UNPROFOR and let the mission fall apart, then start over on Bosnia with a clean slate, or find a way to end the conflict with UNPROFOR still on the ground. Of the two, the preferred choice was to find a way to stop the conflict without withdrawing UNPROFOR.

Though leaving UNPROFOR on the ground would complicate any military plan, the consequences of extracting the force were far greater. First, withdrawing the force would signal that the United Nations had completely failed to stop the conflict. It would be leaving the Bosnians on their own until an allied military intervention could be launched, if it were launched at all. However, the most important consideration for the United States was NATO's Operations Plan 40-104. President Clinton had promised a force of about 20,000 U.S. troops to help withdraw UNPROFOR if it became necessary. The Operations Plan was part of the NATO planning structure, and as such, it would be an automatic deployment if the United Nations pulled out of the former Yugoslavia; if Clinton decided to veto the troops' deployment, he would break a NATO commitment, and quite possibly destroy the alliance.[207] Clinton was caught in a terrible situation, one that he had strove to avoid ever since taking office. His options were quickly dwindling; it looked as if he would have to deploy troops to Bosnia one way or another. Richard Holbrooke, then serving as Assistant Secretary of State for Canadian and European Affairs, recalled his reaction upon learning of the NATO commitment:

> General Estes' briefing [on OpPlan 40-104] convinced me that it would no longer be possible to stay out of Bosnia. To assist in the U.N.'s withdrawal, which would be followed by an even greater disaster, made

[207] Bass, 99-100.

> no sense at all. Using American ground troops to fight the war was equally out of the question. … It was a terrible set of choices, but there was no way Washington could avoid involvement much longer.[208]

Having avoided becoming involved in the conflict for the first two years of his administration, Clinton suddenly found time running out, largely due to the belated recognition in Europe that the situation was unsustainable.

It was not only foreign affairs, however, which pressured Clinton to change his policy. To Clinton, domestic policy and politics was all-important, and foreign policy was generally evaluated in terms of its domestic effects. The political price which Clinton had to pay for not intervening in Bosnia was beginning to rise, and would increase consistently as the summer progressed. In June, only 33 to 41 percent of the public approved Clinton's handling of Bosnia.[209] Bosnia was unlikely to be a deciding factor in the 1996 presidential election, but it had repercussions nonetheless:

> Bosnia was not an issue in and of itself. Not many Americans were likely to go to the polls in the 1996 presidential election and vote one way or another because of events in Sarajevo or Srebrenica. Rather, its importance was more complicated than that, for it appeared to suggest something larger and far more devastating, an impotence on the part of the Clinton administration not just in this, but in all matters.[210]

Clinton had precious few policy successes in the first half of his first term in office. His national health care plan was defeated, the United States withdrew from Somalia humiliated, and Bosnia was a constantly festering problem. There was a need for a great accomplishment, something dramatic, which would raise the President's standing at home and abroad.

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[208] Holbrooke, 66.
[209] Sobel, 217.
[210] Halberstam, 297.

Public and policy experts' attitudes toward intervention were also shifting. By June, an overwhelming 78 percent of Americans believed U.S. troops should aid the UN in Bosnia, given that they remained under U.S. command.[211] Following this trend, a list of twenty-seven non-governmental organizations in the United States issued a press release calling for military intervention in Bosnia. The groups included Human Rights Watch, the American Jewish Committee, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Physicians for Human Rights, and even the Quakers.[212] Many of these organizations had never before advocated the use of military force, but believed the situation was so dire that no other option was sufficient. The combined prestige of these organizations, many of which had monitored the conflict closely, was enormous, and created pressure on the Clinton administration. Even Brent Scowcroft, Bush's National Security Advisor, declared that the situation called for intervention, even if it meant suffering American casualties.[213] Other conservatives, especially in the press, also added their voices to the calls for action. When Clinton began to be criticized by those on the neoconservative right as well as on the left, it became apparent that his position was untenable.[214]

Political advisors quickly caught on, and realized that leaving Bosnia unresolved could endanger Clinton's reelection. Dick Morris, a pollster and political consultant, told the White House staff during the summer of 1995 that Bosnia would have to be solved

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[211] Sobel, 216.
[212] Power, 435.
[213] Ibid, 431.
[214] Halberstam, 306-7.

before the election.[215] Bob Dole pressed this message home by criticizing Clinton in much the same way Clinton had criticized Bush in 1992. However, Dole had more leverage to force action than Clinton had in 1992. From his seat in the Senate, Dole introduced a bill that called for the lifting of the arms embargo on the Bosnian Muslims.[216] The countries that committed troops to UNPROFOR had made it clear that if the embargo was lifted they would withdraw their troops, which would lead to the implementation of the dreaded OpPlan 40-104.[217] Dole eventually backed down somewhat, and amended his bill to take effect only after the UN withdrew, or twelve weeks after the Bosnian government requested their withdrawal.[218] So even if the bill did not immediately threaten to force the withdrawal of UNPROFOR, it did have dramatic consequences for the President. Half of the democrats in the Senate had supported the bill, which passed by a veto-proof 69-29.[219] The vote took place on July 26; just over two week after the fall of Srebrenica and after reports of the atrocities there had been widely publicized, and was a devastating rebuke of Clinton's policy, especially by the democratic Senators.

Even before Congressional pressure affected the administration's views on its Bosnia policy, some in the administration recognized the need for a change and were trying to develop a solution. Tony Lake, who had become immensely frustrated by Clinton's unwillingness to tackle the difficult Bosnia problem, finally took the initiative

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[215] William G. Hyland, Clinton's World: Remaking American Foreign Policy, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1999), 143.
[216] Woodward, The Choice, 333.
[217] Power, 424.
[218] Ibid, 429.
[219] Ibid, 429.

himself. The administration's foreign policy team had always acted in a crisis mode; they were "pragmatic at heart [and] would handle foreign policy issue by issue, with no guidelines …"[220] Making foreign policy in that way meant that Clinton's team was constantly responding to crises, and not planning for the long term, so Lake instructed his staff to figure out where they wanted to be in six months and then work backwards to figure out how to accomplish their goals.[221] The goals they established were a 51-49 percent territory split between the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Serbs and redeploying UNPROFOR to minimize its exposure in case force was needed. The plan was called the 'Endgame Strategy.'[222]

Once the basic outline of the policy was completed, Lake took the policy directly to Clinton, going around Secretary of Defense Perry, Secretary of State Christopher, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff John Shalikashvili, who had replaced Powell in October of 1993.[223] Lake knew that his plan would not win consensus within the Cabinet without backing from Clinton, so his end-run was the only way to gain approval. Lake had discussed the plan with Ambassador Albright, and she encouraged his efforts. With her active support, Richard Holbrooke's consistent support for intervention, and Gore's desire to find a solution to the conflict, Lake felt as though his policy might be able to win firm backing from Clinton.[224] Once Clinton gave his approval, the other Cabinet Secretaries would have to fall in line. Lake also realized that he would have to take a more forceful stance with the NATO allies. 'Consulting,' as Christopher had done on his

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[220] Halberstam, 241.
[221] Woodward, The Choice, 257-8.
[222] Halberstam, 312-3.
[223] Ibid, 325.
[224] Power, 413.

aborted trip to sell lift and strike, would never work. He needed a mandate from Clinton to say that Endgame *is* the United States' policy, and would carry it through with or without the support of the Europeans.[225] All of this required much more decisive action than Clinton had ever taken on Bosnia. Though he had momentarily supported activist policies in the past, such as "lift and strike" or the exclusion zone around Sarajevo, he had backed off from them rather quickly when faced with opposition. What was needed was something which grabbed the United States' and the world's attention, and removed inaction as a policy option.

On July 11, the surrounded Muslim town of Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia fell almost unopposed to Serb forces under the command of General Ratko Mladic, an indicted war criminal. Although it was a United Nations protected safe area, General Janvier in Sarajevo refused to grant requests for air strikes from the beleaguered Dutch garrison protecting the town.[226] The 370 Dutch troops were operating under UNPROFOR's mandate, which forbid them to open fire unless directly fired upon. They could not protect the 40,000 Muslims inside Srebrenica because they possessed only light weapons and were almost out of fuel and food, which the Serbs had refused to allow into the town.[227] So the Dutch could do little but stand by as the Serbs entered Srebrenica and began bussing women and young children to the Bosnian Muslim front lines near Tuzla.[228] All the men left in the city – about 15,000 had taken to the woods in a desperate attempt to escape, where many were hunted down by the Serbs – were killed

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[225] Woodward, The Choice, 259.
[226] Power, 397. For a complete account of the fall of Srebrenica, see Jan Willem Honig & Norbert Both. Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime. New York: Penguin, 1997.
[227] Power, 391-2; Silber & Little, 350.
[228] Power, 401-2.

and buried in mass graves.[229] In all, at least 7,000 Muslim males were slaughtered, either after being captured in Srebrenica or after being hunted down in the surrounding forests.[230]

When the women and children deported from Srebrenica began to tell their stories, along with the trickle of men who reached Tuzla after walking from Srebrenica, the rest of the world raised its voice in disgust and horror. Pressure from all sides to put a stop to the conflict and punish the Serbs became intense, especially upon Clinton. On July 14, three days after Srebrenica fell, Clinton, while practicing golf on the White House lawn, told National Security Council deputies Sandy Berger and Nancy Soderberg that "This can't continue. … We have to seize control of this [Bosnia]. … I'm getting creamed!"[231] Finally, the political cost, always the primary consideration for Clinton, had become great enough to warrant action. A few days later, at a foreign policy meeting, Clinton declared,

> This policy is doing enormous damage to the United States and our standing in the world. We look weak. The only time we've ever made progress is when we geared up NATO to pose a real threat to the Serbs.[232]

Though Clinton still saw the conflict as a political and not a humanitarian crisis, at least he finally acknowledged that military action needed to be taken. Lake, having already gotten the p

President's approval for his plan used the opportunity to finally present his Endgame Strategy.

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[229] Silber & Little, 349-50.
[230] Power, 420.
[231] Halberstam, 316; Power, 437.
[232] Power, 437.

John Shalikashvili, the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was not as opposed to the new, bolder policy as Powell would have been. Shalikashvili had opposed the "lift and strike" policy because it would have lead to ever-increasing involvement – much the same reasons Powell cited in his opposition – but changed his mind after Chirac's election and the massacres at Srebrenica.[233] With Chirac even more active than Clinton on Bosnia, Shalikashvili suddenly found a more receptive tone when discussing intervention with other NATO officers. He even went so far as to suggest a massive strike against Serb air defense targets as the first step in a larger campaign, an idea which was widely supported within NATO.[234] With the military now onboard – Secretary of Defense Perry shared Shalikashvili's new enthusiasm for a more forceful policy – a major obstacle to intervention had been cleared. For the first time, both the President and the military were working towards intervention.

Part of the reason for Shalikashvili's change of heart was the destruction of the myth of Serb military prowess. Beginning in May 1995, the Croatians launched a campaign to take back the territory they had lost four years earlier.[235] At the beginning of August, Croatia launched another offensive, this one retaking almost all of the territory lost in 1991 in just four days.[236] Milosevic refused to support the Croatian Serbs, and the JNA stayed out of the fight.[237]

The Pentagon had feared the JNA, and used it in part to justify its opposition to intervention. As the third or fourth-largest army in Europe, it was not to be brushed aside

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[233] Halberstam, 326.
[234] Ibid, 327.
[235] Silber & Little, 355.
[236] Halberstam, 339-40.
[237] Power, 438.

lightly.[238] However, by 1995, the army had given much of its equipment and manpower to the Bosnian Serbs. It was also brought entirely under Milosevic's control, and when, during the Croatian offensives it became clear that Serbia itself would not intervene, the JNA was completely removed from picture. The Bosnian Serb forces were not of the same quality as the JNA. Though the nucleus had been formed from former JNA officers, many of the forces were paramilitary groups, some youth gangs from Belgrade, who were poorly disciplined and often drunk.[239] When Croatian and Bosnian forces launched offensives against the Bosnian Serbs in August 1995, they were immensely successful. By mid-September when the Americans instructed the Bosnian and Croat forces to end their offensive, the Serbs controlled only about 45 percent of Bosnia, down from 70 percent just a few weeks earlier.[240] It was apparent that NATO would not face a significant threat from either the JNA or the Bosnian Serb army.

After Srebrenica, there was a general agreement among the UNPROFOR members that the mission could not continue as it had. Chirac had made it clear the French intended either to find a solution to the conflict or withdraw from UNPROFOR. The British, too, who had been very reluctant to sanction the use of force, were more receptive to the idea after Srebrenica. At the London Conference in July 1995, a meeting of foreign ministry and defense officials from the NATO member states, Lake introduced his Endgame plan to the other delegations. With the strong support of Clinton, the other NATO members agreed to the plan, which promised to use "substantial and decisive air-power" if Gorazde, another eastern Bosnia safe area, was attacked. However, there was

[238] Halberstam, 31.
[239] Power, 284; Halberstam 122; Bert, 222.
[240] Halberstam, 351.

no mention of the other safe areas, particularly Zepa and Sarajevo.[241] Zepa was deemed too difficult to defend, and was written off; it fell to Serb forces on July 27.[242] Initially Sarajevo was also not included in the ultimatum, though it and the other remaining safe areas were subsequently added at the insistence of the United States.[243] The other accomplishment of the London Conference was removing the "dual key" system which placed a veto on the use of air strikes in the hands of United Nations officials, particularly Yusushi Akashi, U.N. Secretary Boutros-Gali's special representative in Bosnia, who had refused numerous requests for air strikes in the past. All of the decision making power now rested with NATO commanders, who were less reluctant to use force.[244]

On the ground in Bosnia, UNPROFOR re-deployed to form units greater than a thousand soldiers each, and left Serb-controlled territory. These steps removed the liability the Europeans had complained about for the last four years whenever air strikes had been proposed.[245] The troops were essentially worthless in Serb territory in any case, "where they were achieving almost nothing besides serving as potential hostages" in the event of air strikes.[246] The concentration and re-deployment of the UNPROFOR troops removed the last significant barrier to air strikes against the Serbs.

With the policy now in place, all that remained was a provocation to test the allies' commitment. It came on August 28, when a Serb shell killed thirty-seven people in downtown Sarajevo. Richard Holbrooke, whom Lake had appointed lead negotiator in

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[241] Power, 416.
[242] Halberstam, 338; Power, 418.
[243] Holbrooke, 72.
[244] Halberstam, 327-8; Holbrooke, 72.
[245] Halberstam, 330.
[246] Power, 439.

mid-August, immediately recommended air strikes against Serb targets. There was no serious opposition, and NATO began bombing on August 30.[247] The bombing stopped three weeks later, and on November 21, the Dayton Accords ending the war were initialed.[248] Just over three months after NATO began its campaign against the Serbs, a war which had dragged on since the summer of 1991 – over four years – was finished.

Though many factors combined to push the Clinton administration to take action, there was a fundamental realization within the top policy makers – especially Clinton and Lake – that Bosnia was hurting Clinton politically. That realization convinced Clinton, who had been at best inconsistent in his stance on the appropriate policy, that a solution was needed. Clinton later recalled his reasoning:

> You have to ask yourself which decisions would you rather defend ten years from now when you're not in office … I would rather explain why we tried [to intervene] than why … we permitted the war to resume, it expanded, NATO's alliance was destroyed, and the influence of the United States was compromised for ten years.[249]

At no point did Clinton defend his decision on humanitarian grounds. To the end, Clinton relied on the national interest argument, which he had argued against so strongly during his 1992 campaign. Those who did believe that the United States had a duty to intervene based on humanitarian grounds – Lake, Gore, Albright, and Holbrooke – were pushed aside until Clinton realized he had to take action.

Even though Clinton was the first president to take office after the end of the Cold War – and partly because he was – the United States did not consider humanitarian crises more favorably than it had in the past. In part because the framework for international relations for the past fifty years – the confrontation between the United States and the

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[247] Ibid, 440.
[248] Holbrooke, 311.
[249] Sobel, 218-9.

Soviet Union – was gone, domestic issues immediately took center stage. Clinton had neither the political capital, will, nor interest to make a substantive change in the United States' fundamentally national interest-based foreign policy. At the time when change was most possible, it was also, because of who was elected and the public's changing attitudes toward foreign affairs, unlikely that a fundamental change would happen.

International considerations did not have nearly as large an impact on Clinton's choosing to stay out of the conflict as did personal and domestic factors. Though international politics did play a restraining role, especially while the "lift and strike" policy was being considered, at no point were they absolute enough that a committed and decisive president could not have overcome them. After all, Europe was accustomed to having the United States dictate policy on major international issues, and in some instances wished that it would do so again. Clinton's disinterest in foreign policy and consequent lack of leadership was a major reason the crisis in Bosnia, and within NATO, became as severe as it did. Early on, not taking action may have done more harm than forcing Europe to accept a plan it did not approve of would have.

In the end the real losers were, of course, the Bosnians. With the United States unwilling to assert its almost absolute political and military advantage to aid humanitarian causes, and the United Nations completely ineffective, the Bosnians were left on their own. Perhaps the greatest travesty of all was the embargo on weapons imports to the former Yugoslavia, including Bosnia, which severely crippled the government's ability to defend itself. If the international community had not wanted to invest itself in solving the crisis in the former Yugoslavia, it should have stayed out

completely. The half-measures that were taken – such as UNPROFOR – allowed the United Nations, Europe, and the United States to pretend they were fulfilling their duty to stop the fighting and protect civilians, when in reality they were doing neither.

Those who did have a genuine commitment to ending the conflict were not sufficiently powerful, or assertive enough, to overcome objections and change policy. It must remain speculation what might have happened in 1993, had Clinton really believed his campaign rhetoric, and followed through with "lift and strike." One can imagine that, had the proposal been delivered as an already adopted policy to the Europeans, and UNPROFOR re-deployed as it was in late 1995 into large units, that the war might have ended substantially sooner. There is at least one piece of evidence the war might have ended much sooner, and at a relatively low cost. Radovan Karadzic, President of the Bosnian Serbs' Republika Srpska, said that ten thousand NATO troops deployed in two strategic places within Bosnia would have quickly stopped his campaign.[250] To do so, however, would have required an amount of political will that was simply not present on either side of the Atlantic.

The political will, the sense of how important it is, not only to save human life, but to uphold international law was missing from all the actors in the former Yugoslavia. The first leader to speak forcefully about the need to change directions in Bosnia was Jacques Chirac, who stood his ground on a patriotic, not a humanitarian basis. When Clinton eventually followed, he cited national interest and domestic political concerns instead of a concern for human rights. Under Clinton, despite his liberal ideology, his new foreign policy team, and his position as leader of the only superpower, the United

[250] Cohen, Hearts Grown Brutal, 242.

States simply did not view the suffering of a people in Southeastern Europe as worthy of the inconvenience it would cause to create peace.

Somalia

The lessening Cold War tensions of the late 1980s, and the end of the conflict in the early 1990s, lowered the strategic importance of client states of both the United States and the Soviet Union in Africa. Among the states affected was Somalia, and then ruled by the dictator Siad Barre, who was backed by the United States as a counterweight to Soviet-supported Ethiopia during much of the 1980s.[251] A civil war broke out in 1988 between Barre and General Mohammed Farah Aidid, which quickly destroyed the central government's tenuous control over the clan-dominated country.[252] With Somalia's strategic importance lapsed, the United States took little interest in the civil war. It did not threaten any interests of the United States in the region, which were by then minimal in any case.[253]

Humanitarian crises, however, were gaining more and more attention around the world, both from the press and from governments. So while African states were less likely to receive political, military and economic aid in the post-Cold War world, they received a fair amount of attention if there happened to be a humanitarian tragedy, as was the case in Somalia.[254] Though Siad Barre was forced out of the country in the spring of 1992, the civil war did not end. General Aidid fought with other clans for supremacy;

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[251] Halberstam, 249.
[252] Ibid, 249.
[253] Peter J. Schraeder, United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 168. The United States maintained a Cold War naval facility in Somalia, which was not used during the Gulf War. The United States chose not to renew the lease shortly thereafter, and removed the last American military personnel from the country.
[254] Peter Woodward, The Horn of Africa: Politics and International Relations (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2003), 149.

though he was the most powerful leader, he could not establish control over the entire country.[255]

The Bush administration initially opposed intervening in Somalia. The lack of a clear national interest at stake, as well as a general wariness of humanitarian interventions was enough to keep Bush and his advisors from taking a risk there. Only with domestic political pressure from the coming presidential election mounting did Bush approve very limited support for the UN mission. After his defeat by Bill Clinton, Bush ordered an intervention of precisely the kind he had refused earlier, both in Somalia and in Bosnia. However, once he was out of office, the intervention lost focus, and eventually resulted in the deaths of several soldiers and the withdrawal of all American troops, leaving the country in much the same situation it had been in before Bush's intervention.

The Bush Administration: Intervention on the Cheap

By Februrary 1992, there were large numbers of civilian casualties, especially in Mogadishu, where it was estimated that there were about 30,000 casualties, mostly from random shelling. However, the attention of the international community did not focus on the humanitarian tragedy until people began starving in the spring and summer of 1992.[256] However, the Bush administration refused to support a peacekeeping operation in Somalia during the spring of 1992.[257] Not until late April was a peacekeeping force, known as the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), mandated, and even

[255] Halberstam, 249.
[256] Schraeder, 169-70.
[257] Ibid, 170.

then, it was limited to 50 personnel at the demand of the United States. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali had requested 500.[258]

During the summer months, it became clear that neither UNOSOM nor Security Council resolutions had any effect on the situation. Relief organizations' efforts were hampered by the various clans, which confiscated aid destined for civilians.[259] UNOSOM was not strong enough to protect the humanitarian aid; instead, it relied on cooperation with Aidid and the other clans, which often stole the supplies for themselves.[260] By the end of 1992, aid agencies estimated that the various militias and gangs looted eighty percent of their supplies.[261]

By August, nearly one quarter of the Somali population was threatened with starvation, and 300,000 people had died, including one of every four children under the age of five.[262] Boutros-Ghali told the Security Council in late July that one third of the Somali population would die if the United Nations did not take more forceful action.[263] The Bush administration's hopes that the situation could be either ignored or placated with a token peacekeeping force did not seem to be realistic. Somalia was widely acknowledged to be the worst humanitarian disaster in the world at the time, and not a situation the UN could take a pass on.[264]

In response to the increasingly desperate situation in Somalia, President Bush ordered a limited U.S. intervention on August 14, 1992. He pledged logistical support for

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[258] Hurst, 222.
[259] Halberstam, 250.
[260] Schraeder, 175.
[261] Woodward, The Horn of Africa, 184.
[262] Schraeder, 177.
[263] Samuel M. Makinda, Seeking Peace From Chaos: Humanitarian Intervention in Somalia (Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), 63.
[264] Halberstam, 250.

500 Pakistani peacekeepers – the rest of the force Boutros-Ghali had wanted in the spring but the United States refused – and to transport aid to Somalia.[265] The operation was christened "Provide Relief" by the Bush administration. The United States pledged to offer support throughout the fall, but declined to provide guarantees beyond that.[266]

The intervention was seen in some quarters as a way to, in the middle of a tight presidential campaign, "demonstrate [the White House] had a heart," and to "do it relatively cheaply."[267] The timing reinforced this impression – the Republican National Convention was held just a few days after Bush decided to intervene. But presidential politics also restrained the parameters of Operation Provide Relief. The election was still primarily about domestic issues, and Clinton was pounding Bush on the amount of time he spent on foreign policy. The administration did not wish to give Clinton more ammunition by launching a major and open-ended commitment in Somalia.[268]

However, the Bush administration was also under pressure from the media and public opinion. Media attention on Somalia during the summer had been intensive, and had a negative impact on the Bush administration's position before the election.[269] So caught between two opposing forces – wanting to do something positive about a conflict which received so much attention, and at the same time not wanting to be drawn too deeply into any further international commitments – Bush decided to take on an extremely limited role.

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[265] Hurst, 222-3.
[266] Halberstam, 251.
[267] Power, 286.
[268] Ioan Lews and James Mayall, "Somalia," The New Interventionism 1991-1994, ed. James Mayall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 110.
[269] Jeffrey Clark, "Debacle in Somalia," Foreign Affairs 72, no. 1 (1993): 120.

The newly reinforced UNOSOM proved to be almost as ineffective as the original mission, U.S. logistical support notwithstanding. Over the next few months, the Pakistani peacekeepers proved unable to protect the aid supplies they were assigned to deliver. They were hampered by their lack of firepower and their traditional peacekeeping mandate.[270] As a small, lightly armed force, the Pakistanis could not take on the militias that prevented them from delivering food, and were forced, much as the smaller UNOSOM contingent had been, to rely on cooperation with the various clan leaders. Pressure began to build again for some sort of further intervention, despite the wariness of the White House and the Pentagon.

In September 1992, President Bush gave a speech to the United Nations in which he outlined his ideas for enhanced UN peacekeeping capabilities, and acknowledged that the United States must be willing to play a substantial role, both financially and militarily.[271] The situation in Somalia seemed to beg for the kind of attention Bush outlined in his speech. He could not leave Somalia in the hands of an ineffectual UN force after outlining his ideas for making the UN a more effective peacekeeping organization. When he made the decision to intervene, Bush was careful to couch it in terms of supporting the UN, and not as a unilateral U.S. project:

> … some crises in the world cannot be resolved without American involvement, [and] American action is often necessary as a catalyst for broader involvement of the community of nations.[272]

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[270] Hurst, 223.
[271] Ibid, 223.
[272] Schraeder, 175.

Bush recognized that the United States must play a leading role in encouraging the UN and other states to take on difficult humanitarian crises, and was willing to provide the leadership necessary in this situation to allow the UN to intervene more robustly.

Congressional pressure, which largely reflected domestic opinion, was also influential in encouraging Bush to intervene. Senators Paul Simon and Nancy Kassebaum introduced a bipartisan resolution calling for United States military forces to be deployed in Somalia to safeguard the delivery of food.[273] The resolution passed the Senate in late July, before Operation Provide Relief, but the Senators were not satisfied by the half-measures Bush took then, especially as the Pakistanis proved unable to guarantee the delivery of the aid.[274] Congressional pressure was backed by public opinion. A poll taken in late November, just after Bush decided to send U.S. troops to Somalia, showed that seventy percent of the public believed the situation in Somalia warranted the risk in U.S. lives and the cost to deploy them.[275]

Within the bureaucracy there was low-level support for intervention, as there was for Bosnia – though it failed to find support among the senior decision-makers. The Office for Disaster Relief and the Africa Bureau within the State Department both wanted the United States to intervene, though by all accounts they had little influence.[276] Of more importance were the cables that Ambassador Smith Hempstone, stationed in neighboring Kenya, sent to the President. In them, he described the desperate situation in

[273] Power, 285.
[274] Hurst, 222.
[275] Schraeder, 177.
[276] Lewis and Mayall, 109-10.

Somalia and urged action.[277] These appeals were made before the August intervention, but nevertheless raised Bush's awareness of the bleak outlook for the civilians of Somalia.

Presidential politics and the conflict in Bosnia were related and important issues for Bush. Somalia acted almost as a relief valve for pressure on Bosnia. Not only did the August intervention come right before the Republican National Convention, but it also came just as the concentration camps in Bosnia were being revealed to the public in the first week of August, and Clinton's campaign took advantage of Bush's inaction there.[278] The Bush administration was adamantly opposed to intervention in Bosnia; so intervention in Somalia became a way of deflecting both international and domestic criticism.[279] Brent Scowcroft acknowledged as much:

> It [the Bosnian concentration camps] probably did have a significant impact on us. We did not want to portray the administration as wholly flint-hearted realpolitick, and an airlift in Somalia was a lot cheaper [than intervention in Bosnia] to demonstrate we had a heart.[280]

Scowcroft also offered two national security reasons why Somalia was attractive as a place to intervene: first, it would show the world that the U.S. was not afraid to intervene, and second, that the Bush administration did care about Muslims and the third world. In particular, the administration felt the need to refute accusations that the United States did not intervene in Bosnia because the victims were primarily Muslim.[281]

All of these explanations help explain the intervention in August and the administration's increasing willingness to look at a more robust intervention in Somalia

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[277] Power, 285-6; Hurst, 222.
[278] Power, 274.
[279] Ibid, 285.
[280] Western, 130.
[281] Power, 293.

thereafter. However, the Pentagon, as it had in Bosnia, stood absolutely opposed to intervention in Somalia throughout the spring, summer, and fall of 1992. The administration's very limited intervention in August was partly predicated on the assumption that the Pentagon would remain opposed to the idea of deploying troops in Somalia, Bosnia, or any other humanitarian crisis that did not meet the stringent criteria of the Powell Doctrine.[282]

The Pentagon did initially play its predicted role, familiar from the limited discussions of intervention in Bosnia, of opposing a troop deployment on the basic grounds of the Powell Doctrine. Initially, the Pentagon cited the lack of a clearly defined mission, and the presence of what one State Department official called a "clan-based quagmire destined to last years, if not decades" as reasons to stay out of Somalia.[283] Surprisingly, given the just-completed Persian Gulf War, the Pentagon argued that the desert terrain would create logistical and operational difficulties that would make the mission more difficult.[284] These arguments stifled discussion of an American troop deployment to Somalia; as in Bosnia, the Bush administration was not willing to force an intervention on the unwilling Pentagon.

There was a change of heart in the Pentagon in mid-November that changed the situatio completely. The evidence seems to indicate that Bush's loss in the 1992 presidential election played a large part in this. General Powell decided, based on Clinton's campaign rhetoric and early briefings after the election that Clinton's

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[282] Hurst, 223.
[283] Ibid, 222.
[284] Western, 116. It seems the Pentagon was searching for excuses, especially given their similar argument about the heavily forested and mountainous terrain in Bosnia.

administration would almost inevitably become involved in either Bosnia or Somalia.[285] Given the possibilities, Powell decided that Somalia was the better of the two situations to become involved in; it seemed easier to limit the mission's mandate, to get in and then out of, and to resolve, than was Bosnia.[286]

The comparative advantages over Bosnia were a clear mission – the United States could, and did, start almost from scratch with its mandate – open terrain, and a poorly armed and trained militia opponent.[287] In contrast, intervention in Bosnia would require either following or changing the UN mandate; the fighting would be in heavily forested and mountainous terrain; and it was possible that the United States would end up fighting the JNA. Given the comparisons, it is not surprising the Pentagon decided it would rather involve itself in Somalia. The Pentagon did not believe intervention in Somalia was ideal, just the least worst of its two options. Observed one admiral involved in the discussions:

> No one thought Somalia was going to be cheap or completely risk free. But Bosnia made it seem as though we could do Somalia with a relatively moderate force.[288]

The Pentagon did not come to support intervention in Somalia enthusiastically, but rather as a way to preempt any intervention decision Clinton might make. Additionally, President Bush had begun to take a personal interest in Somalia, which was something he had not done with the Yugoslav conflict. The President's consideration of intervening in Somalia made it easier for Powell to decide to support a new intervention in Somalia.[289] Bush's interest was drawn in part from his "[embarrassment at] the fact that the new

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[285] Ibid, 118.
[286] Halberstam, 251.
[287] Hurst, 221.
[288] Western, 137.
[289] Lewis and Mayall, 110.

world order, which was identified with U.S. leadership, was now characterized by the mass starvation of Somali children."[290] In addition, the decision to intervene was made after Clinton's election, which left Bush only with his legacy to consider in the final months of his presidency. With no political restraints on his actions after the election, Bush could begin shoring up his legacy with a final, humanitarian act.[291]

On November 21, with all these considerations taken into account, Powell instructed a deputy to announce at an interagency meeting on Somalia that the Pentagon was prepared to send up to two full divisions to Somalia.[292] The announcement was unexpected; military intervention was not even on the agenda for the meeting because the Pentagon had opposed it so steadfastly in the past.[293] The military did put some conditions on the deployment, mostly in an effort to make it adhere as closely as possible to the Powell Doctrine. First, it was to be restricted to Mogadishu and the southern, hardest-hit areas of Somalia. Second, the mission was confined to providing security for the delivery of aid – Powell was adamant that there be no nation building. Third, the troops were to be withdrawn as soon as the situation had stabilized enough for regular UN peacekeeping troops to take over.[294] Fourth, the operation was to be UN mandated, but the forces would be under United States' command and control.[295] Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Powell's support was conditional on U.S. forces not being deployed to Bosnia.[296] With the military volunteering two divisions to serve in Somalia,

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[290] Makinda, 69.
[291] Schraeder, 178.
[292] Hurst, 223-4; Halberstam, 251.
[293] Western, 135.
[294] Lewis and Mayall, 111.
[295] Hurst, 224.
[296] Western, 138.

Bush quickly approved the intervention, and on December 3 the UN approved the new U.S.-led force, dubbed the Unified Task Force (UNITAF).[297]

UNITAF's mandate was to secure Mogadishu and southern Somalia for the delivery of humanitarian aid, and to prepare for UNOSOM II to take over after a brief – though unspecified – period.[298] The general idea was for UNITAF to force the submission of the militias, and then allow the lightly armed troops of UNOSOM II to take over. President Bush continually stressed the limited duration of the operation:

> Once we have created that secure environment [in Somalia], we will withdraw our troops, handing the security mission back to a regular UN peacekeeping force … This operation is not open-ended. We will not stay one day longer than is absolutely necessary.[299]

Though the United States had made the commitment to intervene, it proved to be a tenuous and highly conditional intervention. President Bush wished to address only the humanitarian tragedy, and not the political underpinnings that had led to the crisis.[300] The UN Security Council agreed that the "ultimate responsibility" for rebuilding the country lay with the Somalis themselves, though there were ample signs that they would not be able to do so.[301]

UNITAF was explicitly not a peacekeeping force. John Bolton, then the Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations, later wrote that UNITAF

> intended to stabilize the military situation only to the extent needed to avert mass starvation, and the United States expected to hand the matter back to the United Nations in three or four months.[302]

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[297] Schraeder, 111.
[298] Makinda, 70.
[299] Hurst, 225.
[300] Schraeder, 179.
[301] Lewis and Mayall, 94-5.
[302] John R. Bolton, "Wrong Turn in Somalia," Foreign Affairs 73, no. 1 (1994): 58.

So the intervention made no pretensions of being a solution to the larger problem, but rather addressed only the immediate consequences of the political chaos and insecurity in Somalia. In that sense, this intervention is not comparable to what Clinton eventually undertook in Yugoslavia. UNITAF's mission was not to solve the problem, as Endgame envisioned for Yugoslavia, but to mitigate the effects that would have a political impact in the United States. The Somali civil war itself was still not important enough for intervention; only the humanitarian aspect drew the United States' attention.

As the mission unfolded on the ground, it became impossible to adhere to Bush's security-only guidelines. The American troops slowly and inevitably became involved in some peacekeeping duties, which they had initially tried to avoid.[303] They found it was impossible to be an armed force in the middle of a civil war trying to deliver humanitarian aid and not become in any way involved in the conflict. In particular, the UNITAF troops found themselves disarming some militia members, though Bush had specifically refused to expand the operation's mandate to cover disarmament.[304]

In the wake of the Cold War, Boutros-Ghali saw an opportunity to expand the UN's role from traditional peacekeeping into peace enforcement, and saw Somalia as an early test of his ideas.[305] He wanted to take maximum advantage of the well-equipped UNITAF force, and use it to create a situation that would allow the follow-on UNOSOM II force to begin rebuilding the basic institutions of the country. Specifically, he pushed both Bush and Clinton to expand UNITAF's mandate to include disarming the militias,

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[303] Christopher M. Gacek, The Logic of Force: The Dilemma of Limited War in American Foreign Policy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 317.
[304] Chester A. Crocker, "The Lessons of Somalia: Not Everything Went Wrong," Foreign Affairs 74, no. 3 (1995): 6.
[305] Makinda, 60.

by force if necessary.[306] One way this debate was framed was each side's definition of 'secure.' Boutros-Ghali believed a 'secure environment' was one where the militias were disarmed, while the Bush administration defined it only as a situation where the militias would let aid through unhindered.[307] The debate over disarmament was just the first indication of the trouble that would follow when UNOSOM II took over.

The Clinton Administration: An "Unprecedented Enterprise"

UNITAF's mission ended on May 4, 1993, with the handover to UNOSOM II. By June, there were only four thousand U.S. troops in Somalia, down from a high of about 28,000.[308] They were replaced by a smaller and less-capable force, which did not have anywhere near the combat capability UNITAF had wielded. Additionally, the United States' resistance to disarming the militias had left them largely intact; the military and political situation in Somalia had in fact changed little since the first American troops landed in early December. Had UNOSOM II been tasked only with maintaining the status quo – delivering aid as UNITAF had done – its forces might have proved sufficient.

However, Boutros-Ghali had a more ambitious program in mind. With the encouragement of the Security Council, and by extension the Clinton administration, Boutros-Ghali wanted to recreate a Somali state.[309] Madeline Albright, then the United

[306] Gacek, 316.
[307] Crocker, 6.
[308] Hyland, 55.
[309] Halberstam, 260.

States' ambassador to the UN, laid out the new and extremely ambitious agenda of the UN in Somalia:

> We will embark on the unprecedented enterprise aimed at nothing less than the restoration of an entire country as a proud, functioning, and viable member of the community of nations.[310]

Since the arrival of UNITAF, the warlords controlling Somalia's militias mostly stayed out of the UN's way. This was partly out of respect for UNITAF's firepower – its two American divisions could easily overpower the militias – but also because they were not threatened by UNITAF. Delivering aid to the civilian population did not affect the militias' status in Somalia. However, the UN's shift to nation building did affect the warlords' interests.[311] The creation of a state would inevitably threaten their positions as rulers of their own personal fiefdoms, which they had established when the central government collapsed. Some in the Clinton administration recognized the disparity between the UN's resources and goals, such as the ever-cautious Warren Christopher. He told Boutros-Ghali that there must be a political solution to the problem; that the UN peacekeeping force alone did not have the ability to rebuild the Somali state.[312]

On June 5, 1993, General Aidid's militia attacked several groups of Pakistani peacekeepers, and killed more than twenty of them.[313] In response, Admiral Howe, the American civilian in charge of the UN mission in Somalia, announced a reward for Aidid's capture. Howe's action changed the situation in Somalia irreversibly. No longer was the UN a neutral actor; it had taken sides, and was fair game for the militias.[314] It

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[310] Hyland, 56.
[311] Crocker, 5.
[312] Halberstam, 260.
[313] Ibid, 257.
[314] Ibid, 258.

was Howe's bounty, which led to the infamous mission to capture Aidid on October 3, and resulted in eighteen dead and seventy-four wounded U.S. soldiers.[315]

It was never much of a question in Washington whether or not to withdraw after the October 3 raid. Clinton did not want to focus on foreign policy, and public opinion had grown hostile to the mission, largely due to the increasing ambiguity of the United States' purpose in Somalia. The United States had in a few months gone from delivering aid to starving Somalis to fighting them on the streets of Mogadishu. The public was not comfortable with this role shift, especially since it was never explicitly explained. Clinton was never a president to go against public opinion, especially in foreign policy matters, about which he was comparatively inexperienced and were low on his list of priorities. The President had not involved himself in the mission in Somalia, and neither had his senior advisors.[316] In part, this disconnect is what allowed the situation to deteriorate as it had; without guidance from senior policymakers, Howe and the UN were able to decide policy in Somalia, which the Clinton administration then had no stake in, and did not support when the operation went bad.

Instead of showing a serious commitment to nation building, and reinforcing the remaining 400 Army Rangers in Mogadishu, Clinton made the decision to pull out entirely. However, it would not do for the United States to run away immediately; first the troops in Somalia were reinforced with 1,700 additional soldiers and 100 armored vehicles, as well as several thousand Marines stationed offshore.[317] These forces were intended to insure that the United States had enough firepower to be able to defend itself

[315] Ibid, 262.
[316] Ibid, 263.
[317] Gacek, 323.

if its forces ended up in another major firefight. This reinforcement was only temporary; all American forces were withdrawn by March 31, 1994, leaving only the lightly armed UN peacekeepers in Somalia.[318] Predictably, they could not institute the rebuilding of the state without either a political settlement or the military force to defeat the militias. The remaining UN forces withdrew from Somalia in the spring of 1995, leaving it in the hands of the warlords.

It seems clear that President Bush's interventions in Somalia were meant to relieve domestic and international pressures, and not to solve the country's problems. Neither the interventions in August nor November of 1992 were intended to resolve the civil war and bring a lasting peace to Somalia. In this sense, they are not comparable to the United States' intervention in Yugoslavia in 1995. Secretary General Boutros-Ghali's nation building plan for UNOSOM II embodied the spirit of intervention that would put an end to the conflict, but the UN forces were not strong enough to carry out his plans, and the United States did not have, under Bush, the desire, or under Clinton, the political will, to see the nation building through. In both cases, politics, whether domestic or international, were the primary consideration, not humanitarian concerns.

[318] Ibid, 323.

Rwanda

Rwanda was in the midst of carrying out a series of political reforms known as the Arusha accords to end a civil war between the Hutu government and Tutsi rebels when President Habyarimana's plane was shot down while attempting to land in Kigali on April 6, 1993. Hutu Power, an extremist movement that was opposed to the settlement between the Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), was behind the assassination.[319] Immediately Hutu Power extremists in the Rwandan government took control and began arresting and executing opposition figures, mostly Tutsis but also moderate Hutus. Quickly the Hutu militia, known as *interahamwe*, began slaughtering all Tutsis, who were easily identified by their identification papers. In the first month, it is estimated about 500,000 people died, most by machete or club. This was not a sophisticated genocide, but as low-tech as it could be. The Hutu Power movement relied on the mass mobilization of the Hutu populace, directed by radio broadcasts, to carry out the genocide. The slaughter ended about three months later when the RPF defeated the Hutu government forces and pushed them into Zaire. In the meantime, about 800,000 Rwandans were slaughtered; about four times as many people as were killed in the entire four-year conflict in Yugoslavia.[320]

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[319] It has never been positively established that the Hutu Power movement downed President Habyarimana's plane, however, most commentators accept that the preponderance of evidence indicates Hutu Power was responsible. Some people do believe the RPF was responsible, but they are mostly affiliated with the former Hutu regime or have other reasons to blame the RPF.

[320] For a comprehensive overview of the genocide and civil war, see: Philip Gourevitch, We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories From Rwanda (New York: Picador, 1998).

The Clinton administration was not predisposed to intervene in Rwanda. The tiny state had no strategic significance, no political power, and no interest group within the United States to argue for intervention. At the time, low-level officials within the bureaucracy expressed the only real concern about the genocide within the government. Memories of the recent debacle in Somalia only reinforced the administration's preference not to become involved.

Not Even on the List

Rwanda was never a strategically important country. A tiny, landlocked state in central Africa with no significant natural resources, Rwanda had no strategic or economic value to the United States. So when the genocide began and the civil war restarted on April 7, the United States' concern was for the safety of its citizens and diplomats in the country. As with Yugoslavia, some junior officials did push for intervention, but they had even less of a chance of succeeding in Rwanda than elsewhere. After all, if Clinton, who had supported a more humanitarian foreign policy during his campaign, would not intervene in Yugoslavia, which was much closer to American interests and minds, becoming involved in Rwanda would require a humanitarian crisis of epic proportions.

Clinton himself acknowledged on May 25 that there was no national interest involved in Rwanda, though it was painfully obvious by that point that genocide was being committed.[321] The United States' response to the genocide was in general one of indifference. When pressed by the Belgian foreign minister to take some sort of action,

[321] Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, The International Dimension of Genocide in Rwanda (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 97.

Secretary of State Christopher responded that he had "other responsibilities."[322] In general, there was little enthusiasm for Rwanda outside the State Department. Tony Lake, the President's National Security Advisor, was consumed by the crises in Bosnia and Haiti, and did not spend time on Rwanda.[323] Rwanda was never on the Clinton administration's list of major issues, as shown by its never having been addressed by a full Cabinet meeting.[324] No one at a high level within the administration pushed for intervention in Rwanda. Tony Lake, Al Gore, and Madeline Albright, who all supported intervention in Bosnia, were silent.

In the absence of any sort of high-level support, it was left to a few junior officials within the Defense and State departments to push for intervention. However, on their own, they had almost no chance to alter policy. James Woods in the Defense Department's Bureau of African Affairs believed the slaughter in Rwanda warranted at least some amount of attention, which it had not received from more senior officials. He wanted Rwanda to be placed on a list of trouble spots, but was told by his superiors,

> Look, if something happens in Rwanda-Burundi, we don't care. Take it off the list. U.S. national interest is not involved and we can't put all these silly humanitarian issues on lists … Just make it go away.[325]

The Defense Department was singularly unsympathetic to humanitarian causes, which given the lack of national interests at stake in Rwanda, was all Woods could argue for.

The complete lack of interest among senior officials in the Defense Department was reflected in the State Department. Prudence Bushnell, who was a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, was told that, "these people do this from time to time" when she was

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[322] Power, 351.
[323] Ibid, 364.
[324] Ibid, 366.
[325] Ibid, 342.

considering options for responding to the crisis, and urged to worry only about evacuating U.S. citizens.[326] Joyce Leader, who had been second in charge at the United States' Rwandan embassy until it was closed in April, became the State Department's expert on Rwanda. She monitored the crisis and wrote reports, but she thought the only way to stop the genocide was a military intervention, which was not welcomed by her superiors.[327]

The lack of enthusiasm for intervention among senior officials came from many sources. Perhaps most important were the same considerations voiced when intervention in Yugoslavia was proposed. There was little or no public support, and consequently no political support. The Pentagon was still opposed to using its forces for humanitarian crises; it believed the duty of the military was to protect American interests, not altruistic interventions to help others. First was Rwanda's lack of any sort of strategic importance and a measure of racism that accompanied it. Second, the debacle in Somalia during October 1993 led to unwillingness on the part of the Clinton administration and the Pentagon to take casualties and participate in United Nations peacekeeping missions. Third was an early confusion of the civil war with the genocide; it was not immediately clear to senior policy makers that the killing of civilians was not just a side effect of the civil war, but was a systematic, planned campaign.

Even though some 800,000 people were killed in Rwanda, it never received the amount of attention directed at Yugoslavia, where about 200,000 were killed. In part, the lack of attention is due to the Rwandan genocide's short duration – about three months –

[326] Ibid, 351.
[327] Ibid, 365.

compared with the four-year Yugoslav conflict. However, it was also partly due to the United States' psychological closeness to Europe. Europe is more important to the United States economically and politically, and sentimentally, because the country is based on European values, not African or Asian ones.[328] So while 800,000 people might have been killed by a genocidal regime in Rwanda, the Clinton administration never gave serious thought to intervening; if it were to act anywhere at the time, Bosnia was much closer to the American consciousness than was Rwanda.

Perhaps this attitude is best shown by a phone call General Dallaire, the Canadian in charge of UNAMIR, received from the Defense Department in July, after the genocide had been halted and the United States was planning a humanitarian relief mission. The official asked how many Rwandans had died, because they were trying to figure out how many casualties they were prepared to accept, and figured that 85,000 dead Rwandans were worth one United States casualty.[329] It is difficult to imagine, even if it were true, that the United States would ever admit that 85,000 European lives were worth only one dead American. The United States' attitude towards Rwandan casualties indicates a certain amount of racism inherent in its foreign policy, which under Clinton was largely a reflection of public opinion. Representative Harry Johnston, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, acknowledged as much during a hearing on Rwanda.[330]

Not all of the United States' unwillingness to intervene can be blamed on a certain amount of racism and a distinct lack of national interest. The deaths of eighteen American soldiers in Somalia the previous fall made both the Pentagon and the Clinton

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[328] Halberstam, 273.
[329] Power, 381.
[330] Klinghoffer, 97.

administration almost unconditionally unwilling to intervene in Rwanda. The Pentagon especially was wary of being drawn into another situation like Somalia, and was concerned that it might have to support an intervention in Bosnia at the same time.[331] These concerns kept the Pentagon absolutely opposed to any intervention, though one involving American troops was never seriously proposed. Despite the ongoing genocide, Somalia was the frame of reference for Rwanda, and not a genocide such as the Holocaust.[332]

Instead of being concerned about stopping genocide, Clinton and his team were focused on avoiding taking risks with U.S. troops, especially in Africa.[333] A repercussion of Somalia was a reluctance to let other states undertake peacekeeping operations in uncertain situations, such as Rwanda. The United States was afraid it would be forced to rescue the operation if it went awry and end up with its troops at risk.[334] This risk-adverse attitude characterized the United States' response not just to using its own troops, but also to the possibility of other states sending their forces to Rwanda. The Clinton administration "saw Somalia lurking around every corner" during the Rwandan genocide, and the desire to avoid another situation like Somalia was the driving force behind the United States' policy at this time.[335] Alison Des Forges from Human Rights Watch commented on the falsity of comparing the proposed interventions in Rwanda and Somalia:

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[331] Ibid, 91.
[332] Power, 357.
[333] Halberstam, 276.
[334] Power, 366.
[335] Michael Barnett, Eyewitness to a Genocide (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 140.

> We are not proposing an intervention force between rival armed factions, but a rescue operation to protect civilians.[336]

The difference in missions did not affect how decision-makers looked upon intervention. Sending American troops into Africa on a humanitarian mission, especially one under the United Nations' auspices, was not going to happen. No humanitarian concerns could change their mind. This attitude came to be called the "Somalia Syndrome," which was similar to the "Vietnam Syndrome" which characterized the military's response to Bosnian intervention, with the additional fear of casualties and a growing belief in isolationism.[337] All of this was embodied explicitly in policy with the release of Presidential Decision Directive 25, which was made public in May 1994, but had been used as a basis for policy since the Somalia crisis in October.[338]

PDD-25 was partly a response to Congressional criticism of the United Nation's peacekeeping operations and Clinton's support for them. Congress withheld hundreds of millions of dollars from the UN in the early 1990s to protest what it saw as excessive spending and expansion. Clinton, in an effort to show Congress he could also be tough with the UN, and perhaps convince them to release some of the embargoed UN dues, urged the Security Council to withdraw UNAMIR unless the Arusha accords were quickly implemented.[339] PDD-25 stipulated that peacekeeping missions should not be maintained in situations where there was no clear mission or exit strategy. PDD-25's "purpose [was] to use peacekeeping more selectively and more effectively than [had]

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[336] Klinghoffer, 96.
[337] Klinghoffer, 95.
[338] Barnett, 41.
[339] L.R. Melvern, A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide (New York: Zed Books, 2000), 112.

been done in the past," and Rwanda, even before the genocide and restarted civil war, seemed a good place to cut back on UN operations.[340]

Senator Dole, who was a passionate advocate of intervention in Yugoslavia, summed up Congressional, and especially Republican, interest in Rwanda:

> I don't think we have any national interest there. The Americans are out, and as far as I'm concerned, in Rwanda, that ought to be the end of it.[341]

In a Congress already critical of the United Nation's role in peacekeeping operations and the amount of money the United States was required to pay in support of those operations, calls for a heavily armed force to be sent on a dangerous mission to Rwanda were received coldly. Even Dole, who expressed a great deal of concern over Yugoslavia, was dismissive of any attempt to intervene to save hundreds of thousands more lives in Africa.

There was little Congressional pressure to act, in part because not many citizens were aware of what was happening in Rwanda. There were, especially after the European and American citizens had been evacuated, very few reporters in Rwanda to cover the genocide, and so they generated little pressure on the President and Congress to act.[342] Neither Congress nor the President paid a political price for not intervening in Rwanda, as they had eventually done in Bosnia. What little Congressional effort there was to persuade Clinton to intervene went almost unheard. Senators Paul Simon and James Jeffords from the Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs wrote a letter to Clinton after speaking with Dallaire on May 13. They stated the need for intervention to stop the

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[340] Klinghoffer, 96.
[341] Power, 352.
[342] Ibid, 375.

genocide, noting that there were risks, "but we cannot continue to sit idly by while this tragedy continues to unfold."[343] Their letter failed to move the Clinton administration, which responded almost a month later with a list of actions the administration had taken to help Rwandans, none of which had resulted in an intervention in the month since the letter was sent. With a Congress hostile to the UN in general, and further interventions in Africa in particular, and a public which had not shown any interest in the plight of the Rwandans, Clinton had no political forces pushing him to act, and actually had quite a number trying to restrain action.

The crisis in Rwanda consisted of two separate but very much related conflicts. The first was the genocide carried out by the Hutu regime against the Tutsi population; the second was the renewed civil war between the Hutu Power regime and the RPF rebels. The Clinton administration chose to focus on stopping the civil war and returning to the Arusha accords peace process. Most important to this decision was the lack of immediate recognition that there was a genocide; the death of civilians always accompanies a civil war, and because many of the killings in the first few days were of prominent Tutsis and moderate Hutus, it was easy to see the killings as a natural occurrence of the civil war.[344] In its diplomacy, the United States tried to be evenhanded; it did not distinguish between the Hutu government and Tutsi rebels, but tried to be impartial, because it believed the central issue of the conflict was the civil war, which could be resolved politically.[345] The United Nations was also more concerned with the civil war, because "in the first four weeks of genocide, the fact that a systematic and

[343] Melvern, 203.
[344] Klinghoffer, 91.
[345] Ibid, 94.

continuing slaughter was taking place in Rwanda was not once discussed at length in [Security] Council meetings."[346]

Both the United States and the UN were more concerned with the civil war because that issue is what they had dealt with in the past. Neither set of policy-makers initially viewed the crisis as much more than a recurrence of the civil war, and their discussion of peacekeeping and diplomatic efforts revolved around that understanding. So instead of reinforcing the peacekeepers and giving them a mandate to stop the genocide, the United States encouraged the Security Council to withdraw all but a token force; the concern was for the political process, not Rwandan lives. Withdrawing UNAMIR was supposed to be a punishment for leaving the path for a political resolution; instead, it was a reward for the Hutu government, which saw with the peacekeepers' removal an almost unobstructed opportunity to complete the extermination of all the Tutsis in Rwanda.

The United States' failure to recognize the genocide early in the crisis was not due to a lack of forewarning. Three intelligence reports in the months leading up to the crisis hinted at large-scale ethnic violence. In January 1994, an intelligence analyst predicted as a worst-case scenario that 500,000 deaths could result from a breakdown of the Arusha process, while a month earlier the CIA reported that some 40 million tons of arms had been imported to Rwanda, which should have raised warning flags given the supposedly peaceful designs of the government.[347] Joyce Leader, the second in charge of the Kigali embassy, provided even more direct evidence of the extent to which the government

[346] Melvern, 166.
[347] Power, 338.

might have known genocide was underway. She remembers that, "By 8 a.m. the morning after the plane crash, we knew what was happening, that there was systematic killing of Tutsi."[348] James Woods, deputy assistant secretary for African affairs at the Department of Defense, recalled:

> … there was plenty of evidence around if you'd wanted to use it. It was known that this was planned, premeditated, carefully planned, and was being executed according to a plan with the full connivance of the Rwandan government. This was known.[349]

So there was plenty of evidence early on about what was happening in Rwanda, had policymakers chosen to acknowledge it. However, with the simultaneous crises in Haiti and Yugoslavia, there was little time and no interest in looking at the Rwandan crisis outside of the context of the civil war. It was far simpler and politically more desirable for senior officials to view the crisis as a traditional civil war, which the United States had at best a minimal interest in stopping, rather than as a genocide that would have obligated the United States to take some action.

In the end, though, it mattered little whether the United States viewed the conflict as genocide or a civil war. In either case, there was no support for intervention.

> It did not matter if the killing in Rwanda was due to a civil war or genocide. The United States was going to respond in the same anemic way – a point callously underlined in May when the genocide was well known but the United States refused to acknowledge its existence and opposed the plan to intervene.[350]

The United States wanted to avoid becoming involved in Rwanda at almost any cost – hence the tendency to deal with the crisis as though it were a civil war, and the administration's reluctance to back any other nation's plan to intervene. An important part of this strategy was not to acknowledge that genocide was being committed in

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[348] Ibid, 354.
[349] Melvern, 170.
[350] Barnett, 161-2.

Rwanda, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. So during most of May, State Department officials were forbidden to use the word 'genocide' in reference to Rwanda. Only on May 21 did Secretary Christopher allow officials to say 'genocide,' though never without qualifications such as 'acts of genocide' that implied the full standard had not been met.[351] After it became politically untenable to deny that Rwanda was genocide, Clinton's advisors conceded the term, but reinterpreted the Genocide Convention to enable action, not to require it.[352] The semantic argument over Rwanda was, as was also the case in Yugoslavia, indicative of an administration that did not wish to become involved. The rhetoric of national interests, the worries about UN peacekeeping operations, and the tendency to see the crisis as a civil war and not genocide were all consequences of the Clinton administration's unwillingness to take political risks on humanitarian interventions, especially in Africa.

Clinton never considered sending U.S. troops to stop the genocide in Rwanda. So the United States' foreign policy moves during the crisis were generally played out in the United Nations Security Council, where a variety of possibilities for intervention were discussed. As discussed above, the United States' first action in the Security Council on April 15, after the outbreak of fighting, was to demand the withdrawal of UNAMIR to show displeasure with the abandonment of the Arusha process.[353] In a compromise, the Security Council agreed to withdraw all but about 500 of the 2500 peacekeepers, despite their immediate role protecting 15,000 Tutsis in Kigali's soccer stadium.[354] Had the UN

[351] Power, 361-2.
[352] Gourevitch, 153.
[353] Power, 367.
[354] Melvern, 146, 163.

completely withdrawn, the Hutu militia and government would have almost surely killed all of those under its protection. In explaining his desire to withdraw UNAMIR, Christopher cited a need to protect the operation's mandate and personnel, but not those civilians the peacekeepers were supposed to be protecting:

> [The decision to demand withdrawal was] based on our conviction that the Security Council has an obligation to ensure that peacekeeping operations are viable, that they are capable of fulfilling their mandates, and that the UN peacekeeping personnel are not placed or retained, knowingly, in an untenable situation.[355]

The Clinton administration simply did not care about the civilians under the UN's care, or their fate if UNAMIR withdrew. Only the outrage by other members of the Security Council resulted in a token force being left behind to protect what civilians it could.

Six days after the United States demanded UNAMIR withdraw, General Dallaire in Rwanda proposed the reinforcement of his beleaguered force by bringing in several thousand well-equipped troops with a mandate to stop the genocide. He claimed that with 5,000 high-quality troops and an appropriate mandate he could stop the genocide in a matter of days.[356] The Clinton administration was not receptive to the proposal, because the risks were unknown, as was the force's precise mission and exit strategy. PDD-25 showed its influence here, even though the United States was not being asked to contribute troops. Almost as bad in the eyes of the Clinton administration as committing troops to another African humanitarian intervention was the possibility of having to rescue other nations' troops which whose mission had gone badly. So by early May the

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[355] Barnett, 106

[356] Gourevitch, 150. There is no consensus that Dallaire's claim was true, though most experts seem to agree that given the low-tech nature of the genocide, even a relatively small force with an appropriate mandate could have saved many Tutsi lives. The most common example used is the situation at Kigali's soccer stadium, where a handful of troops protected about 15,000 Tutsis. For a viewpoint skeptical of the effectiveness of an intervention, see: Alan Kuperman, "Rwanda in Retrospect," Foreign Affairs 73, no. 6 (1994): 47-62.

Clinton administration had decided that any intervention should take place under the auspices of the Organization for African Unity (OAU), and not the United Nations.[357]

The United States finally acquiesced to a United Nations mandate intervention force, UNAMIR II, on May 17, but with severe restrictions. Ambassador Keating from New Zealand commented that the United States had "essentially gutted the resolution … in reality the expansion is a fiction."[358] The United States agreed to provide fifty armored vehicles for the intervention force, which was to be made up of troops from African states. However, the Pentagon delayed providing the vehicles by arguing over whether they were to be sold or leased, how they were to be painted, and who would provide transport. The vehicles were not available in Africa until July, a month and a half after they were initially requested, and after the genocide and civil war ended.[359]

The one intervention proposal the United States wholeheartedly supported was also the most distrusted, in both Rwanda and other states that actually cared about the crisis.[360] On June 15, the French offered to deploy about 2,500 troops in Rwanda to protect civilians.[361] The French had a history of involvement in Rwanda extending back to 1959 when Belgium had given the country independence. France supported the Hutu regime throughout the civil war in the early 1990s and was known to be clandestinely supplying arms to the government throughout both the peace process and the genocide.[362] However, all that mattered little to the United States. France offered to pay for its

[357] Melvern, 192.
[358] Ibid, 197-8.
[359] Power 379-80.
[360] Melvern, 210.
[361] Kuperman, 81-2.
[362] Gourevitch, 89; Melvern, 233-4; Klinghoffer, 80.

mission itself, requested no logistical support, and nothing politically except a Security Council resolution authorizing its mission. From Clinton's perspective, it offered the chance to look as if it were doing something about Rwanda, without the drawbacks of actually having to spend money or take risks with its soldiers. Questions of the mission's effectiveness in saving the Tutsi were secondary, if present at all; it was considered a no-lose situation for the United States.

The French intervention did save a few Tutsis, but it also sheltered the by then almost-defeated Hutu Power regime until it could escape into Zaire. The United Nations had still not deployed any additional peacekeepers when the RPF gained control of most of Rwanda and installed a new government on July 19.[363] The great question of the Rwandan genocide is: Could it have been stopped earlier with acceptable costs by the international community? Dallaire's repeated requests for modest numbers of troops and a stronger mandate, with which he judged he could stop the killing, suggest so.[364] Several observers have lent credence to that assessment, including Secretary General Boutros-Ghali.[365] The low-tech nature of the genocide is an indication of the potential effectiveness of a well-equipped intervention force; the *interahamwe* militia who did most of the killing was armed mostly with machetes and only a smattering of rifles and grenades. In addition, those 15,000 civilians the UN kept under its protection throughout the genocide by and large survived.[366] The Hutu militia and government were in general unwilling to carry out massacres in front of UN troops. The presence of more UN troops

[363] Power, 380-1.
[364] Bert, 77.
[365] Melvern, 190; Gourevitch, 150.
[366] Kuperman, 98.

in Rwanda with a mandate to protect civilians could have saved a great number of lives, even had their mission not been to defeat the Hutu Power movement.

The United States eventually sent a few hundred troops to Rwanda in August 1993, "for the immediate and sole purpose of humanitarian relief, not for peacekeeping."[367] In the end, the United States was absolutely unwilling to put any of its troops at risk – even in the most indirect way, as by supporting a UN intervention they might eventually have to go in and rescue. To Clinton and his team, Rwanda was just not an issue, as it held no strategic importance, and no significant lobby ever formed within the United States to push for intervention. If the crises in Yugoslavia had not warranted the risk of American lives in the past two years, it was almost inconceivable that the United States might have intervened in Rwanda. Especially given the short timeframe of the crisis – approximately three months from the time Habyarimana's plane was shot down until the RPF installed a Tutsi government in Kigali – there was not sufficient time for an administration as hesitant and unsure of itself as Clinton's to adopt a firm and positive course of action.

[367] Power, 381.

Conclusions

The United States did not have a clear standard for, or even a foreign policy that cared much about, intervening in humanitarian crises during the 1990s. Although rhetorically the Bush administration did acknowledge that genocide would be grounds for intervention, it resisted adopting the position that the conflict in Bosnia met the standard of genocide. The Clinton administration never even went that far; although its State Department spokespersons strenuously resisted labeling Serb actions in Bosnia genocide, they also never acknowledged that doing so would automatically lead to an intervention. If the Bush and Clinton administrations could not agree upon even genocide as a standard for intervention, certainly no other act – such as the more innocuous-sounding ethnic cleansing – could be the standard.

Given that the severity of the crisis was not a factor in the United States' decision to intervene, that decision was made with political considerations in mind. These considerations did vary among the administrations. The Bush administration, being focused on foreign policy, naturally considered the international situation – particularly what was good for Gorbachev in the Soviet Union – when making decisions about intervention for humanitarian reasons. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, questions of the effectiveness of a military intervention, and particularly the American casualties that might result, became paramount. In both cases, Bosnia lost.

Thus, while the conflict in Bosnia was much closer to traditional United States interests than the famine in Somalia, the Bush administration tried its best to ignore the

conflict in Bosnia, while it sent a sizable military force to lawless and hopelessly divided Somalia in the Horn of Africa. Quite simply, the breakup of Yugoslavia along ethnic lines threatened Gorbachev's attempt to hold together the ethnically diverse and fractious Soviet Republics, while no such considerations existed by the time the crisis in Somalia developed. Similarly, Bosnia conjured up images of Vietnam, both among policymakers and in the military, while Somalia was favorably compared to the recently completed – and highly successful – Persian Gulf War.

Therefore, there are two negative explanations for Bush's decision to intervene in Somalia: it did not pose a problem to Gorbachev's efforts to hold the Soviet Union together, and the administration viewed its terrain as more favorable to American military forces than Bosnia. Although Somalia did not have the two major disadvantages of Bosnia, the absence of these conditions is not enough to explain the administration's intervention. Positive explanations, though, are difficult to come by. There was only marginal Congressional pressure, and no influential officials within the administration or the bureaucracy were pushing for intervention. The only positive explanation that seems to explain the intervention in Somalia is the 1992 election.

Though some of the decision to intervene was based on the seriousness of the humanitarian crisis, that was by no means the deciding factor in either Bosnia or Somalia. The severity of the crises was never a part of the discussion on whether or not to intervene. The Somali crisis had peaked during the summer of 1992, when President Bush and the Pentagon were still insisting that there would be no intervention. Bosnia was at its worst politically for the Bush administration in August of 1992, when the

existence of the Serb-run camps was first publicized. At neither peak did the Bush administration seriously consider intervention.

Not until the political pressures of the 1992 election began to take a toll on the Bush administration was any intervention discussed. Bush ordered his initial – and very limited – Somali intervention on the eve of the Republican National Convention, largely to defray criticism that his administration was callous to suffering there and in Bosnia. This intervention is explained best by the criticisms leveled at Bush by Clinton, and the need to show a softer side of the administration's policies in light of Bush's faltering re-election effort. President Bush's post-election decision to deploy thousands of troops to Somalia is a bit more puzzling. With the election over, it seemed that only Bush's legacy was still at stake. While his legacy was certainly a consideration, it appears that a desire to keep Clinton out of Bosnia was a greater influence.

Clinton's outraged speeches on the Bush administration's refusal to take on the Serbs in Bosnia created the pressure for President Bush to do something – a grand humanitarian gesture to show it cared – but it was not obvious where the Bush administration would act. Once Clinton created the pressure, the negative explanations – what Somalia was not in relation to Bosnia – decided where the intervention would take place. Seen in this light, the administration and Pentagon's preference to intervene in Somalia makes more sense than it initially does. President Bush was not out to fix the humanitarian crisis; the mandate of UNITAF is ample evidence of that. Instead, the best that can be said about Bush's decision to intervene is that he wanted to provide short-term relief while exposing American troops to a minimum of danger. More likely is the

conclusion best supported by the evidence: Bush intervened in Somalia because of domestic electoral pressure, and then expanded the intervention after he lost the election in order to keep Clinton out of Bosnia.

The importance of domestic politics in Bush's decision reveals just how little his administration did care about the humanitarian aspects of the crises in Somalia and Bosnia. The Bush administration's worldview was still grounded in the Cold War; interventions would only occur if the situation presented a challenge to the national interest, and the Bush administration did not believe they did. There was no humanitarian foreign policy under President Bush, only a last-minute appeal to appease its critics before the election, and then an attempt to circumscribe Clinton's freedom of action after the election. Despite the inadequacy of Bush's response, and the opportunity he missed to set a precedent for the post-Cold War era, at least his administration was upfront about its intentions or lack thereof. The same cannot be said of the Clinton administration.

Although Clinton chided Bush several times during the 1992 campaign for not giving enough weight to humanitarian crises in his foreign policy, Clinton's dedication to those same crises turned out to be surprisingly weak. Consistently, Clinton chose not to act when doing so would have detracted from his domestic agenda, or when there was no political pressure or perceived gain from intervention. It seems Clinton's promises while on the campaign trail were just that: additions to the hundreds of other pledges presidential candidates make in order to boost their popularity. As is often the case with

such promises, they quickly fall by the wayside after the election, especially if they prove more difficult to implement than they originally seemed.

While it is uncertain whether Clinton's commitment to ending the fighting in Bosnia ever went beyond political considerations, it certainly did not run very deep. Clinton's quickly discarded "lift and strike" policy shows how easily he was dissuaded from his promise to take a more active role in Bosnia than Bush had. The administration's main consideration was how much effort would have to be spent on a major initiative in Bosnia. If international politics ruled the Bush administration's decision-making process, Clinton's was almost entirely oriented towards domestic politics.

Clinton's domestic proposals – particularly his healthcare initiative – were his true passions. Foreign policy in general was subordinated to domestic policy, but this was particularly apparent in areas where, as in Bosnia, a policy was called off because of the problems it posed to the administration's domestic policies. The Clinton administration had only so much political influence and time it could spend, and within these finite limits, Clinton's domestic proposals would always win out over non-critical foreign policy problems. Therefore, Clinton initially pursued the "lift and strike" policy as a relatively low-effort way to help the Bosnian Muslims. When it became apparent that implementing the policy would require a significant effort on the administration's part because of considerable European opposition and a perceived insolvability of the crisis, Clinton backed away. Bosnia was not important enough to warrant the effort that would be required to bring peace.

A similar situation was at work in the Clinton administration's handling of Somalia. Partly because Bush handed the Somalia intervention to the new administration, and Clinton consequently was not personally invested in the intervention, high-level officials in the administration paid little attention to the situation. Consequently, the administration's decision to abandon Somalia as soon as politically possible was easy to make. No consideration was given to the Somalis, or the fact that the United States was leaving Somalia much as it had when it arrived – divided and controlled by warlords, with the United Nations troops ineffective without the Americans' firepower. Clinton's immediate response to the Battle of Mogadishu in October 1993 showed how little importance humanitarian concerns were given within the administration when put up against domestic politics and public opinion. With public opinion solidly against the United States remaining in Somalia – as well as questions about how the operation had gone from a humanitarian aid mission to a manhunt for a warlord – Clinton wasted no time in declaring the U.S. would leave.

Although in part a response to domestic pressures after the Somalia debacle, the United States' unwillingness to intervene in Rwanda also demonstrated the administration's lack of humanitarian concern in formulating its foreign policy. Despite clear evidence of genocide within weeks of the conflict's outbreak, the Clinton administration showed no interest whatsoever in either intervening or supporting those who wished to intervene. There were few larger international issues at stake in Rwanda – the country was by most measures politically insignificant; in fact, an internationally

imposed solution may have avoided the bloodshed in the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo that followed the defeated Hutu's flight there after the genocide.

Without any domestic pressure groups pushing for intervention in Rwanda, Clinton had nothing to gain politically. If an intervention in Rwanda were to go awry, Clinton would be charged with creating another Somalia – placing American troops in harm's way for a cause that did not involve U.S. interests. So with little to gain and a lot to lose – such as the 1996 election – Clinton knew Rwanda could not pay off politically; and his dedication to humanitarian ideals did not outweigh his political calculations. The genocide in Rwanda had so little impact on Clinton as a humanitarian tragedy that his administration opposed even supporting other nations who were willing to intervene, based on a fear the United States might eventually have to rescue those troops. More damning, and more indicative of the Clinton administration's true priority of a humanitarian foreign policy than being unwilling to commit its own troops, was its lack of enthusiasm, or even support, for those countries who were willing to stop the fighting. The remote possibility that the United States might be pulled into Rwanda prevented it from taking measures that could easily have saved some of the 800,000 Rwandans who died.

Ironically, a similar situation in part finally led the United States to intervene and stop the war in Bosnia. Whereas in Rwanda the distant possibility that American troops might become involved kept the Clinton administration away, the very real possibility that the United States might have had to deploy troops in Bosnia helped Clinton decide to intervene there. Concern for the suffering of the Bosnian Muslims was no more a part of

Clinton's decision to intervene in Bosnia than it had been when Bush decided to intervene in Somalia. Both decisions were purely political, though Bush was more successful in making the intervention in Somalia appear to be based on humanitarian concerns. For Clinton, several political factors had to coalesce before further inaction in Bosnia became more risky than intervention. The most important was the 1996 presidential election, which Clinton's advisors warned might be difficult if the Yugoslav wars were not stopped before then. Clinton's Bosnia policy revealed several weaknesses about his presidency that would be difficult to paper over if he did not halt the conflict. In addition to his political weaknesses, NATO's OpPlan 40-104 threatened to involve the United States in the evacuation of UN troops from Bosnia, a situation which would be very difficult to explain domestically, and had the potential to destroy NATO. With the election on the horizon, and NATO the cornerstone of the United States' involvement in Europe, neither option was acceptable.

The political calculation Clinton applied to his Bosnia policy did not change enough until the summer of 1995 to make intervention a necessity. In an administration as focused on domestic politics – and its own survival – as Clinton was, intervention in Bosnia was never a serious option until the situation threatened those two all-important concerns. If intervention in Bosnia, which was a much higher-profile crisis than either Somalia or Rwanda, had to wait for so many international, domestic and personal repercussions to make themselves felt, in retrospect it is not surprising that the Clinton administration chose to ignore Rwanda and leave Somalia. The Clinton administration

was nothing if not sensitive to public opinion, and they surely knew that Bosnia was much closer to the hearts and minds of the public than was either African state.

Clinton's response – and lack thereof – to the crises in Africa is not then racism on the part of the administration but a reflection of the attitudes of the public. In general, the public's attitudes may be considered racist, though this does not mean the administration's policy was racist by extension. Such an overriding concern within the administration for how the public perceived its policies suggests Clinton might have been willing to consider intervention in Rwanda, or staying in Somalia, had the public showed strong support for such a move.

Even imagining circumstances similar to those that finally prompted intervention in Bosnia occurring in the cases of Rwanda and Somalia is difficult, given the lack of importance the public assigns to events in Africa. A major shift in public attitudes would have to take place, towards an attitude that does not filter the United States' moral responsibility through a geographic perspective. In the context of the public's general attitudes towards these three crises, such a shift would mean that public opinion reflected only the severity of the crisis, not whether it was in a remote African country or in Europe. Such a shift in perceptions, however, is unlikely to occur, and certainly did not happen during Clinton's tenure in office.

The United States' foreign policy during the 1990s did not reflect a concern for humanitarian crises. Both the Bush and Clinton administrations had their own priorities and outlooks, neither of which involved a commitment to stopping ethnic cleansing or genocide. These two administrations missed the best opportunity the United States ever

had to change both the primary aim of American foreign policy and the world's response to genocide and other crimes against humanity. President Bush's "New World Order" quickly failed its first tests in the United States' refusal to intervene in Bosnia and in Somalia during the summer of 1992. In considering Bush's intervention in Somalia, it is important to remember that the mission's objective was explicitly not to force a long-term, political solution, but rather to provide immediate humanitarian relief only. President Clinton, however, did not do any better, in either Somalia or elsewhere. Clinton, being the first post-Cold War, post-Soviet Union president, took office without a set of absolute constraints within which his foreign policy options were limited. That Clinton could have remade American foreign policy, but rather chose to adopt almost the same positions and excuses that Bush had used before him, made his presidency even more frustrating.

A large part of the problem with American foreign policy towards humanitarian crises is its insistence on adhering to the Cold War principle of neutral peacekeeping. Too often, the UN deploys peacekeepers in situations where there is little peace to keep. These missions – such as UNPROFOR in Croatia and Bosnia, UNAMIR in Rwanda, and the UNOSOM missions in Somalia – at best will maintain the status quo, though the real need in these situations is to resolve the conflict. The UN must separate Peacekeeping missions from Peacemaking missions. This was impossible during the Cold War, as Peacemaking generally requires taking sides in a conflict, which would only have exasperated the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. With the end

of the Cold War, and the advent of unquestioned American political, economic and military dominance, there is now an opportunity to establish a Peacemaking regime.

If such a change is to occur, it must be at the behest of the United States. However, the political realities of the United States – specifically the lack of interest in putting American troops and prestige at risk for a cause that is not within the traditional national interest, as well as a general suspicion, especially among conservatives, of the UN – makes such a major change difficult to contemplate. Much of this resistance comes from previous American experiences in interventions, such as Somalia and Vietnam, where the United States either faired poorly or was perceived to have done so. Overcoming the stigma of these interventions is necessary to create a more activist foreign policy, which would require a president willing to make the case for U.S. participation in Peacemaking operations under the UN.

Participation in Peacemaking operations would have to be selective and well defined. U.S. commitment should be restricted to crises where civilians are either being directly threatened or intentionally killed. The UN Convention on Genocide provides a framework for intervention that may be used in these circumstances. Any intervention needs to be carefully planned and monitored. The Powell Doctrine is a useful guide for planning American involvement, providing the definition of national interest is expanded to include genocide. Close control over the mandate of such interventions in necessary, the "mission creep" that occurred in Somalia during Clinton's tenure would be disastrous in maintaining public support.

Of course, even allowing for the implementation of the Powell Doctrine, intervention will always remain a risky endeavor. The tolerance of the public to accept casualties in such missions is an open question. The outrage of the American public after the death of 18 soldiers in Somalia was a major consideration in President Clinton's decision to withdraw the remaining troops, while a similar level of outrage has not developed over the much higher casualty rates in Iraq. Part of the problem of casualties is the lack of importance the American public assigns to civilians dying in other parts of the world. The attitude that allowed 800,000 Rwandans to die without any serious consideration of American intervention must be changed.

Even given these difficulties, a shift towards a foreign policy focused more on humanitarian issues is still a possibility. Although combating the "War on Terror" is currently the focus of American foreign policy, and seems destined to remain that way for some time, it does not impose the same restraints on the United States that the confrontation with the Soviet Union did. No longer is there a possibility that intervening to stop a genocide may result in a global conflict, as the Bush administration was afraid would happen in Yugoslavia during 1991. However, a shift in American public opinion is necessary to convince the political leaders that intervention is worth the risk, effort and expense. While the United States is the unchallenged superpower in the world, it has an unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate that the world will no longer tolerate crimes like genocide. To allow this opportunity to slip by because of shortsighted political concerns or a simple lack of effort is inexcusable and a disservice to the ideals upon which the United States was founded.

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