

FORUM: Historical Security Council (HSC)

QUESTION OF: The Srebrenica massacre

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POSITION: President

INTRODUCTION

The fall of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s was a contributing factor in the Srebrenica massacre. Nationalist tensions erupted as the multiethnic state broke apart, sparking the Bosnian War (1992–1995). A violent conflict over territory and identity erupted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is home to a mixed population of Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats. Motivated by the goal of establishing an ethnically homogeneous Serbian state, the Bosnian Serb forces launched an ethnic cleansing operation against Bosniaks and Croats, which ultimately resulted in the sad events that occurred in Srebrenica.

The Srebrenica massacre is admittedly one of the darkest episodes in modern European history, as it serves as a sobering reminder of the fatal results of ethnic hatred. The Bosnian War erupted in 1992, but it reached its peak point in July 1995, when the Bosnian Serb forces organized a mass murder plan in and around the town of Srebrenica, killing around 8,000 Bosniak men and boys.¹ This horror was the last act of the war that included genocide, ethnic cleansing, and flagrant human rights abuses.

The massacre took place from July 11 to July 22, 1995, when the Bosnian Serb force captured the town of Srebrenica, which the United Nations (UN) had declared a "safe area". The Bosnian Serb forces isolated men and boys from the rest of the community and executed them in mass murders, even though there were Dutch UN peacekeepers there. This was rationalized by a genocidal plan to exterminate the Bosniak population in the area and establish territorial control.

Assessing the Srebrenica massacre is essential in order to grasp the wider consequences for international law and human rights, as well as the horrors of the Bosnian War. The outcome of the genocide still haunts the Balkan nations to this day, as the events in Srebrenica caused a vast refugee wave, internally and externally. The international community eventually decided to act by signing multilateral agreements and launching missions as means to rehabilitate the region. Even an ad hoc, specialized emergency, court was established, namely the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), to designate the killings as genocide, setting a crucial precedent in the struggle against war crimes impunity.

The Srebrenica atrocity is a powerful reminder of the costs of inaction and the ongoing need for justice and reassessment of the moral code in the framework of CGSMUN's theme, which highlights the significance of comprehending and correcting historical injustices to create a more equal future. Delegates are invited to discuss how international

¹ "Srebrenica." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 19 July 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Srebrenica>.

law, human rights, and multilateral diplomacy might collaborate to prevent such tragedies from reappearing as they engage with this complicated and tragic past. This exact paper, being a study guide of the Historical Security Council, depicts the events of the Srebrenica massacre until the end of 1995.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Yugoslavia

“Former federated country that was situated in the west-central part of the Balkan Peninsula”.² “At the end of World War I it was formed as the nation that united Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes from the former Slavic provinces of Austria-Hungary (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina), together with Serbia and Montenegro”.³

Srebrenica

“Town located in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina. Srebrenica was included in Serb-held territory of the Republika Srpska, or Bosnian Serb Republic by the November 1995 partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina”.⁴ The Srebrenica region was known for consisting of multiethnic groups, which caused ethnic hatred of certain minorities.

Genocide

“The deliberate and systematic destruction of a group of people because of their ethnicity, nationality, religion, or race”.⁵

International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

“A set of rules that seeks, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects persons who are not, or are no longer, directly or actively participating in hostilities, and imposes limits on the means and methods of warfare. IHL is also known as "the law of war" or "the law of armed conflict"”.⁶

War crimes

“Any of the following acts against persons or property during war time: wilful killing; torture or inhuman treatment, including biological experiments; wilfully causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or health; extensive destruction and appropriation of

²“Yugoslavia.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 29 Aug. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Yugoslavia-former-federated-nation-1929-2003>.

³“Authority.” *Oxford Reference*, Oxford University Press, www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20111013155042479. Accessed 7 Sept. 2024.

⁴ “Srebrenica.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 19 July 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Srebrenica>.

⁵ “Genocide.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/genocide>.

⁶“What Is International Humanitarian Law?” *International Committee of the Red Cross*, <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/what-international-humanitarian-law>.

property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly; compelling a prisoner of war or other protected person to serve in the forces of a hostile power; wilfully depriving a prisoner of war or other protected person of the rights of fair and regular trial; unlawful deportation or transfer or unlawful confinement; taking of hostages".⁷

Referendum

"Electoral devices by which voters may express their wishes with regard to government policy or proposed legislation".⁸

Paramilitary groups

"Organizations that operate outside a country's formal military structure. Paramilitaries are typically modeled after military organizations and may have similar training and equipment. These groups often have political or ideological aims and may be involved in activities such as counterinsurgency, anti-terrorism, or internal security".⁹ After the fall of Yugoslavia multiple paramilitary groups were active in the region causing even more turbulence in the political scene.

Safe areas

"Specifically designated areas that aim to afford a form of heightened physical and humanitarian protection to the displaced civilian population in an ongoing armed conflict. In theory, safe zones have the potential to provide additional protection from attack, facilitate humanitarian and medical assistance and even enable education, employment and other opportunities in the midst of an armed conflict".¹⁰ The UN itself recognized Srebrenica as a "safe area".

Peacekeeping Operations

"One among a range of activities undertaken by the United Nations to maintain international peace and security throughout the world by implementing coercive measures, including the use of military force. Launch of peacekeeping operations requires the explicit authorization of the Security Council to act in the face of a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression".¹¹

⁷"Rome Statute." *International Criminal Court*, 2024, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2024-05/Rome-Statute-eng.pdf>.

⁸ "Referendum." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/referendum>.

⁹"Paramilitary." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/paramilitary-armed-force>.

¹⁰ "Safe Zones: A Protective Alternative or a Tool of Refugee Containment?" *International Review of the Red Cross*, <https://international-review.icrc.org/articles/safe-zones-a-protective-alternative-to-flight-or-a-tool-of-refugee-containment-919>.

¹¹United Nations. "Terminology." *United Nations Peacekeeping*, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/terminology>.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The fall of Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia was established after World War I by uniting numerous areas of the northern Balkan region, namely Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Albania. After the end of World War II (1945), internal turbulence within Yugoslavia was increased, leading to its reconstruction under Josip Broz Tito's direction. By promoting a pan-Yugoslav culture that strongly emphasized collaboration and togetherness, Tito's authoritarian administration was able to curb ethnic nationalism.

Tito's death in 1980 marked the beginning of Yugoslavia's collapse. His unifying leadership left a power vacuum that was quickly filled by nationalist leaders in the federation's member republics. The politician's loss was followed by the 1980s economic recession, rising unemployment and inflation, adding to the discontent and hatred among the populace. As the republics, especially Slovenia and Croatia, began to call for greater autonomy, whilst Serbia under Slobodan Milošević's auspices sought to establish Serbian primacy and solidify authority inside the borders of Yugoslavia.

The early 1990s were marked unexpectedly with the collapse of Yugoslavia. The nation had been suffering from a drastic rise of nationalism, financial instability, and domestic disputes. Eventually, Yugoslavia's fall was signed by Slovenia's, Croatia's, and Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence in 1991 and 1992, respectively. Not all republicans embraced these declarations of independence, especially the sizable Serb minorities in Bosnia and Croatia who were afraid of being left out of the new nation-states. Armed violence broke out as a result of nationalist discourse feeding these anxieties and eventually, Yugoslavia fell on 27 April 1992.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence (1992)

The international community, in particular the European Community (EC, later the European Union), was involved in diplomatic efforts to manage the crisis and prevent further escalation when Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence from Yugoslavia in June 1991. The declarations led to brief but intense conflicts in both republics. By December 1991 the European Community recognized the independence of Slovenia and Croatia, signaling a significant shift in the international approach to the Yugoslav crisis and placing pressure on the other Yugoslav republics to make their own decisions.

Bosnia and Herzegovina followed the example provided by the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia, but there were also big hazards involved. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was no distinct majority population, in contrast to Slovenia or Croatia, where one ethnic group was obviously dominant. President Alija Izetbegović's Bosniak-led administration had to negotiate these ethnic differences while deciding the future of the republic.

Following an invitation from the European Community, Bosnia and Herzegovina resolved to hold a referendum on independence from Yugoslavia. The referendum, which took place between February 29 and March 1, 1992, was extremely controversial since it would determine whether the republic would become independent or stay a part of the collapsing Yugoslav Federation. Under the leadership of Radovan Karadžić, the Serb population in Bosnia was strictly against independence, believing that a state controlled by Bosniaks and Croats would marginalize the Serb majority. Consequently, the Serb Democratic Party (SDS), led by Karadžić, essentially boycotted the referendum by obstructing voting in the majority of Serb-dominated districts.

In regions where voting was allowed, the referendum was held in defiance of the Serb boycott. Almost two thirds of the electorate cast ballots, and almost all of them supported independence. The outcomes were in line with the wishes of the Bosniak and Croat communities, who were primarily in favor of seceding from Yugoslavia in order to escape the control of a Belgrade-based Yugoslav administration dominated by Serbs.

Based on the results of the referendum, President Izetbegović formally declared Bosnia and Herzegovina independent on March 3, 1992. With the issuance of this proclamation, the republic's break from Yugoslavia became official.

Bosnian War (1992-1995)

The Bosnia War, which was admittedly the most fatal and intractable conflict that accompanied Yugoslavia's breakup, began April 1992 with Bosnia Herzegovina's independence and ended December 1995. The war was marked with brutal violence, ethnic cleansing and the killing of civilians so that it became one of Europe's most tragic events in history since World War II. The Bosnian War erupted due to two main reasons, ethnic and political differences.

Ethnic divisions

The population of Bosnia and Herzegovina was ethnically diverse, as it consisted of Bosniak Muslims, Croatian Catholics, and Serb Orthodox Christians, who lived in mixed communities all across the country. To be more precise, according to the census of 1991, Bosnia-Herzegovina's population consisted of "44 percent Muslims, 31 percent Serbs, 17 percent Croats, and 5 percent 'other'".¹² However, these communities were further divided along ethnic lines as a result of the rise of nationalism in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Particularly, Bosniak Serbs under the direction of Radovan Karadžić, a Bosniak Serb political and military leader of the time, and with the help of the the local paramilitary group, Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) aimed to unite Serb-inhabited territory in Bosnia with Serbia and Montenegro, in order to establish a "Greater Serbia".

However, the Bosniak Serbs were not the only ethnic group that wanted to prevail. The Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia was also formed as a result of the Bosnian Croats' efforts, spearheaded by the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and backed by Croatia, to create an ethnically homogeneous Croatian state inside Bosnia. As the conflict dragged on, the Bosniaks, led by Alija Izetbegović and the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), became more and more isolated in their attempts to keep Bosnia and Herzegovina a multiethnic state.

The war deepened these ethnic differences as each group fought for control over land and the safety of their own communities. In order to create ethnically pure zones, citizens were systematically targeted during the war depending on their ethnicity.

Alterations in the political scene

Bosnia and Herzegovina's political landscape was significantly altered throughout the conflict. New political and military organizations that represented the various ethnic groups emerged, when the central authority of Sarajevo lost its sovereignty over several regions of the country. As a natural outcome, the Bosnian Serbs established the Republika Srpska, with Pale as its capital and Radovan Karadžić as its president, and aspired for international recognition as a separate political entity. The Bosnian Croats also declared the Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia, but the international community never recognized it as a sovereign state.

¹² "ISS Report 12133." *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep12133.8.pdf>.

To assert control over their own lands, the ethnic militias that backed these new political groups carried out ethnic cleansing campaigns. External parties involved in the conflict included Serbia and Croatia, who provided logistical and military support to their ethnic relations in Bosnia.

Srebrenica

Serb takeover

The Srebrenica crisis reached a breaking point in July 1995. General Ratko Mladić commanded the Bosnian Serb forces in a full-scale attack on the enclave. On July 11, 1995, the Serbs took control of Srebrenica after UN soldiers were unable to hold out for more reinforcements.

The Bosnian Serb forces began a significant offensive on the Srebrenica enclave at the beginning of July 1995. Even after being declared a "safe area" by the UN, the Bosnian Serb army progressed with minimal opposition. Outnumbered and outgunned, the Dutch peacekeepers were powerless to stop the advance. There were calls for NATO bombings to protect the town, but they were mainly unsuccessful because of misunderstandings, delays, and limitations on the timing and method of the strikes.

Mladić's forces captured Srebrenica's outer fortifications on July 9, 1995, and by July 11, they had taken control of the town itself. While strolling through the streets of Srebrenica with TV cameras following him, General Mladić declared the area to be "Serb territory."

United Nations involvement

An account of tragedy and failure characterizes the United Nations' role in Srebrenica. To safeguard the population stranded in the enclave, the UN had designated Srebrenica as a "safe area" and launched peacekeepers. However, the UN forces lacked the authority, the manpower, and the equipment they needed to hold the town against a determined military attack.

About 400 Dutch UN peacekeepers were deported in Srebrenica¹³ as means to prevent attacks on civilians. Their demands for reinforcements and air support were either turned down or postponed, and they were instructed to stay out of direct combat with the Bosnian Serb forces. The Dutch peacekeepers were forced to negotiate a departure, deserting the civilian populace, as the Serb forces continued their march on Srebrenica.

¹³ "It Was Hell: Dutch Troops Recall Failure to Stop Srebrenica Deaths." *Balkan Insight*, 8 Aug. 2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/08/08/it-was-hell-dutch-troops-recall-failure-to-stop-srebrenica-deaths/>.

Numerous people have described the UN's failure in Srebrenica as one of its worst mistakes throughout the entire UN history. The UN peacekeeping operations' shortcomings were brought to light by their inability to stop the slaughter in spite of their presence on the ground, especially when the peacekeepers were outnumbered and operating without clear orders. UN peacekeeping tactics were reevaluated in the wake of the Srebrenica disaster, which also highlighted the need for more robust international procedures to deter and respond to mass atrocities.

Massacre

The ethnic cleansing was carefully organized and carried out. General Ratko Mladić's Bosnian Serb soldiers kept the men and boys apart from the general populace by lying to them and making false promises.¹⁴ Mass graves were dug for the victims after they were transferred to different parts of Srebrenica, including as farms, warehouses, and schools. The remains were later dug up and reburied in secondary and tertiary graves in an effort to hide the atrocity.

According to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, "some 97.1 percent of the 7,661 persons recorded as dead or missing as a result of the events at Srebrenica were males from 15 to 69 years of age; 68 were women, including two between the ages of five and nine, four between the ages of 15 and 19, and 11 between the ages of 20 and 24. More than 99 percent of the dead and missing were Muslim. As of July 11, 2008, the remains of 3,215 persons had been exhumed from mass graves, identified by DNA analysis, and reburied in a cemetery across from the former United Nations base in Potočari. The names of the missing and dead appear on a stone memorial. The bodies were returned to a district that has not recovered from the war. The area's economy is moribund. The infrastructure is decrepit. Much of the housing stock is run down and vacant. Only a handful of Muslims have returned".¹⁵

There have been multiple testimonies recorded, which have been used by ICTY, in order to compose the case's verdict. A case in point is Mevludin Orić, "who testified in the trial that he spent the night of July 13 in a bus outside the Vuk Karadžić School in Bratunac and heard the gunfire of executions. «All night they were taking groups out of the bus...» he

¹⁴"Srebrenica Massacre." Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Srebrenica-massacre#ref294000>. Accessed 19 July 2024.

¹⁵ "Srebrenica Massacre (July 11-16, 1995)." *Sciences Po Mass Violence and Resistance - Research Network*, Sciences Po, 30 Mar. 2016, www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/srebrenica-massacre-july-11-16-1995.html. Accessed 7 Sept. 2024.

testified. «All night, shooting could be heard from the school. People were screaming, moaning. Whoever was taken out in those groups was never returned to the bus.» On the next day, Orić testified, he was driven in a bus to a school north of Zvornik, held in a gymnasium crowded with captives, and taken, blindfolded and with bound hands, to a field. «We got off the lorry, and we were told to line up as quickly as possible. When we did so, I was together with my cousin Haris, and we held hands. And he said they would kill us. And I said they wouldn't. He didn't even finish speaking when the bursts of fire started... I fell on the ground. He fell on top of me. That's when screaming and groaning of injured men started... Afterwards, they continued to bring more shifts, more groups... They continued to execute those injured people who were screaming.» Orić testified that he lost consciousness and recovered his wits only after dark. «I took the blindfold off slowly, off my eyes, and I saw some lights, headlights, of vehicles... There was a loader and an excavator. They were digging a grave. And there were headlights. They brought another five groups after that»¹⁶

As showcased, the slaughter took place as a part of a larger ethnic cleansing campaign that sought to drive out the Bosniak people from eastern Bosnia. The world was horrified by the massacre's savagery, which prompted the Bosnian Serb leadership and those who supported them to be widely condemned.

Aftermath

Increased refugee wave in Potočari

Following the Serb occupation of Srebrenica, thousands of Bosniak civilians sought refuge at the nearby UN installation in Potočari. Dutch UN forces manned the base, but the flood of refugees soon overwhelmed them. Potočari had terrible living conditions with limited access to food, water, and medical care. The refugees lived in unsustainable conditions, always fearing that they would be turned over to the Bosnian Serb forces, and were jammed into the facility and its environs. A large number of refugees in Potočari were taken from their families by force and given over to the Serbs, even in the face of UN presence. Men and boys were hauled away to be executed, while women and children were frequently permitted to depart on buses.

¹⁶ "Srebrenica Massacre (July 11-16, 1995)." *Sciences Po Mass Violence and Resistance - Research Network*, Sciences Po, 30 Mar. 2016, www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/srebrenica-massacre-july-11-16-1995.html. Accessed 7 Sept. 2024.

Human rights violation in Potočari

The incidents at Potočari serve to this day as a symbol for the numerous violations of human rights that took place in the course of the Bosnian War. The hundreds of migrants, especially women and girls that experienced horrifying sexual atrocities committed against them by Bosnian Serb soldiers, such as rape and sexual abuse, consist a case in point. Such violent war crimes were a part of a planned effort to intimidate and degrade the Bosniak people.

The slaughter at Srebrenica and the abuses of human rights in Potočari have been extensively reported and testified to, supplying copious proof of the horrors perpetrated throughout the conflict. A number of Bosnian Serb leaders have been charged with war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in relation to these offenses.

Outcome of the genocide

The Bosniak community was severely injured after the genocide, and the settlement now serves as a reminder of the horrors of the war. International law and the global effort to put an end to war crimes impunity have been significantly impacted by the atrocity in Srebrenica. Holding those responsible for the Srebrenica tragedy accountable was made possible in large part by the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal (ICTY) in 1993. The ICTY was designed to try people for crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia. Notable personnel like Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić were convicted of crimes including genocide and set important judicial precedents.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Netherlands

The Netherlands, as well as the majority of the European nations, were extremely concerned about the increasing violence in the former Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990s. Dedicated to bolstering global peacekeeping endeavors, the Dutch government was among the leading proponents of a forceful international reaction to the humanitarian catastrophe engulfing Bosnia and Herzegovina. Respecting its standing as a champion of human rights and international law, the Netherlands helped the UN create and preserve safe zones, such as Srebrenica, in Bosnia. Thus, the Netherlands deployed the so-called Dutchbat to Srebrenica territory.

However, the Dutch government was put in a challenging predicament as the situation dramatically deteriorated. Protecting the Bosniak people in Srebrenica was expected of it both domestically and internationally, and on the one hand, it wished to avoid a conflict that may result in the loss of Dutch lives. In an attempt to strengthen the Dutch Battalion, the Dutch government looked for more funding and support from abroad, but these attempts were mainly ineffective. Dutch peacekeepers and the Srebrenica enclave were put in danger when NATO air support was not obtained during crucial times, despite repeated appeals.

The Netherlands went through a period of intense national contemplation and disagreement following the massacre. This criticism went beyond what the peacekeepers did on the ground to include the highest ranks of the Dutch military and political establishment. By assisting the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in its attempts to bring war criminals to justice, the Netherlands took an active role in global efforts to restore justice in the Balkan peninsula. The Dutch government has also taken part in a number of efforts that are meant to facilitate reconciliation with the families and survivors of the Srebrenica victims. This includes offering monetary compensation and making public apologies, yet many of the people who were personally impacted by the atrocity have felt that these actions are insufficient.

United States of America (USA)

A major actor in both the military and diplomatic efforts to put an end to the Bosnian War was the United States. As the war dragged on and evidence of crimes like the Srebrenica massacre surfaced, the United States began to play a more active role in trying to find a solution, albeit initially it was hesitant to get heavily involved in the turmoil.

In order to force the warring parties to the bargaining table after the genocide in Srebrenica, the United States led diplomatic efforts that resulted in the Dayton Peace Accords in November 1995. By dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina into the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, the Dayton Agreement effectively brought an end to the Bosnian War.

Croatia

Due to its recent independence and continuous border confrontation with Serb forces, Croatia had a complicated and multidimensional engagement in the Bosnian War. When the Bosnian government faced opposition from the Bosnian Serb forces and the JNA, which was led by Serbs, Croatia first stood with it. But there was also conflict in Croatia's

relationship with Bosnia, especially with the Bosnian Croats, who occasionally sought their own territorial goals in Bosnia.

Croatia had a mostly indirect role in the Srebrenica massacre. Nonetheless, because the Bosnian conflict was very relevant to Croatia's security and territorial integrity, the government was constantly monitoring the situation. Alongside NATO's operations, the Croatian military launched a mission, namely Operation Storm in August 1995, which helped tip the scales of power in the region, creating the conditions for the Dayton Accords. Operation Storm mainly targeted Serb-held parts of Croatia. The complexity of alliances and rivalries during the Yugoslav Wars was highlighted by Croatia's dual stance as a party to the conflict and an ally of the Bosnian government.

Greece

Greeks and Serbs have always been close throughout the past decades, due to the numerous similarities they share. Both groups are predominantly Orthodox Christians, for whom religion is an integral part of daily existence. More significantly, it is worth mentioning that throughout modern history, the two nations have consistently backed one another, especially during the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913. To be more precise, a large part of the Serb population later sought safety on the Greek island of Corfu during World War I as their homeland was taken over by the Central Powers.

Aside from this common past, certain Greeks could be held accountable for the July 1995 slaughter in Srebrenica with the Serb Bosnian army. The first wave of Greek volunteers entered Bosnia in 1993, at a time when the Yugoslav wars were still raging and the Serbian offensive was making gains in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ratko Mladic himself requested the formation of the Greek Volunteer Guard (GVG), which took place in March 1995. About 100 Greeks with military training constructed the squad, who chose to aid their Serb "orthodox brothers" in their conflict with Bosnia's Muslim population.

Greek volunteers fought with Bosnian Serb soldiers throughout the war, some of whom were purportedly connected to far-right nationalist parties. A few of these volunteers are purported to have witnessed the Srebrenica massacre, a claim that has generated intense debate and condemnation in Greece. In spite of GVG's involvement in the massacre, the Greek government took part in international peacekeeping missions and formally remained neutral throughout the conflict.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Especially in reaction to the crimes carried out by Bosnian Serb forces, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was vital to the last phases of the Bosnian War. At first, NATO's role in Bosnia was restricted to maintaining a no-fly zone and giving to the UN's peacekeeping operation, namely United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), air support. NATO, however, adopted a more active stance as the conflict intensified and the Srebrenica atrocity exposed the international community's inability to protect civilians. Moreover, NATO began a massive bombing campaign against Bosnian Serb military targets in August 1995 in response to the massacre and ongoing Serb attacks on safe zones. The first ever large-scale military operation in NATO history, the operation was crucial in debilitating Bosnian Serb troops and pressuring them to accept a truce.

International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY)

In order to prosecute grave crimes during the Yugoslav Wars, such as genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, the United Nations formed the International Criminal Tribunal (ICTY) in 1993 as an ad hoc tribunal. The tribunal was essential in ensuring that the victims of the Srebrenica massacre and other crimes carried out during the Bosnian War received justice. For their involvement in the genocide in Srebrenica, the ICTY indicted and prosecuted a number of senior Bosnian Serb figures, notably Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić.

The tribunal's work was revolutionary in many ways, establishing significant legal standards for the prosecution of mass murder and other crimes against humanity. It also had an impact on the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the advancement of international criminal law. Notwithstanding its successes, the ICTY had several obstacles, such as trouble capturing perpetrators, getting governments to cooperate, and handling the many legal and political problems pertaining to the wars in the former Yugoslavia.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

As an unbiased and neutral humanitarian organization, the ICRC actively participated in the Bosnian War, offering support and assistance to people impacted. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was instrumental in trying to find missing people, supporting survivors, and recording violations of human rights both during and after the Srebrenica massacre. In Srebrenica, the ICRC encountered many difficulties, namely in obtaining entry and guaranteeing the safety of the civilian population. The organization's

publications and initiatives to draw attention to the crimes helped the world community comprehend the scope and gravity of the Srebrenica atrocity.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The UNHCR was already actively reacting to the significant displacement brought on by the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina before the Srebrenica massacre. The organization's objective is to provide internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees in the area food, shelter, medical attention, and other necessities. UNHCR led the international response to one of the worst humanitarian disasters to hit Europe since World War II.

Additionally, the UNHCR participated in attempts to deliver humanitarian supplies to the enclave's population, which had grown to nearly 40,000 people—many of whom had fled from nearby areas—in Srebrenica. Food, medicine, and other necessities were severely in short supply, and the situation in Srebrenica was terrible. Delivering aid to the enclave was extremely difficult for the UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies due to the continuous violence and the embargo enforced by Bosnian Serb forces.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
1991	The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia began to break apart as Slovenia and Croatia declared independence, leading to escalating conflicts in the region.
March 1, 1992	Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence following a referendum with the Bosnian War occurring shortly thereafter.
April 1992	Srebrenica, a predominantly Bosniak town, became isolated as Bosnian Serb forces began their siege. The town swells with refugees fleeing ethnic cleansing in surrounding areas.
April 16, 1993	The United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 819, declaring Srebrenica a "safe area" under UN protection.
May 25, 1993	ICTY was established by passing the UN Security Council resolution 8271.
March 1995	Radovan Karadžić, leader of the Bosnian Serbs, issued a directive to create "an unbearable situation of total insecurity" for the inhabitants of Srebrenica, setting the stage for the offensive.
July 6, 1995	The Bosnian Serb army launched its final offensive on Srebrenica, rapidly advancing towards the town.
July 11, 1995	Srebrenica fell to Bosnian Serb forces.
July 13-17, 1995	The Bosnian Serb army systematically executed and buried the victims in mass graves, attempting to conceal the crimes.

November 1995	The Dayton Peace Accords was signed, officially ending the Bosnian War, with Srebrenica becoming part of the Republika Srpska.
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UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR)¹⁷

The original purpose of UNPROFOR's establishment was to safeguard civilians in Croatia during the dissolution of Yugoslavia. UNPROFOR's mandate was extended to cover the protection of UN-designated "safe areas," such as Sarajevo, Tuzla, Žepa, Goražde, Bihać, and Srebrenica, as the conflict extended to Bosnia and Herzegovina. UNPROFOR was in charge of preserving peace and order in the enclave, guaranteeing the delivery of humanitarian aid, and shielding civilians from armed attack in Srebrenica. However, the force lacked the requisite military backing and equipment to accomplish these goals in an efficient manner.. UNPROFOR was technically unable to stop the Bosnian Serb advance that resulted in the July 1995 massacre of more than eight thousand Bosniak men and boys.

Resolutions 819 and 836 (6 Apr. 1993)¹⁸

In order to strengthen the "safe area" idea, the UN introduced Resolutions 819 and 836. Via 819, Srebrenica was recognized as a "safe area", whilst 836 authorized the use of force to protect the safe areas, including Srebrenica, and it extended UNPROFOR's mandate. UNPROFOR was given permission under the resolution to take "necessary measures, including the use of force, in reply to bombardments against the safe areas by any of the parties or to armed incursions into them".¹⁹ Passing the aforementioned documents represented a dramatic alteration in the UN's strategy, giving peacekeepers the ability to defend the safe regions with greater vigor and asking NATO to give close air assistance to UNPROFOR in defending the safe areas.

¹⁷ "United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) - Background." United Nations Peacekeeping, https://peacekeeping.un.org/mission/past/unprof_p.htm. Accessed 19 July 2024.

¹⁸ "General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina." United Nations Digital Library, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/164939?v=pdf>. Accessed 19 July 2024.

¹⁹ "General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina." United Nations Digital Library, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/164939?v=pdf>. Accessed 19 July 2024.

Peace Agreement/Resolution 1031 (15 Dec. 1995)²⁰

The Bosnian War was declared to have ended with the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, also known as Resolution 1031. The resolution sought to provide support to the peace agreements' implementation and set up a plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina's post-conflict reconstruction. Acceptance of the Dayton Peace Accords: The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or the Dayton Peace Accords, which delineated Bosnia's political and territorial reconstruction, was approved by the resolution. It approved the creation of the Implementation Force (IFOR), a multinational force commanded by NATO entrusted with managing the military components of the peace deal, such as keeping the peace between opposing groups and ensuring security throughout Bosnia.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Vance-Owen Peace Plan (1993)²¹

One of the first and most important international initiatives to stop the Bosnian War was the Vance-Owen Peace Plan. Former US Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance and former British Foreign Secretary Lord David Owen, who were serving as UN and European Community mediators, initiated the idea. The plan called for Bosnia and Herzegovina to be divided into ten semi-autonomous provinces, each primarily based on ethnic lines, as means to prevent the creation of racially homogeneous districts . Therefore, the provinces would have some degree of autonomy, despite the fact that they would stay part of a single Bosnian state.

²⁰ "Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35." United Nations Digital Library, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/201088?v=pdf>. Accessed 19 July 2024.

²¹"Vance-Owen Peace Plan, 2 January 1993." Balkan Insight, <https://balkaninsight.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Vance-Owen-Plan-2-January-1993.pdf>. Accessed 19 July 2024.

The Vance-Owen Plan was first embraced by the Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat leadership, who considered it as a workable framework for putting an end to the conflict and maintaining Bosnia's unity. Radovan Karadžić and the Bosnian Serb leadership, on the other hand, fiercely opposed the initiative. They were against the planned borders as well as the loss of the land they had won in the fight. Despite strong international pressure, the plan was ultimately rejected by the Bosnian Serbs in May 1993, which effectively caused it to fail.

Thus, the Vance-Owen Peace Plan became a milestone, when it comes to peacebuilding in the region, despite the fact that it failed. It managed to promote equality and paved the way to the road of negotiations for the matter.

Washington Agreement (1994)²²

The Washington Agreement was signed on March 1, 1994, just a year before the final escalation of the conflict. With major assistance from the European Union, the United States mediated the accord. The agreement was meant to create an administrative framework for the Bosniak and Croat communities within the Federation, so as to improve the power-sharing system. This arrangement was made to guarantee that both parties could participate in the federation's governance. Another component of the Washington Agreement called for an instant ceasefire between Bosniaks and Croats, thus putting an end to hostilities and enabling both sides to concentrate on their shared opposition to the Bosnian Serbs.

In a nutshell, the Washington Agreement served as one of the most effective international initiatives that were introduced to provide stability in the former-Yugoslavia territory. It became a milestone in the Croat-Bosniak collaboration and inspired the establishment of the Dayton Peace Accords.

Contact Group Plan (1994)²³

The Contact Group, which consisted of representatives from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Russia, formulated the Contact Group Plan. When

²²"Washington Agreement (1994)." DBpedia, [https://dbpedia.org/page/Washington_Agreement_\(1994\)](https://dbpedia.org/page/Washington_Agreement_(1994)). Accessed 19 July 2024.

²³ Serfaty, Simon. "Architectural Renovation in Europe." European Union Institute for Security Studies, December 2002, <https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/occ016.pdf>. Accessed 19 July 2024.

the Contact Group was established in 1994, its goal was to coax the opposing parties to engage in negotiations as means to find a comprehensive solution to the Bosnian conflict. As a result, a major diplomatic attempt was made to balance the political and territorial aspirations of the Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs through the Contact Group Plan.

According to the Contact Group Plan, Bosnia and Herzegovina would be divided into two entities: a federation made up of Bosniaks and Croats would govern 51% of the area, while Bosnian Serbs would control 49%.²⁴ Compared to earlier plans, the Contact Group Plan's divide was an attempt to create a more balanced territorial structure. As part of the agreement, Bosnian Serbs had to acknowledge Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The leaders of the Bosniak and Bosnian Croat communities acknowledged the need for foreign assistance, leading them to approve the Contact Group Plan. However, the idea was rejected by the Bosnian Serb leadership, mainly because they were unwilling to give up any territory or acknowledge Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty. After rejecting the Contact Group's plan, the Bosnian Serbs were further isolated internationally. Though it was unable to end the war, the Contact Group Plan set the stage for the ultimate Dayton Peace Accords in 1995 as well.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Promoting Universal Jurisdiction in International Courts

Political leaders must be held accountable for their actions, especially when they commit heinous crimes such as the Srebrenica massacre. However, governors have the so-called immunity, meaning that they cannot be tried during and even after their tenure. As a result, political leaders throughout history commit atrocities for which they do not get punished. By promoting universal jurisdiction and minimizing their immunity when mass atrocity crimes are committed, personnel like the Bosniak Serb leaders could be held accountable. SC could call for the creation of ad hoc courts, like the ICTY, so as to try perpetrators in prestigious international courts that are trusted by the entire international community. By passing such a solution, justice could be restored and future potential perpetrators could be prevented from committing such an assault.

²⁴"Safe Zones in Conflict Zones." *European Union Institute for Security Studies*, <https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/occ016.pdf>.

Launching a UN Peacekeeping Operation

In post-conflict territories such as the former Yugoslavia, establishing a modernized UN peacekeeping force is essential to preserving security and tranquility. A strong mandate with a clear focus on protecting civilians and assisting local governance structures is vital for a peacekeeping force, as demonstrated by the shortcomings of previous missions like the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) during the Bosnian War.

In order to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, this reinvigorated mission would need to make sure that peacekeepers had the power and resources to respond forcefully to acts of violence, including military support, logistical support, and intelligence capabilities. In order to achieve a stable operation without causing the dissatisfaction of the civilians, the UN must cooperate with local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), other Intergovernmental Organizations and member states to gather all necessary information that will ensure the efficiency of the missions. Thus, the state in which operations have been launched, in this case Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the ten highest-ranking troop-contributing nations ought to establish a commission that will aim to monitor and overview the missions. Member states will submit a monthly report summarizing the role peacekeepers play in the region, assessing their contribution to the conflict. When a violation is observed, the commission will be able to take the matter to SC directly. The commission can also collaborate with NGOs in the field of human rights and organize conferences to discuss with the affected populations the impact of the operations on the region's stability from the viewpoint of the civilians. Via this measure, the global community will be informed of potential human rights' violations and act promptly whenever a crime is committed.

Improving the living conditions in Potočari

For Potočari, a town forever associated with the atrocities of the Srebrenica massacre, better living circumstances are essential to the community's long-term healing. The vast majority of the people in Potočari struggled with the deep psychological trauma of having survived such horrors and lived under horrific, unsustainable conditions. In order to address the aforementioned issues, a multifaceted strategy involving significant investments in infrastructure development would be needed. Such projects should include rebuilding the refugee camp, equipping local hospitals, and developing educational institutions to supply the essential services that a thriving community demands. Organizations like ICRC, Doctors without borders and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

(UNESCO) could contribute to providing sustainability in the refugee camp. The World Food Program could also be highly useful, so as to end the lifelong issue that Potočari faced, starvation. UN commissions like UNHCR could assist the correct allocation of funds, so as to ensure that all of the aforementioned matters could be covered.

Introducing a Transition Program in the Ex-Yugoslavia region

It has been observed that the ex-Yugoslavia territories have suffered to maintain stability after Yugoslavia's dissolution. Thus, it is essential to rehabilitate the northern Balkan region via introducing a transitional program. Infrastructures must be renewed and the political scene must be stabilized. Former Yugoslav states must undergo a well-structured reparation program. First and foremost, a transitional government could be enforced, which would be monitored by the SC until democracy has been brought back and the election processes are safe to be held. Moreover, the educational system ought to be modernized, so as to break down any stereotypes about minorities and eliminate the phenomenon of "biased education". Via this measure, nations that have been struggling with internal issues, like Bosnia and Herzegovina could steadily implement democratic procedures once again and upgrade their capacities. Over all, through the transitional governments infrastructures can be renewed and stability could be restored.

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