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THE CRISIS IN BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA AND THE 'NEW WORLD ORDER'

The end of the Cold War, collapse of communism in former Soviet Union, peaceful revolutions in Eastern Europe (with the exception of Rumania), success of democratic regimes in many Third World countries raised hopes for a 'new world order' based on justice, cooperation, interdependence and collective security. International solidarity and collective action against Iraq in 1990-1991 generated a new expectation that from now on no aggressor will go unpunished, and states will behave within the norms and obligations of international laws. The allied victory over Iraq was viewed as a triumph of collective security. Based on the experience of that war an idealistic Wilsonian vision of a 'new world order,' propagated by President Bush, was born in the sands of Arabia.¹

But with the events unfolding in the Balkans, particularly with the terrifying news of horror, human sufferings and systematic genocide committed by the Serbs against the Muslims there in the name of 'ethnic cleansing,' on the one hand, and indecisiveness and failure of international community, including the UN to respond to these successfully on the other, serious doubts and questions have arisen whether the 'new world order' is prematurely dead in the mountains of the Balkans.

1. For details of the 'New World Order' and its various aspects, See, Golam Mostafa, "The Gulf War, the 'New World Order' and Implications for the Third World," BISS Paper, (Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, Dhaka), No. 14, July 1992.

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The Serbian Aggression for territorial expansion in Bosnia-Herzegovina has been continuing for more than a year without any immediate sign of ending. This is the most horrifying war in Europe after the World War II which has already killed more than 150,000 innocent civilians, particularly the most vulnerables - women and children. The war has created a serious refugee problem by uprooting millions of people from their villages and towns. An EC report revealed that the Serbian troops carried out rape in "organised and systematic" way in Bosnia and used it as a "weapon of war." A US intelligent report concluded that the cruelty against Muslims by Serbs "dwarfs anything seen in Europe since the Nazi times."² An Associated Press report concludes that more than one-third of Muslims have fled to various European countries; there were widespread evidence of mass killings; Serbs have made all efforts to keep visitors, including press and media, away from the sites of worst atrocities; and the government of Serbia and Montenegro shares responsibility for the campaign of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina.³

The Serbs with the help of Yugoslav federal army have been destroying Muslim villages and towns, blowing up mosques, burning houses, shops and properties owned by the Muslims. Thousands of Muslims—both men and women—have been rounded up, systematically tortured, raped and displaced by Serbian troops. According to reports the atrocities in Bosnia-Herzegovina committed by the Serbs have, in many ways, surpassed the crime committed by the Nazi Germany during the World War II.

The international community, including the EC, the US and the UN, is frustrated and agonised with the horror and sufferings in Bosnia, but, at the same time, appears to be helpless, sharply divided and indecisive on what to do to stop the genocide. "Serious measures", "determined steps", "great ideas", "punitive measures" and "military steps" are being debated in the capitals of major powers and in the UN headquarters, but, so far the international community has failed to take any action to put the war to an end.

2. *The Economist*, January 23, 1993, p. 46.

3. *The Globe and Mail*, August 19, 1993, p. A7.

The UN activities are mainly limited to supply of humanitarian aid to besieged towns and villages (which is also insufficient, often delayed and blocked by the Serbs), and to evacuate refugees from territories occupied by the Serbs to safer places. Attempts have been made to bring political solution to the complicated and delicate ethnic issue in Bosnia-Herzegovina, all of which have so far failed, and Bosnian Serbs, taking the advantage of indecisiveness and failure of the international community, are realising their ultimate goal—to form a greater Serbia through territorial expansion by driving away Muslims from their towns and villages.

The purpose of this article is specific and limited. The historical causes and roots of the crisis are well covered elsewhere.⁴ Atrocities and genocide committed by Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina are also well covered by the world press and media. The main purpose of this article, is to analyse the crisis from the perspective of a new world order. The paper is divided into five sections: part I provides a brief review of the issue in the light of recent developments in order to put the subject into a perspective. Part II discusses European responses and dilemmas to the issue, including the position of Russia. Part III is devoted to an analysis of US policy-options, choices and dilemmas regarding the crisis. Part IV evaluates the UN role in the crisis, and finally Part V provides arguments in favour of why the international community, particularly the US should take decisive actions against the Serbs in general and the Bosnian Serbs in particular.

I

Bosnia-Herzegovina, as one of the provinces of former Yugoslavia, was always a multi-ethnic and multicultural province. Out of its about 5 million population, 44% are Muslims, 31% are Eastern Orthodox Serbs with sentimental ties with Russia, and 17% are Catholic Croats with religious and cultural ties with the west. Racially they are all from south slavic origin and speak in Serbo-Croatian language.⁵

4. Historical causes and roots of the Yugoslav crisis are well covered and analysed by A. Kaplan in his recent book *Ghosts in the Balkans*, see also, Farah Kabir, "The Disintegration of Yugoslavia: An Assessment", *BHSS Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 1.

5. *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, March 1993, p. 8.

Influenced by the waves of revolutions in Eastern Europe, formation of independent states in former Soviet Union and encouraged by the declaration of independence by Slovenia and Croatia-two other federal republics of former Yugoslavia- Bosnia-Hercegovina decided to hold a referendum under international supervision on the question of its independence. On March 1, 1992, a question was put to the electorate: "Are you in favour of a sovereign and independent Bosnia-Hercegovina, a state of equal citizens and nations of Muslims, Serbs, Croats and others who live in it?" Two-thirds of the population voted in favour.⁶ The EC recognized the new state on April 6, 1992, followed by the US on the next day. In May 1992, Bosnia-Hercegovina became a member of the UN.

But Yugoslavia, consisting of the republics of Serbia and Montenegro, challenged the validity of the referendum, refused to recognize the new state and waged war against it. The Bosnian state was not prepared for such a war. Moreover, weapons from its Territorial Defence Forces were confiscated by the federal army before the election.⁷ Strong Serb forces, equipped with heavy weapons, tanks and airpower (Serbia is the only former Yugoslav republic with combat aircrafts), occupied Muslim and Croatian villages and towns, drove them away from their houses and thus pursued the policy of "ethnic cleansing" with a view to forming greater Serbia. The Bosnian government hoped for (and was promised of) international protection in case of aggression. But when the Bosnian Muslims became the victims of Serb aggression, the EC and the US failed to accept any responsibility for defending them, one of the member states of the UN, rather they were treated merely as a "warring faction."⁸

Arms embargo imposed by the UN against former Yugoslav republics seriously hurt the Muslims in their efforts of self-defence. Bosnian Serbs got arms from the Yugoslav federal army and from other East European countries, including Russia. The Croats had their own reserve of arms, and

6. Branka Magas, "The Destruction of Bosnia-Hercegovina," *New Left Review*, No. 196, 1992, p. 197.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

probably received new supplies from their supporters in Europe. The Bosnian Muslims, in the absence of arms suppliers and strong political supporters, were left defenceless and became the primary victims of Serbian and Croatian aggression and atrocities.⁹

The crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina is not simply a civil war, but a case of genocide where the minority Bosnian Serbs with the help of former Yugoslav army are annihilating an entire religious community, the Muslims. In realising this goal they have adopted two policies: to drive away defenceless Muslims from their villages by burning their houses, raping women and massacring men and creating reign of terror; and to wage a war against the capital Sarajevo and other Muslim cities.¹⁰ Already thousands of Muslims have been driven away from their towns and villages and some of the strong Muslim enclaves, like Srebrenica, Zepa, Gorazde and Ceska were under siege (at the time of writing) and may fall to Serbian hands at any time. Despite the UN Commander in Bosnia-Herzegovina General Philippe Morillon's assurance that the Serbs would not take Srebrenica because "it would be a crime against humanity," and despite the presence of about 200 Canadian UN peace-keepers in the city, tensions were high and situation was uncertain. Those who still remained in the city were afraid of a Serbian assault at any time.¹¹ Reports confirm that when the UN was active and visible in Eastern Bosnia, Serb forces regrouped their positions and continued attacks on Muslim positions and enclaves in northern and western Bosnia. In fact, the Serbs are using this strategy all the time. One Serbian commander even confided to a British reporter that when the UN and the Western press and media were preoccupied with Sarajevo, the Serbs continued their policy of "ethnic cleansing" in other parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹²

9. Ideologically and politically, the Muslim world was supposed to support Bosnia-Herzegovina. But they were so divided and paralysed by internal and intra-state divisions and rivalries that it was not possible for those countries either to support Bosnia-Herzegovina directly or to influence Europe or the US to put pressure on Serbia.

10. *The Economist*, September 26, 1992, p. 54.

11. *The Globe and Mail*, April 24, 1993, p. A8.

12. *The Guardian*, March 17, 1993.

The Serbs, who constitute less than one-third of the total population of Bosnia-Hercegovina, already control about 75% of the territory. The Croats control a significant portion of it, and the Muslims, being majority, control only about 10% of the total territory. If the current policy of "ethnic cleansing" continues, and the international community allows the Serbs to do so, no Muslim enclaves will be left in Bosnia-Hercegovina, and the whole issue will turn into a mere refugee problem for Europe which is the precise goal of both Serbia and Croatia.

II

No other part of the world has observed and experienced so many dramatic shifts and changes in the post-Cold War era as Europe did in the last 3-4 years. The fall of the Berlin wall, reunification of Germany and the collapse of the Soviet Union all have serious and far reaching implications for Europe. When the former republics of Yugoslavia started to disintegrate in 1991, Europe had genuine reasons to be concerned and apprehensive because of bitter historical memories.¹³ The EC was given a mandate by the CSCE to provide "good offices" in the solution of the Yugoslav crisis.¹⁴ The EC closely observed and monitored the developments in the Balkans, and recognised the independent states that emerged in place of former Yugoslavia with the hope that their recognition would help to stabilize the situation. But things developed in a totally different direction. The Bosnian Serbs refused to recognise Bosnia-Hercegovina as an independent state although the referendum for independence took place under the EC supervision, and the new state fulfilled all the criteria set by the EC to be recognized as an independent state. When the war broke out and the Serbs continued the policy of "ethnic cleansing" against the Bosnian Muslims, Europe was unable, if not unwilling, to take any serious action against Serbia.

13. For early EC policy towards Yugoslavia, see Branislava Alendar, "The European Community and the Yugoslav Crisis", *Review of International Affairs*, Vol. XLIII, 1992, pp. 18-20.

14. Ljubisa Rakic, "The London Conference: A Quest for a Peaceful Solution", *Review of International Affairs*, Vol. XLIII, 1992, p. 3.

From the beginning, the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina was considered as a European one to be dealt with and resolved by the Europeans. The EC tried to bring a political solution to the crisis through bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, but all attempts failed because of the lack of priority and urgency attached to resolve the conflict. The EC was neither ready nor willing to take any serious measure against Serbia, although some of its members participated in the UN administered humanitarian missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina: to supply food and medicine to Muslim towns and villages, and to evacuate sick and wounded people from besieged areas.

Europe's policy of disillusionment, inactiveness and give-away was criticised by Bosnian leaders. In December 1992, Alija Izetbegovic, President of Bosnia-Herzegovina, directly accused Britain as "the biggest brake on any progress" towards peace in Bosnia.¹⁵ The EC did condemn Serbian aggression, yet failed to adopt any policy to protect the Bosnian Muslims. Europe was even reluctant to implement the UN resolution to tighten economic sanctions and to enforce the "no-fly zone" against Serbia and Montenegro. When the US seriously considered an option of using force against Bosnian Serbs, the EC opposed the idea mainly because of two reasons: the security of its ground troops; and, the belief that the use of force will not resolve the crisis. The EC also opposed the demand by the Bosnian Muslims to lift arms embargo, although it was widely supported by the US and the Muslim world. Europe's main concern is that the lifting of arms embargo from the Bosnian Muslims may involve such radical Muslim states as Iran and Libya into the conflict in the Balkans, and it certainly does not want to create another "Afghanistan" in the heart of Europe.¹⁶

Russia was another stumbling block for EC policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Russia was, and is still, sympathetic towards the Serbs because of strong religious, cultural and linguistic ties with its "Slav brothers." Russia's policy towards Bosnia-Herzegovina was mainly guided

15. Jane M.O. Sharp, "Intervention in Bosnia: Case for", *The World Today*, Vol. 49, No. 2, February 1993, p. 29.

16. *The New York Times*, May 4, 1993, p. A18.

by its domestic political developments and consideration. Yeltsin is afraid that any tougher stand against Serbia would strengthen Russian conservatives, make him unpopular and undermine his reforms. It is an irony that Russia, which as former Soviet Union always championed the cause of peace and supported the suppressed and oppressed peoples all over the world, now supports and protects an aggressor in the guise of historical and cultural solidarity.

But in pursuing its policy towards Bosnia-Herzegovina Russia should consider the fact that half of the members of the CIS are Muslim majority states. About 10 million Muslims live in the Russian Federation.¹⁷ Already Azerbaijan, a former Soviet republic, boycotted the CIS meeting and accused Russia for siding with Armenia in its conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.¹⁸ Continuous Russian support to Bosnian Serbs against Muslims will certainly affect Russia's relations with its Muslim partners in the CIS, and such a policy will also undermine Russia's relations with Third World Muslim states, particularly with Turkey and Iran.

The European public opinion appears to be more in favour of using force to end the war in the Balkans than their leaders. European leaders seem to be more restrained, ambivalent and indifferent towards the war in Bosnia. More and more European leaders are, however, expressing their concerns and speaking out in favour of taking stronger and decisive actions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher strongly pleaded for Bosnian Muslims to be armed to end the "massacre of the innocents". She also criticised the British policy of not supporting the US initiative to lift arms embargo from the Muslims.¹⁹

The EC policy towards the Bosnian crisis was ambivalent and contradictory from the beginning. The NATO Secretary-General, Manfred Wornat, indicated in December 1992 that the EC would support a military

17. For details of Muslim population in Russia, see Shirin Akhiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union*, 2nd edition, (London: Kegan Paul International), 1986.

18. Daniel Sneider, "Caucasus War Worries Region", *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 18, 1993.

19. *The Ottawa Citizen*, April 14, 1993.

intervention if asked by the United Nations, while European leaders expressed their strong reservation about the use of force.²⁰ Even the EC peace mediator David Owen occasionally spoke about possible use of force against Serbs, but in other times he totally opposed the idea. The Bosnian crisis clearly demonstrates how unpredictable Europe can still be in the last decade of the 20th century. It also raises doubts about whether Europe has really overcome its historical legacies. It appeared that on the Bosnian issue the US passed "the baton of leadership" to Europe, but the EC failed to build a coalition of European powers that could save Bosnia-Herzegovina and create an example of European collective security system.

European leaders can not avoid their responsibilities by simply being indifferent or ambivalent. Two World Wars were started and fought in Europe to a great extent as a result of policies of appeasement, give-away and conspiracy by European leaders. Already analogy is being drawn that current European leaders are behaving in the similar manner as their predecessors did in Munich in 1938.

The Bush Administration was aware of the political developments and its possible dangers in the Balkans. Yet, it was disinterested in taking any action and deliberately maintained a policy of low profile for several reasons: the crisis in Yugoslavia was primarily viewed as a European one which should be resolved by the Europeans; the US had no immediate interest in former Yugoslavia; after the Gulf crisis in 1990-91, the US was neither prepared nor willing to take another costly foreign adventure for uncertain gains; the US public apparently became inward-looking and criticised President Bush for not doing enough for solving domestic economic and social problems; and President Bush could not ignore the public opinion in an election year.

The US, however, supported the UN-EC peace initiatives and the UN operated humanitarian missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The US was unusually vocal about the trial of war criminals in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In

20. "Yugoslav Republics," *Country Report*, (The Economist Intelligent Unit, London), No. 4, 1992, p. 13.

the London Conference on former Yugoslavia in December 1992, acting US Secretary of State L. Eagleburger called for four Serbs and three Croats to be tried before the UN War Crime Tribunals.²¹ The US supported the UN embargo on Serbia and Montenegro and "no-fly zone" over Bosnia-Herzegovina. By the end of 1992, the US policy towards Bosnia became clearer, and President Bush in a letter to Yugoslav President Milosevic drew the line when he said, "in the event of conflict in Kosovo caused by Serbian action, the United States will be prepared to employ military force against the Serbs in Kosovo and Serbia proper."²² It also warned that the US would use force in case of any interference against humanitarian aid. Yet, the policy of Bush Administration towards Bosnia-Herzegovina was flexible and indecisive. As president Bush said, "our assessment of the situation in the former Yugoslavia could well change if and as the situation changes We are constantly assessing our options."²³

On the other hand, Bill Clinton during his campaign criticized Bush for not doing enough for Bosnia, and accused him of dumping the problem in the lap of the Europeans. So when Clinton came to office in January 1993, the general expectation was that his Administration would take the issue more seriously. But soon it appeared that his Administration had shifted gears on the issue, and continued similar policy as his predecessor did. President Clinton was, however, not ready to recognize that he gave up the Bosnian cause or became soft to the Serbs. The US concentrated more on humanitarian aid, including air dropping food in besieged Bosnian cities and villages. The US air-dropped thousands of tons of food and medicine to besieged Muslim towns and villages in Bosnia-Herzegovina, although there are debates and conflicting reports about the success and effectiveness of the mission.

Continuous Serbian aggression on Muslim positions, failure of the EC and UN to bring a political settlement of the crisis as a result of the rejection of the EC-UN brokered peace plan by the Serbs, and delays and

21. "EIU Country Report," *op. cit.* p. 11.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

23. Remarks by President Bush, West Point, January 5, 1993.

harassments of UN food convoys, created pressure on the Clinton Administration for taking concrete measures, including the use of force, against the Bosnian Serbs. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell and Minority Leader Bob Dole both called for lifting arms embargo on Bosnia and air strikes against Serbian positions.²⁴ Calls for decisive actions against Bosnian Serbs also came from other quarters, including Senators, some lobby groups and experts in the field. US supported the UN resolutions to tighten sanction against Serbia and Montenegro and strictly enforce the "no-fly zone" over Bosnia-Herzegovina. In an interview with the CBS both Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski agreed that the US should do "something" to stop the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Both of them agreed that it has to be limited, specific and clearly defined. They were also of the view that it was not only a moral obligation but a geopolitical interest for the United States to stop the war in the Balkans. Brzezinski proposed three specific steps: (a) to lift embargo on arms from the Bosnian Muslims, (b) to strictly enforce the "no-fly zone," and (c) to bomb on selective Serbian offensive positions.²⁵

After considering all possible options, in early May, 1993, President Clinton seriously considered three measures: to lift arms embargo from the Bosnian Muslims; to attack on Serbian positions by using US air force; and, to create "safe areas" for the Bosnian Muslims.²⁶ Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, was sent to Europe and Russia to get support for the President's plan. But it appeared that Christopher returned empty handed, and the US failed to sell its plans to Russia and its NATO allies in Europe. Europe wants the involvement of US troops in the peace keeping operation, while the US is not ready to commit ground troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina and prefers surgical air strikes on Serbian offensive positions. Washington's NATO allies are concerned that any attack on Serbian positions will jeopardise the security of their ground troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina, hamper the relief efforts and will possibly end the peace process.²⁷

24. *The New York Times*, April 8, 1993, A14.

25. "Face the Nation," CBS Television program, April 25, 1993.

26. *The New York Times*, April 29, 1993, p. A6

27. CNN, April 27, 1993.

The US Administration seems to be also divided on the issue. Personally President Clinton is reportedly more in favour of taking stronger actions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Secretary of state Warren Christopher, Defence Secretary Les Aspin and Joint Chief of Staff Colin Powell are more cautious and less optimistic about the success of air strikes, although General Merrill McPeak, the Air Force Chief of Staff, is confident that air strikes could be undertaken "at virtually no risk" to the US air force.²⁸ So, without support from the allies and with a divided Administration, President Clinton did not have any choice than to back down from his position. In fact, from the beginning, the US policy towards Bosnia-Herzegovina has been full of contradictions, it lacks clear vision and determination, and suffers from dilemmas and indecisiveness.

The US public opinion also seems to be not in favour of US military involvement in the Balkans. But the fact is that public opinion does not form automatically, it has to be created and moulded by the press, media and government publicity and propaganda. During the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait hundreds of millions of dollars were spent to create US public opinion in favour of the war, but in the case of Bosnia neither the US government nor other interests/lobby groups have similar kind of interests.

President Clinton described Bosnia as a "problem from hell" about which "very little can be done."²⁹ In an interview in the CBS news program "Face the Nation" US Secretary of State Warren Christopher said, "The United States simply does not have the means to make people in that region of the world like each other." Christopher's argument can not be accepted because hatred and mistrusts are characteristic to all trouble areas in the world. The US can not make the Arabs, Israelis, Persians or the peoples of former Soviet republics like each other, yet Washington is actively involved in those areas. Moreover, it is neither possible nor expected from the US to make people like each other or to resolve all conflicts, rather the expectation is that the US involvement, either by putting pressure on or using force

28. *The New York Newsday*, Sunday, May 2, 1993, p. 17.

29. *The New York Times*, April 18, 1993.

against aggressors, will create a conducive environment for the parties to work together for an understanding, rapprochement and resolution of the conflicts through negotiations. The truth is that Washington has vital strategic, both economic and political, interests in the Middle East and in Russia, but not in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The general argument is that the US can not act in Bosnia-Herzegovina because the Europeans may not follow, and the US do not want to act unilaterally. On the other hand, the EC is afraid that it can not and does not have the necessary means to act unilaterally without the US leadership. As a result, a deadlock situation has been created which is rewarding the Serbs in realising their ultimate goal of creating greater Serbia by driving away Bosnian Muslims. But this gridlock has to be broken, and major responsibility lies with the United States as well as Europe.

The Bosnian situation has made it clear that in the post-Cold War and post-Soviet era, only the US have the necessary will and power to lead international politics. What is required now is decisive action and leadership on the part of the US Administration to mobilise the world behind it, because time is working in favour of the Serbs. And there is no reason not to believe that other nations, including China and Russia, will follow the US because of their high political and security stakes and economic dependency on the US. It may be easier now to stop the genocide and protect and preserve Muslim enclaves, including Srebrenica, than getting them back from the Serbs. The experience in Palestine fully supports this concern. International community, particularly the US will have to ask the question whether it wants to create another "Palestinian case" in the heart of Europe or not.

IV

The UN, plagued by the superpower rivalries for long time, was not ready and equipped to deal with the nature and type of issues and problems that emerged in the post-Cold War era. The UN was involved in the crisis of Bosnia-Herzegovina from the beginning, and also coordinated policies

and activities with the EC. The UN mediator Cyrus Vance closely worked with the EC mediator David Owen to find a political solution to the crisis.

From the beginning, the Serbs demanded the negotiation to be shifted to the UN from Geneva because their apprehension was that the peace process could be dominated by Germany, a historical rival to Serbia. After months of negotiations in Europe, the peace talks was brought to the UN with the hope that international community would be able to put more pressure on the Serbs. As a result of a series of meetings, conferences and discussions with all parties concerned, the EC and UN mediators, David Owen and Cyrus Vance, came up with a peace plan in October 1992, which proposed to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina into 10 autonomous territories; three for each ethnic groups - Serbs, Croats and Muslims- and Sarajevo, the capital, a mixed, "open" and completely demilitarised province.³⁰ The peace plan was initially rejected by all parties. Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic in an interview with the *Washington Report* said, "This map can in a way legalise ethnic cleansing and taking territory by force."³¹ The plan allotted 43% of territory to the Serbs who constitute only about 17% of the population which was viewed by the Muslims and Croats as a reward to the Serbs for their aggression. Even President Clinton criticised the plan as "unfair" to the Muslims. Germany was also critical of the plan. But the architects of the plan were able to convince the parties that given the complex nature of the situation this was the best alternative solution. Despite their dissatisfaction and serious reservations, both Muslims and Croats signed the plan, but the Bosnian Serbs rejected it in a so called referendum held on May 16, 1993 (although their leader signed it earlier). The Serbs demand two-thirds of territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina with a corridor in the north to link Bosnian Serb enclaves to the mainland of Serbian Republic. They also complain that there are few Muslims in some of the areas allotted by the Vance-Owen plan for the Muslims. But the fact

30. For details of the Vance-Owen peace plan, see "EIU Country Report" *op. cit.* pp. 13-14.

31. Ian Williams, "Bosnian President Hits at UN and EC", *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, February 1993, p. 19.

is, Muslims have been driven away by Serbs from those areas. The UN-EC peace negotiators were still trying to salvage the plan and to implement it, but political developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina itself and policies adopted by major powers, including the US, suggest that the Vance-Owen plan is dead for all practical purposes.

Initial UN involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina was to carry out humanitarian aid and relief operations in the besieged city of Sarajevo. But when reports of famine, mass killings, atrocities and shortages of food and medical supplies came from other parts of Bosnia, the UN extended its relief operations in those areas also. The UN food convoys were systematically harassed, blockaded and delayed by Serbian troops. The UN peace keeping forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina were not in combat mission, their main function was to ensure safe passage for relief convoys, to create buffer between the warring parties, and to evacuate wounded people from besieged towns and cities. Since they did not have the combat mandate, in many cases they simply became silent observers of mass killings and atrocities. In reality when Serbian troops drove away Muslims from their places and occupied their land and property, they allowed (occasionally asked) the UN troops to evacuate the refugees or otherwise threatened to kill them all. By evacuating Muslim refugees from their towns and villages, the UN troops, not by choice but dictated by the situation, indirectly helped the Serbs in realising their policy of "ethnic cleansing." Often the UN troops were told by the Serbs that the Muslims wanted to leave their places "voluntarily."³² As for the UN troops, they were in dilemma whether to let the Bosnian Muslims to die or to help the Serbs to expedite their policy of "ethnic cleansing" by evacuating the Muslims.

The first active UN involvement came in August 1992 when the Security Council imposed economic sanction against the former Yugoslav republics of Serbia and Montenegro for their policies in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but it was never enforced. According to *The Economist*,

32. *The Economist*, August 15, 1992, p. 38.

"Serbia has had little difficulty in getting the essentials for its war economy ... via the river Danube, and mostly from Rumania and former Soviet republics.³³

The UN also declared "no-fly zone" over Bosnia-Herzegovina in October 1992, but it was not enforced either. The UN monitors have recorded that there were over 500 violations of the UN "no-fly zone" over Bosnia by Serbian aircrafts.³⁴ Finally, after a long debate and discussion on April 12, 1993 the UN Security Council voted to enforce the "no-fly zone" in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and since then NATO and US planes are policing the area. But it has made hardly any difference because attacks on Muslim positions are usually carried out by land, heavy guns and artillery. Moreover, Bosnian Serbs have already achieved their goal of territorial expansion. Yet, the NATO planes policing the zone are instructed to "refrain from firing on Serbian aircrafts that violate the ban, except as a last resort."³⁵ While the US and NATO planes policing the "no-fly zone" in Iraq, which were not even voted by the UN, were instructed to shoot Iraqi aircraft without warning.³⁶

Strict sanctions against Serbia was discussed in the UN Security Council but voting was delayed because of a threat of Russian veto. Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev said that his government wanted more time to persuade the Serbian government to take a more responsible approach. Finally, a resolution calling for strict sanctions, was voted by the UN Security Council on April 17, 1993, but it was not enforced until the Russian referendum on April 25, 1993.³⁷ It is understandable that the US and the West have strategic interests in keeping Yeltsin in power and in the success of his reforms, but can it be justifiable to delay the implementation of a decision of the UN body for the interest of an individual leader of a particular country, while innocent civilians, mainly women and children, continued to be the victims of an aggression.

33. *The Economist*, August 29, 1992, p. 42.

34. "Serb guns mock UN air patrols," *The Ottawa Citizen*, April, 14, 1993.

35. *The New York Times*, April 12, 1993, p. A8.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *The Wall Street Journal*, April, 19, 1993, p. A14.

The UN also considered to lift the arms embargo from the Bosnian Muslims. In fact, it was a strong demand on the part of the Bosnian government and the OIC to lift the ban and to recognise the right of their self-determination which is a fundamental right of every state guaranteed under article 51 of the UN charter. There is a strong argument that the Muslims should have access to arms. As one observer puts it, "If we can not protect them, let them die with dignity."³⁸ But the UN can do hardly anything about the lifting of the arms embargo because the Europeans are strongly against it. French officials even threatened that if the issue is voted by the UN Security Council they will veto it.³⁹ Even if the arms embargo is lifted, which is very unlikely, it will be extremely difficult to reach arms to the Muslims without having them fall into Serb hands.⁴⁰

The UN can create "safe areas" for the Bosnian Muslims, though it will not resolve the problem. It can protect the Muslims, at least temporarily, from Serbian and Croatian aggressions. The experience of Srebrenica (where 200 Canadian UN forces were defiant of Serbian threats and refused to leave the city) shows that the UN can make a difference. But as far as political solution is concerned, it has to come from the international community headed by the United States.

The problem in Bosnia-Herzegovina is, no doubt, complex and deeply rooted in history. But it does not mean that nothing can be done or the international community can avoid its responsibility just by describing it as too complex, too dangerous and too risky.

The world should not buy Serbian propaganda that they do not have friends, except orthodox Russia and Greece. They claim that they are surrounded by enemies - "fascist croats" backed by Germany and Austria,

38. This remark was made by Anthony Lewis, a *New York Times* reporter during an interview with the "CBC Prime Time News" on 28 April, 1993.

39. *The New York Times*, April 29, 1993, p. A6.

40. Vigal Chazan, "A town fights for its people's lives", *The Ottawa Citizen*, April 17, 1993, p. A5.

"Hungarian fifth columnists" in the province of Vojvodina, "Albanian terrorists" in Kosovo and "Muslim fundamentalists" in Bosnia-Hercegovina, and they are the custodians of European civilization which is now threatened by Muslims.⁴¹ For propaganda purposes, the Serbs are calling the Bosnian war as a "Muslim conspiracy" led by Turkey. And since the issues of "Muslim threats" and "Islamic fundamentalism" are popular to the Western audience, the Western press and media are also playing a dubious role.

The Bosnian Muslims are not fundamentalists. They are fighting for their survival. After living so many years under European liberal political traditions and communist rules most of them do not practice Islam, and many of them even do not know their religious rituals and traditions. Their religious faith being Islam is simply a historical accident, as majority of the Japanese are Buddhists or Germans are Catholics. There are people who try to label the Balkan war as a war over civilization or religious domination. But the fact is, it is an outright aggression by a powerful and well equipped minority against ill equipped majority for territorial expansion. Serious steps and decisive actions must be taken against Bosnian Serbs for a number of reasons:

First, international community has a moral obligation to save a member state of the United Nations where majority of the population are being cleansed simply because of their religious faith and belief.⁴²

Second, international community has a legal obligation to save Bosnia-Hercegovina which has fulfilled all necessary legal requirements for being an independent state, and is recognised by the international community, including the major powers.

Third, according to the "New World Order" defined and pursued by the Bush Administration (Clinton Administration has never rejected it) Bosnia-Hercegovina qualifies for US intervention on the categories of "humanitarian" and "security" interventions.⁴³

41. Tony Barber, "Serb drive is fuelled by siege propaganda", *The Ottawa Citizen*, April 17, 1993, p. A5.

42. This point is strongly supported by Anthony Lewis, *op. cit.*

43. According to the "New World Order" the US can intervene on three grounds: humanitarian, security and environmental. For details, see Allan Henrikson, A Discussion paper on "Defining a New World Order." *The Fletcher Round Table*, (The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy), May 1991.

Fourth, sooner or later, the US will probably have to intervene in the Balkans for its strategic interests. If the Serbs go unpunished and are rewarded for their policy of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the next target will be Kosovo where 90% of the population are ethnic Albanian origins. Serbs see Kosovo as "the cradle of their culture," site of their "nation defining" battles against Muslim Turks. Serbia has already announced that Kosovo should be forcefully incorporated into greater Serbia. The next victims of a possible Balkan war will be Macedonia and Albania. If the policy of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia continues indefinitely and Russia continues to support the aggressor, Germany may join on the side of Slovenia and Croatia, while Turkey, Albania, Azerbaijan and other states in the region may support the Muslims, and because of rivalries with Turkey, Greece may join in the opposite bloc, thus the possibility of an overall Balkan war will increase. So, to prevent an all out Balkan war the international community should act now.

Fifth, Europe should not buy the Serbian argument that they are the gate-keepers of European civilization from Muslim occupants from the East. Historical facts show that in modern times Muslim countries were never enemies of either Europe or North America, rather they fought shoulder to shoulder with them against communism and the former Soviet Union. Almost all Muslim countries also maintain very close economic and political ties with the West.

Sixth, Europe knows better than any other continent the price of appeasement and give-away to the aggressors. The present leadership of Europe will have to review their policies regarding Bosnia-Herzegovina, and take decisive steps for future peace and security of Europe. With the United States preoccupied with its domestic economic and social problems and inward-looking public opinion, Europe is expected to play more active role in international politics, and Bosnia-Herzegovina is the first test for united Europe's international policy. Finally, Europe has a serious stake in resolving the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina, because any war in the Balkan may undermine or even kill the process of European integration, and Europe may go back to a situation that prevailed before the pre-World War I.