

Brotherhood and Disunity: A Strategic Analysis of the War in Bosnia,
1992-1996

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Abstract

This paper evaluates the War in Bosnia by applying contemporary U.S. Joint Doctrine of the ends, ways, means, strategic paradigm. Most scholarship on the war in Bosnia was written during or immediately after the war; the accounts are pessimistic in their analysis of Dayton and the prospect of enduring peace. It has been twenty-five years since the Dayton Accords were signed. Bosnia Herzegovina is comprised of two autonomous entities: The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. Between the two entities there is a road, open and porous. It is not the Korean peninsula with a Demilitarized Zone or Cyprus separate and disjointed. It is a lasting and enduring peace. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia successfully indicted 161 individuals, including Bosnian Croats, Serbs, and Muslims for war crimes, culminating in 2017. To argue that this was a civil war caused by ancient hatreds or a war caused by foreign aggressors is too binary and limiting. This paper supports research that argues that this war was both, a hybrid war. The war in Bosnia was a fabricated civil war, one in which the resources and means available were ethnoreligious; soft power tools that included a nexus of identity, history, propaganda coupled with legitimate concerns for the future resulted in genocide and the displacement of over a million people. For those who survived and endured ethnic cleansing and a siege, seeing neighbors turn on neighbors, it too was most certainly a civil war. Strategically analyzing the war using the U.S. joint military doctrine, this paper claims that the character of the war was dominated by ethnoreligious nationalism. The targets, tactics, and objectives were all influenced by ethnoreligious nationalism. This was fueled by the breakdown of Yugoslavia, weak religion, and weak economic and political structures that were exploited by nationalist chauvinism. The two main leaders in the Bosnian war Slobodan Milosevic and Alija Izetbegovic, applied ethnoreligious nationalism asymmetrically in support of their political objectives which directly contributed to the Dayton accords.

Key Words: Bosnia, Nationalism, Religion and Conflict, Strategy

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Introduction: A Strategic Analysis¹

Western military theorists evaluate war through the framework of the enduring nature of war versus the changing character of war that was developed by Clausewitz in his seminal book *On War*. Throughout *On War*, Clausewitz compared dualisms, focusing on the perceived contradictions between the abstract and the material.² The nature of war is the unchanging essence of war, what makes something *war* and not some other human phenomenon. It is a human endeavor; violent, interactive, and fundamentally driven for a political purpose. The character of war describes how war manifests itself within the real world, the contextual reality of a conflict. As war is executed for political purposes within, among, or between societies, it will be shaped by the context in which it manifests. The characterization is undoubtedly influenced by technology, ethics, political, social, and cultural constructs that change across time and place.³

Each war has a particular character, something that dominates the tone, conduct, and purpose of the war which influences the war's outcome; connecting the conduct of the war to desired political outcomes. Modern wars are increasingly influenced by international and external actors, such as NATO and the UN. Media and technology have a paramount influence on how the war is perceived and how it translates to support or condemn for the belligerents involved. For strategic thinkers, one way to approach the study of war, to better understand and evaluate a war, and deduce its character, is through the ends, ways, means paradigm. Contemporary American Joint Armed Forces Doctrine articulates strategy in its most simple terms as a continuous assessment of what needs to be accomplished; the political objectives (*ends*), the resources that are necessary to achieve the political ends (*means*), and the methods in which those resources be employed (*ways*). It is further simplified as the relationship between ends, ways, means.⁴ While political objectives may remain steady throughout a war, they often shift based upon the tactical situation on the ground. Therefore, the ends, ways, means, and associated risk are evaluated continuously in an iterative manner. As doctrine states:

This *ends, ways, means* model is the basic construct of modern strategy, but it alone is inadequate to turn ideas into action. Strategy is both an iterative process and a product—the reflective synergy of art and science creating a coherent bridge from the present to the future, enabling the translation of ideas into action to get what you want while addressing potential risks to the nation.⁵

¹ Jane Petrick is an active-duty US Army Major. This paper reflects her analysis alone and does not reflect the views of the Department of Defense or United States Army.

² Theoretically, the discussion on the enduring nature and changing character of war is most closely aligned with Hegel's thesis-antithesis-synthesis model in which two opposing sides are reconciled to form something new. Given that the two geniuses lived around the same time there has been much scholarly debate on their interactions. One article, published in 2014 makes an effective assertion that although both agreed in many ways in their methodology, the two diverged on ethics. Hegel understands war as an inherently justified 'right' of the state, whereas Clausewitz views war as a neutral instrument of the state. See Youri Cormier, "Hegel and Clausewitz: Convergence on Method, Divergence on Ethics," *The International History Review*. Vol 36, no. 3. January 16, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2013.859166>.

³ H.R. McMaster, "The Geopolitical Lessons of the Iraq War" (Comments, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC, March 21, 2013).

⁴ Joint Force Development. *Joint Doctrine Note: Strategy*, JDN 2-19, I-1-I-3.

⁵ Joint Force Development. *Joint Doctrine Note: Strategy*, JDN 2-19, I-1-I-3.

In its most basic terms strategy is about creating the situation in which you bridge your current reality to a desired outcome. The desired outcome, the political (*ends*), for example, for the US in Germany during World War II was total defeat of the Nazi regime. Next, what resources (*means*) or tools do you have, soldiers, weapons, financial means, geographic advantages, time, and political setting at your disposal to create the desired outcome. Finally, how will you employ those resources or tools to achieve your desired ends. That is the *ways*, the operational art of using your tools efficiently to achieve the desired outcome. For the Allies in World War II, the operational ways included the D-Day invasion, the invasion of Africa, coupled with continued Soviet pressure on the Eastern Front, resulting in the fall of Berlin. But strategy is an iterative process, constantly ebbing and flowing based on tactical and operational success and failures. Strategy often changes and evolves.

Twenty-five years have passed since the signing of the Dayton Accords. Surprisingly, most Bosnian War scholarship was written within a few years of the war. After September 11, 2001, much of the world, particularly military and conflict scholars, focused on understanding the attacks and the American-led interventions into Iraq and Afghanistan. However, the International Criminal Tribunal proceedings for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) continued from 1993-2017 and generated a significant amount of research related to the war. Additionally, in 2013, President Clinton declassified and published nearly 300 documents from the Balkan Task Force for public review. These resources offer new and interesting perspectives for evaluating and understanding the Bosnian War and the Dayton Accords.

As a trained strategic planner for the United States Army, it will be my job to evaluate both friendly and adversary strategic approaches and thus anticipate and plan for future wars. Within that regard, evaluating past wars through a strategic analysis elucidates lessons and provides an intellectual exercise for future requirements. In culmination for my MA, I thought that it would be beneficial to apply my recently acquired knowledge on the study of religion through an intellectual exercise that would bridge both my strategic education and the education I received from the RPC program. I did not intend to explore Bosnia through this approach but when I reflected on my study it became clear that this was how my intellect was drawing conclusions and making analyses.

Ultimately, I applied the ends, ways, means, approach as a theoretical heuristic to analyze a complex system, a war, with the purpose of deducing how the character of the war contributed to the cessation of hostilities and the implementation of peace. My strategic analysis concludes that the character of the war in Bosnia was one of ethnoreligious nationalism resulting in a hybrid civil war.⁶ In all wars, there is a connection between tactical operations and strategic outcomes, and in Bosnia, accordingly, ethnoreligious nationalism shifted as the tactical situation changed. The two main leaders in the Bosnian War Slobodan Milosevic and Alija Izetbegovic, applied ethnoreligious nationalism asymmetrically in support of their political objectives. Milosevic leveraged ethnoreligious nationalism internally, focusing on Serbian victimization and claims of self-determination, building a narrative of civil war, one of ethnic hatreds to mobilize

⁶ I concur and add to Matic and Stojic's analysis that the war in Bosnia was an internationalized hybrid war. I go one step further and argue that the Bosnian war's character was an ethnoreligious nationalist hybrid war. As military scholars they argue that contemporary strategic theorists must look at a more holistic basis for understanding wars. See Matic & Stojic, "The War in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992-1995: An Assessment of the War's Historical Context and Typology," *Small Wars Journal*.

the masses. He continued this approach until it no longer served his political purposes, abandoning it at the right moment for one of peace that resulted in Dayton. Izetbegovic, to overcome the challenges of not having an army, leveraged ethnoreligious nationalism externally, relying on international support and the larger Islamic community for resources. In addition to this paper's conclusion, from this analysis, there are three other claims offered as starting points for future research. First, despite the way Izetbegovic is described in the prevalent western historiography of the war, it is argued that he was an effective leader and statesman, ensuring that a united and whole Bosnia remained. Secondly, despite the rhetoric of total war, and the use of ethnic cleansing and siege warfare, Milosevic and the Bosnian Serbs actually fomented war for defined limited purposes. A third point relates to the total war analysis and the effectiveness of ethnoreligious nationalism and the limitations of soft power.

Finally, a bit of clarity on the scope and scale of this paper. The Bosnian War was the third conflict in the wars of the former Yugoslavia, nor was it the final conflict. It is difficult to separate the Bosnian conflict from the larger situation, but due to length and time limitations, this study entirely focuses on Bosnia. Additionally, this paper does not evaluate the international community's role, the UNPROFOR, or specifically the leadership of the United States. A significant amount of scholarship currently exists on these subjects.⁷ Finally, this paper focuses almost singularly on the conflict between Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Bosnian Serbs or the Republika Srpska. While the Croatian portion is crucial to understanding the war in its entirety, the conflict was fomented by Slobodan Milosevic, and it was Alija Izetbegovic, the Bosnian President, who responded.

History and Origins of Ethnoreligious Nationalism

History and collective memory were paramount in building ethnic divisions within Bosnia. This section will highlight a few important claims. First, to oversimplify, the main difference among the South Slavs was religious identity. In order to create division this difference had to be exploited and radicalized to support ethnoreligious narratives. Second, ethnic cleansing by paramilitary organizations had precedent in Yugoslavia, the worst of which occurred during WWII. Third, religious organizations were consistently in a tacit relationship with the state, most formally within Serbia. Weak religion, as defined by Appleby, prevailed.⁸ For Tito, religious institutions were a threat to his power and the power of the socialist party. A sort of paradox resulted, despite a 1000-year tradition of religion in the Balkans; the institutions themselves were ill-equipped to handle division because they had grown accustomed to emphasizing survival and victimization. Fourth, claims of the illegitimacy of the Bosnian state only served the goals of Tudjman and Milosevic; throughout history Bosnia maintained an independent identity. Finally, the war was not a random phenomenon of ethnic hatred but orchestrated to achieve specific goals. Beginning in the 1970s, power became increasingly decentralized in Yugoslavia. Muslims gained titular recognition, making them equal to that of

⁷ Susan Woodward's *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War* and Burg and Shoup's *The War in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention* are thorough in their analysis of the failures of the International community. These books do not evaluate the success of the Dayton Accords or the effectiveness of the Implementation Force.

⁸ Appleby, *The Ambivalence of The Sacred*, 77. Religious illiteracy, according to Appleby, leads to a prevalence of weak religion. " 'Weak religion' is one in which the people retain meaningful contact only with vestiges of the broader religious worldview and network of meanings and resources, in which they are isolated from one another and from educators, spiritual-moral exemplars, and in which ethnic, nationalist, secular-liberal, and other worldviews and ideologies have a free reign to shape the meaning of those vestiges."

Croats and Serbs. Despite political and economic factors that threatened the unity of Yugoslavia, conflict did not erupt for nearly 15 years after decentralization began and almost a decade after Tito's death. Together these claims demonstrate that history, collective memory, and mythology set the context for the exploitation of ethno-religious nationalism.

Simply speaking, Croats are Catholic, Serbs are Serbian Orthodox, and Bosniaks are Muslim. Historians of the region generally agree that the South Slavs arrived in the Balkans between the sixth and seventh centuries.⁹ Through conquest, fighting, mixing, and coexisting, South Slavs emerged as the dominant ethnicity in the region that became Yugoslavia. In the 1980s, nationalistic Croatian and Serbian "historians" were relentless in their pursuit of proving who was the first, and thus the true inheritor of the land. In contribution to the origins narrative, was the perception that all Serbs were Croats that converted, or the opposite, all Croats were Serbs that converted. Moreover, what proved to be an incredibly powerful convergence of Croat and Serbian "history" was their account of Muslim history in Yugoslavia. Both argued that Muslims were not true South Slavs because they had rejected the Christian faith by converting to Islam, and thus, as a result, their descendants are not true South Slavs. Michael Sells summarizes this in his theory of Christoslavism. He posits that Christoslavism is an ideology that all Slavs are Christian by nature and that any conversion from Christianity was a betrayal of the Slavic race. Thus, the ethnic cleansing that occurred in Bosnia was ethno-religious purification.¹⁰ Paul Mojzes, in *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the 20th Century*, confirms a similar line of logic. "An ethnic or religious war is a violent confrontation between two or more groups, usually sharing a territory to determine who owns the land exclusively and whose group will dominate the historical processes determining the future."¹¹ In essence, the land and the geopolitical history of the land become sacred and thus drives the pursuit of homogenous homelands.

The conversion of Southern Slavs to Islam is the root of the debate on Bosnian state history. Was Bosnia considered a true state or a construct? The idea that Bosnia was a construct served the Greater Croatian and Serbian agenda of Tudjman and Milosevic. However, a more accurate history of South Slavs reveals that, indeed, since the 12th century, there has been a Bosnian entity. From the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries, there was a Bosnian Kingdom that culminated under King Tvrtko's domain, which covered present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dalmatia (Croatia), Sandzak (Serbia), and Montenegro.¹² Like Serbia, the Kingdom of Bosnia was conquered and defeated by the Ottoman Turks in the late 1400s. What resulted was modern BiH, Sarajevo, at its center, a crossroads of three major faiths, empires, and civilizations: Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, and Islam.

Beyond a perfect breakdown within borders or domains, South Slav real history was likely plural and diverse on the local level. Those who came under the sway of Roman Catholicism developed a Croatian identity. Those who fell under the influence of the Eastern Orthodox church developed a Serbian identity. The church administration, which was intrinsically connected to the local political power, further facilitated and enforced a separation of the South Slavs.¹³ Then under Ottoman rule, many Bosnians choose to convert. Conversions

⁹ The most widely cited English language history of Yugoslavia is John R. Lampe's *Yugoslavia as History: Twice there was a country*. Cambridge University Press, 1996. In less than 500 pages he covers the arrival of the original South Slavs in the 800s through breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1980s.

¹⁰ Sells, *A Bridge Betrayed*, 29-52.

¹¹ Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the 20th Century*, 9.

¹² Lampe, *Yugoslavia As History*, 14, 64. and Job. *Yugoslavia's Ruin: The Bloody Lessons of History*, 156-157.

¹³ Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*, 6-7.

were not forced under the Ottoman Millet system, but landowners were Muslim and thus provided economic benefits to conversion. In the 1990s, the cities of BiH were majority Bosnian Muslims, whereas the rural and country areas were usually Serb and Croat, though much of BiH was mixed. These individuals identified themselves as Yugoslavs, usually the children of mixed marriages and families. These distinctions only fueled the confusion between religion, identity, power, and politics in Yugoslavia's waning years.¹⁴

Ethnic cleansing has mytho-religious and historical precedent in the former Yugoslavia and in particular Serbia. First captured in the religious mythology of Prince Lazar, an independent Serbian Empire met its demise in the fields of blackbirds, Pristina Kosovo, in 1389 when Prince Lazar chose martyrdom and rode to his death, defeated by the Ottomans. This is the mytho-religious foundation of the importance of Kosovo for Orthodox Serbs. Its linkage to "cleansing" was not established until the mid-19th century. The epic poem "The Mountain Wreath" portrays and glorifies the Christmas eve mass extermination of Slavic Muslims by Serbs. It was viewed as a sacred act, a 'cleansing.'¹⁵ The Serbs were thus liberated from Turkish rule. Throughout the war in BiH, Serb nationalists and Serbian Orthodox clerics referred to Bosniaks as Turks even though all formal political connections ceased with the collapse of the Ottoman empire after WWI.

Ethnic tensions exploited during the 1990s were primarily rooted in historical memory, particularly WWII, where veterans, survivors, and their direct descendants were alive in Yugoslavia. Considering the global destruction during WWII, Yugoslavia was home to some of the worst atrocities and fighting. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia was conquered by the Axis forces in 1941, culminating in a Kingdom-wide civil war. The Ustashe independent State of Croatia became the fascist puppet state of the Nazi regime. The Croatian Ustashe atrocities included ethnic cleansing, forced conversion to Catholicism, internment at concentration camps, and the mass murder of Serbs, Gypsies, and Jews. The Jasenovac and Banjica concentration camps were the locations of the majority of the estimated one million killed.¹⁶ On June 22, 1941, the Ustashe Croats, announced an official policy aimed at "cleansing" the Croatian state of its nearly 2 million Serbs: one third would be deported, one third would be converted to Catholicism (and therefore become Croatian) and one third would be executed.¹⁷ The Ustasha Independent State of Croatia proved to be one of the deadliest regimes in the 20th century.¹⁸

The Chetniks, a Serbian nationalist movement and guerilla force in Serbia, initially fought against the Axis occupied Yugoslavia but eventually collaborated with the Axis powers during their occupation. The communist Partisans fought against the Axis powers and gained significant Allied support after the Tehran Conference. With logistical and airpower support from the Western allies and Soviet ground troop support, the Partisans eventually gained control of the entire country. The Chetniks, the Ustashe, and the Partisans, while fighting against external powers, also fought each other, with the most destructive pattern of ethnic cleansing occurring in BiH. This cyclical destructive pattern destroyed towns, often resulting in the mass slaughter of innocents. With a pre-war population of roughly 15.4 million, the historically

¹⁴ Lampe, *Yugoslavia As History*, 21-25, 207.

¹⁵ Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed*, 40-44.

¹⁶ Throughout Yugoslavia's Post WW2 History, the actual number of those killed during WW2 at concentration camps or during the pattern of terror and counter terror through-out Yugoslavia was widely disputed and often related to the narrative of victimization that helped to fuel nationalism. Though this disputed is covered in much of the scholarship see Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 207.

¹⁷ Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 204-206.

¹⁸ Shelton, *Encyclopedia of Genocide*, 217-220.

agreed-upon death toll of at least 500k to 1 million suggests that nearly 5% of the population died during WWII with a larger amount injured.¹⁹ Ultimately WWII and the Yugoslav Civil War demonstrated the salience of ethnoreligious nationalism as a basis of identity and political mobilization.

Josip Broz Tito, the benevolent dictator, and his loyal lieutenants, faced significant challenges in rebuilding a nation after such destruction. The political solution for Yugoslavia was straightforward: brotherhood and unity and the equality of all Yugoslavs (and thus Bosnians), through power-sharing within the communist system.²⁰ Ethnic tensions did not go away; it was through highly effective and centralized power-sharing that Tito kept the nation together. As Mojzes summarizes,

Tito and the Communist party did not solve the ethnic question. The communist dictatorship used oppression to heal the wounds of WWII, but it was a superficial coverup. As the political, social, and economic crisis deepened after Tito died, the structures failed, and the leaders failed to find a nonviolent resolution. The political, social, and economic crisis increasingly took on an ethnoreligious cloak.²¹

Key moments between WW2 and Tito's death in 1980 shed light on the internal challenges. In 1946, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia emerged as the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, ruled by a communist government and recognized by the last Yugoslav King, King Peter II. In 1963, the nation changed its name to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) with Tito being named President for life. In the SFRY each republic and province gained increased power and centralized control, including a constitution, supreme court, parliament, president, and prime minister. Throughout the 1970s, including the Croatian Spring of 1970 and 1971, ethnic and national tensions continued. Croats viewed Yugoslavia as a Serb hegemony and demanded checks on Serbian power. The 1974 constitution was important in balancing the tensions between Serbia and Croatia. It also demonstrated how weak the central government of Yugoslavia had become. Under the 1974 Constitution, Bosnian Muslims were now considered a titular or constituent population, equal to Serbs and Croats. The two Serbian autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo gained significant power, thus undermining Serbian control over the two areas.²²

The long-term impact of the 1974 Constitution is imperative to linking Yugoslavian history to the crisis of the 1990s. While under Tito's command, the Yugoslav central government, though considerably weakened, maintained control through his internal system of checks and balances and individual hard power. After Tito's death, coupled with the changing geostrategic environment, dire economic conditions, and a weak rotating Presidency, Yugoslavia began to weaken.²³ As Constructivist scholar Wilmer astutely articulates, "the 1974 reforms actually contributed to the long-term ethnic tensions by further implicating national identity as the primary mediating force between individuals and the state."²⁴

¹⁹ Lampe, *Yugoslavia As History*, 197-228. Lampe covers much of the debate on the number killed on page 207 and 208.

²⁰ Job, *Yugoslavia's Ruin*, 161-165.

²¹ Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides*, 134.

²² Lampe, *Yugoslavia As History*, 229-293.

²³ See Woodward and Lampe for a detailed discussion on the political and economic factors contributing to the breakdown of Yugoslavia.

²⁴ Wilmer, *The Social Construction of Man*. 46.

One reason why conflict in the former Yugoslavia was so surprising was that Yugoslavs had a high the quality of life. Due to geopolitics of the Cold War, both the West and the USSR courted Yugoslavia.²⁵ Yugoslavs were able to travel within Europe and the Iron curtain. Additionally, the GDP for many of the republics were equivalent to the smaller countries in Eastern Europe.²⁶ Perhaps the best example of Yugoslavia's position as a European nation was captured by the 1984 Olympics in Sarajevo. The events were a great success and put the Jewel of Yugoslavia, Bosnia, on the modern map. Few Yugoslavs predicted that eight years later, Pale, which is near the mountains used for the Olympic games, would serve as the tactical headquarters of the Republika Srpska.

After Croatia and Slovenia declared independence in the summer of 1991, BiH had to decide between choosing independence or remaining in the rump Yugoslavia. Throughout 1989-1990, Milosevic, through political machinations, consolidated nearly total control over the 'rump' state.²⁷ On November 18, 1990, BiH held their first multiparty elections resulting in a national assembly dominated by the three ethnic parties: The Party of the Democratic Action, the SDA, led by future president Alija Izetbegovic, the Serbian Democratic Party (SDP) led by Radovan Karadzic, and the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), led by Stjepan Kljuic. Izetbegovic was elected to be chairman of the Presidency of the BiH. Jure Pelivan, of the HDZ, was elected Chairman of the Council of Ministers of BiH.²⁸ While the leaders were initially committed to continuing the legacy of a multinational state, Slovenia's and Croatia's wars for independence greatly influenced the Bosnian public. A significant split was apparent; Bosnian Serbs desired to stay within the Yugoslav federation, whereas Bosniaks and Croats sought independence.²⁹

During the debates on independence, Radovan Karadzic, the future President of the Republika Srpska, and Alija Izetbegovic had a critical public exchange that foreshadowed the dynamic of the future. Karadzic rose to the podium to relay his staunch rejection of independence and said:

“Do not think you will not lead Bosnia and Herzegovina into hell and maybe the Muslim people into possible annihilation, because the Muslim people cannot defend themselves if there is a war here.”³⁰

Alija Izetbegovic, who had not planned on speaking during this particular debate, felt necessary to respond. In watching a video of the exchange, it is easy to assess that Izetbegovic's reply was not rehearsed or preplanned:

“His [Karadzic] manner and his message perhaps best explain why we might not wish to remain in Yugoslavia any longer... The Yugoslavia that Mr. Karadzic wants, nobody wants any longer, except perhaps the Serb people. In the eyes of Yugoslav people: Slovenes, Croats, Macedonians, Albanians, Hungarians, Muslims, and in the eyes of the world, that Yugoslavia is no longer popular... Karadzic is just an expression of a way of

²⁵ After his break with Stalin, Tito became a leader within the non-aligned movement.

²⁶ See Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 1. And Davies, “Were Bosnia's Good Ol Days.”

²⁷ Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 115-135. To understand how Milosevic consolidated power see. Silber, Laura, and Allan Little. *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*. New York: Penguin Books, 1997 and the BBC documentary of the same title.

²⁸ Burg & Shoup, *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina*, 51-55.

²⁹ Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides*, 163-165.

³⁰ Hemon. “Genocide's Epic Hero.”

thinking, an attitude. What he is doing *isn't worthy of the Serbian people*. The Muslim people will not vanish.”³¹

As a result of the increased tension between the ethnonational parties, the Serb members of Parliament, led by Radovan Karadzic, boycotted the central government and formed the Assembly of the Serb People of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On October 21, 1991, a week after the heated exchange between the two leaders, the Bosnian Serbs established an independent assembly. By January 9, 1992 the assembly transformed into the Serbian Republic of BiH. All of these efforts occurred before official Bosnian independence. Ultimately this separatist group became the Republika Srpska in August 1992. Under the EC's guidance, a referendum took place to confirm the declaration of Bosnian independence. Voting took place between February 29 and March 1, 1992. The turn-out for the referendum was 63.4%, with nearly all Bosnian Serbs boycotting. Of those who participated, 99% supported independence.³² Armed conflict began within hours of the referendum. Many scholars and diplomats argue that the push for independence was the wrong move, done hastily. However, this is evaluating Bosnian independence separate from Croatian and Slovenian actions. Former Yugoslavian diplomat and scholar Cvjetko Job makes a compelling counter, “For the Bosnian Republic, faced with open ‘secessions,’ actually *anschlusses*, (italic in original) and open preparations for its conquest and partition, its sovereign acts, and their international acceptance, were the only way left for its existence, however precarious.”³³

The map below shows the 1991 census of Bosnia and a map of the ethnic majority in 1997. What becomes a persistent point of contention during every iteration of peacemaking were the proposed maps. In 1991 the Serbs comprised 31% of the population, Muslims represented the majority with 44%, and Croats were approximately 17% of the population. The 1991 census demonstrates the plurality of particular areas, especially within central and eastern Bosnia, the locations that would ultimately endure the worst fighting and atrocities.³⁴

After the wars in Slovenia and Croatia, the international community sought to prevent conflict from spreading to Bosnia through a peaceful resolution. The Lisbon Agreement, or the Carrington-Cutileiro plan, was a result of a European Community effort. The conference took place simultaneously with BiH pursuing the referendum for independence. The details of the Lisbon agreement provided for Bosnia existing within its borders without recognizing Bosnian sovereignty. Implied was an assumption that an independent plural Bosnia may not survive. Mate Boban of the independent Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia, Alija Izetbegovic, and Radovan Karadzic all initially signed the document, which outlined the republic as three constituent nations with the right to self-determination and all canonization of territory along ethnic lines.³⁵ This move essentially pre-partitioned BiH. Izetbegovic was the first to withdrawal from the plan, which ultimately hardened his position towards a united BiH. Izetbegovic solidified his position after speaking with US Ambassador Warren Zimmerman, who reluctantly

³¹ Italic added by author. The video clip of Karadzic has been viewed all over the Western world, particularly as it was used during Karadzic's war crime's tribunal. However, Alija Izetbegovic's reply is less known and viewed and I was only able to find it after watching a documentary on Alija Izetbegovic produced by Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera World, *Bosnian Leader Alija Izetbegovic: From Prisoner to President*.

³² Burg & Shoup, *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina*, 98-101, 117. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 194-195.

³³ Job, *Yugoslavia's Ruin: The Bloody Lessons of Nationalism*, 177.

³⁴ Cohen, *Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia's Disintegration and Balkan Politics in Transition*, 170-176. Cohen discusses changes in demographics and self-identified allegiances.

³⁵ Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 196.

alluded that American policy supported a united BiH.³⁶ It is critical to note that the three constituent nations disagreed over the map's details and territorial breakdown.

Furthermore, the Republika Srpska rejected the initial breakdown and offered a different map that claimed nearly two-thirds of BiH for the Republika and split multiple cities, including Sarajevo.³⁷ This plan would have left Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats with limited territory. Even evaluating the maps the Bosnian Serbs with the ultimate high point of Serbian aggression between 1993 and 1994, as a result of military operations and ethnic cleansing, the map presented, and the territory gained is similar. Therefore, Karadzic and the Republika Srpska were ready to use force or any means possible to achieve their objectives and create a homogenous state from the beginning.³⁸ The plan was altogether rejected within days of BiH receiving international recognition and the siege beginning.³⁹

The war unfolded in March, with sporadic tensions increasing throughout the month. On March 3, 1992, Bosnian Serbs moved on Sarajevo, but Sarajevans resisted. Early on, the spirit of Sarajevo was evident and became the pulse of resistance to Serbian aggression. By April, tensions were increasing. The SDS called on all Bosnian Serbs in Sarajevo to abandon the city and to support the Republika Srpska. As Serbs departed with few jobs and employment opportunities, many of them fell into the ranks of the paramilitary groups. President Izetbegovic ordered all reservists to help defend the city and the nation. Bosnian Serbs perceived the call for defense as an act of aggression. The Siege of Sarajevo began hours after official international recognition of an independent BiH. Armed with JNA (Yugoslav National Army) weaponry, the shelling of the city started on April 6, 1992, with ground forces crossing the Drina river from Serbia proper and taking control of the Muslim majority cities of Zvornik, Visegrad, and Foca. These cities are geographically near Serbia's border and were critical to establishing and maintaining a contiguous connection with the mother state. By May 1992, over half of BiH was engulfed in war.⁴⁰

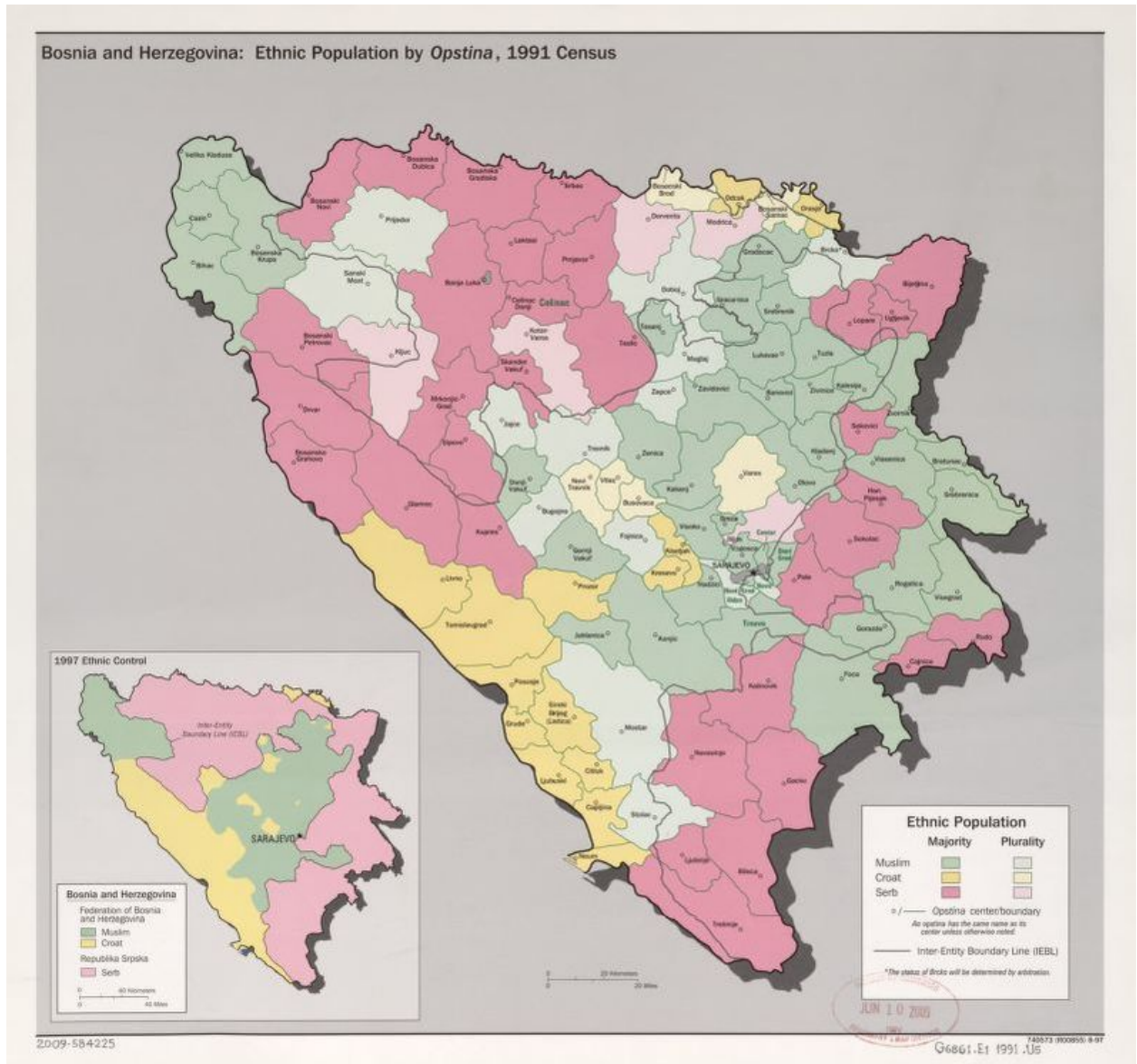
³⁶ Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 196. There is debate in the scholarship as to whether Ambassador Zimmerman actually suggested to Izetbegovic that he should not sign the document. At this point in time it is clear in the historiography that the US policy on the former Yugoslavia was incoherent and the US was actively supporting European leadership in the Balkans.

³⁷ Josip Guardic, *The Hour of Europe: The Western Powers and the Breakup of Yugoslavia*, 294. Guardic makes a clear assessment that one of the reasons the war occurred was because the West demonstrated a significant amount of tolerance regarding Serbian expansionist tendencies and pursuits, 303. Written in 2011 this book focuses on the years of 1987-1992 and is a more recent contribution on the scholarship on breakup of Yugoslavia and failure of the West.

³⁸ Map of territory seized Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed*, (map 2), 18. This was confirmed in the ICTY trial of Radovan Karadzic and Momcilo Krajisnik- Judgement Summary. United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

³⁹ Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 197.

⁴⁰ Ivo Daalder, "Decision To intervene," *Brookings*. December 1, 1998.



- Library of Congress, Central Intelligence Agency, 1997, showing the census of 1991.

Strategic Evaluation of Milosevic and Izetbegovic- Elite Behavior and the Employment of Ethnoreligious Nationalism

“Wars must vary with the nature of their motives and of the situation, which gives rise to them. The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and the commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.”

On War, Carl von Clausewitz ⁴¹

⁴¹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 88.

As Clausewitz articulates, the most critical strategic question that must be answered is to establish which kind of war the commander is directing. Strategy is both an iterative process and a product that bridges the present to the intended future. While this section will primarily unfold using the *ends, ways, and means* framework, strategy is iterative and evolving and tactical successes and defeats are directly connected to strategic choices. Therefore, there was carry over between the categories as tactical events drove Milosevic and Izetbegovic to make decisions and choices. After successfully producing a quick separatist war in Croatia, Milosevic sought to answer the Serbian question by fomenting a war in Bosnia. In order to achieve this, the war had to be perceived and executed as a civil war, one of ethnic hatreds in which external intervention would be viewed as ineffectual. What unfolds in these next sections is a strategic analysis of Slobodan Milosevic and Alija Izetbegovic. What will become apparent is that Milosevic leveraged ethnoreligious nationalism internally. He primarily used domestic resources, including domestic opinion, the Yugoslav Army (JNA), paramilitary forces, internal media and disparate leaders to foment conflict and achieve his political objectives. For Izetbegovic, surviving this conflict would be particularly challenging. Against war all along, Izetbegovic focused on preserving a multiethnic state, one in which Muslims were protected. However, with limited material resources to defend Bosnia and Sarajevo, Izetbegovic relied on ethnoreligious nationalism externally. By demonstrating that the Muslims and the multicultural heritage of Bosnia and Sarajevo were the primary targets of Serbian aggression, Izetbegovic leveraged international sympathy from both the West and, more importantly, the greater Islamic community to support Bosnia's defense.

Analysis of Slobodan Milosevic

After the wars of the former Yugoslavia, significant English scholarship was produced on Milosevic. Building on those contributions, this section focuses on what the ICTY proceedings reveal about his role in the Bosnian war. As Yugoslavia faced considerable challenges including rampant inflation, political weakness, and decreasing strategic importance in the West, Yugoslavia and Serbia was in crisis. Deeply tied to this was the *Serbian Question*, on the eve of the breakup of Yugoslavia, what would be the future be for the three million Serbs who lived outside of Bosnia Proper?⁴²

Using the ensuing crisis, Milosevic leveraged an opportunity to gain power. Milosevic's desired political objectives were a united Serbia and independent but geographically connected Serbian states within Croatia and BiH. This was the Greater Serbia idea.⁴³ From his rise to power as the Belgrade Party Chief, Slobodan Milosevic was never considered a nationalist and even more Milosevic was never considered religious.⁴⁴ Throughout the Wars in Yugoslavia, and in particular Bosnia, Milosevic never had a strong relationship with the leadership of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC). Yet despite this, during the war in Croatia and in the early months of

⁴² I am unsure who originally generated the language of the "Serbian Question" however it is prevalent throughout all scholarship as a truism.

⁴³ The Greater Serbia idea is highly vague. What it concretely meant and the willingness of Milosevic to pursue the Greater Serbia and at which cost, or risk, is not well developed in the scholarship. This is my analysis of what the Greater Serbia idea generally referred to as the war went on. In 1990- before war in Bosnia- Operation RAM was developed. Operation RAM was the closest plan that provided parameters for achieving the 'Greater Serbia.' For what I have assessed the details are close to what Karadzic outlined in May 1992 in his six strategic objectives for the Republika Srpska. See. Danner, "The Horrors of a Camp called Omarska and the Serb Strategy."

⁴⁴ Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 129-130.

the wars in Bosnia, the SOC was loyal to Milosevic.⁴⁵ Moreover, considering his communist roots, his ability to leverage ethnoreligious nationalism to pursue the Greater Serbia idea is particularly surprising and is a testament to his capacity as a charismatic leader. Framing everything on past grievances, history supplied the necessary justification to pursue national and political interests, no matter the cost.⁴⁶

Bosnian Serbs- Strategic Means

As stated in the introduction, strategic *means* refer to the resources available for employment in pursuit of political objectives. This strategic evaluation on Milosevic's means begins in the years and months prior to the conflict beginning. Milosevic's three main resources were religious institutions, the media, and paramilitary organizations. Defying attempts to evaluate them separately, they often interacted together. The ethnoreligious divisions had to be radicalized in order to spark a civil war. Using past grievances, Milosevic transformed himself from an effective communist boss to a chauvinist nationalist leader and the defender of the Serbs.

Religious Organizations- Strategic Means

Religion scholars Vjekoslav Perica,⁴⁷ Paul Mojzes,⁴⁸ and Michael Sells⁴⁹ provide scholarship investigating the relationship between mythmaking, national identity, and religion as they related to the Balkan wars. As best said by Michael Petrovich, "religion was not so much a matter of private conscience as it was one's public identity."⁵⁰ Considering western secularity, their contributions challenge the prevalent western understanding of religion and the relationship between religious institutions and the state. Throughout the history of the Balkans including the wars in the former Yugoslavia, religion and religious institutions were a major source of political legitimacy and agency for nation formation. Furthermore, religious leaders worked with academics and intellectuals in bolstering myths of national identity, history, and origin.⁵¹

The most symbiotic relationship between the church and state in the Balkans is the relationship between Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) and Serbian state. The SOC was the considered the protector of the Serbian nation, intimately involved in the cultural and spiritual welfare of the state.⁵² Additionally, with an emphasis on the continuity of Catholicism, the Croatian Catholic church too viewed itself as the legitimate protector of the Croatian people and nation.⁵³ Thirteen centuries of Christianity in Croatia was used by the Tudjman and Catholic leaders as a political tool to mobilize to support independence. Both Tudjman and Milosevic

⁴⁵ Even after Patriarch Pavle went on to criticize Milosevic he never broke the narrative of Serbian victimization nor did he ever accept any blame for the atrocities. Associated Press. "Serbian Orthodox Church Patriarch Pavle dies at 95."

⁴⁶ Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides*, 9-15. Mojzes unpacks the connections and theories on how ethnic cleansing and genocide was used in the nation building process.

⁴⁷ Perica. *Balkan Idols Religion and Nationalism In Yugoslavia*.

⁴⁸ Mojzes. *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century*.

⁴⁹ Sells. *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia*.

⁵⁰ Cited in Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*, 5.

⁵¹ Perica's book that is cited throughout this paper best pieces together the nexus of religion and politics.

⁵² Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*, 25.

⁵³ Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*, 10

used religious and historical symbology and myths to mobilize support for their political causes and radicalize the population.

Throughout the war, the Serbian Orthodox Church supported the Serbian cause. This was best represented by the Patriarch of Belgrade, Patriarch Pavle. To be clear, while much of the support was implicit and tacit, Patriarch Pavle explicitly and publicly supported the Bosnian Serbs. Prior to breakout of the war in Bosnia, he wrote a letter to all Orthodox churches in which he urged the protection of Croatian Serbs from “Croatian neo-fascist regime” and justified the war in Croatia as righteous.⁵⁴ While the SOC gained unprecedented access to the top of Belgrade leadership which bolstered a renewed religiosity of the Serbian people, it also inadvertently became a servant of ethnoreligious nationalism and militancy and supported extremists like Arkan.⁵⁵ Zeljko Raznatovic, known as Arkan, was the commander of the most lethal paramilitary force in Bosnia, the Serbian Volunteer Guard, better known as Arkan’s Tigers. Patriarch Pavle even personally met with Arkan. In context of this relationship, Arkan regarded the patriarch as his “commander,” stating that they were fighting “for the Serbian Orthodox church, their religion.”⁵⁶ Patriarch Pavle was also close with Republika Srpska President Karadzic and publicly supported Karadzic’s rejection of the Vance Owen plan. As late as 1994, Pavle claimed that Serbs were native to Bosnia and that Muslims only arrived when the Ottomans *invaded*.⁵⁷ At a local level, Priests of the SOC were members of the Republika Srpska parliament. Rank and file priests blessed the fighting, publicly supported the fighting, and even reportedly participated in battles. In 1995 Tilman Zulich, President of the international NGO Society for Threatened Peoples, stated in 2005 that “Since 1991, Patriarch Pavle and a vast majority of Serbian bishops have repeatedly stood up for Serbia’s annexation of ethnically cleansed regions in Croatia and Bosnia.” Rhetorically it was considered “unchristian” to blame Serbs for aggression. Videos of the massacre of Srebrenica included a Serbian Abbot Gavrilo from a monastery outside of Belgrade blessing the Serbian murders of six Muslims from Srebrenica. Zulich argues that the SOC, under the leadership of Pavle, were guilty of crimes. At a minimum, the continued support of the Bosnian Serb cause for the majority of the war demonstrates how the SOC was complicit to the destruction of 500 years of a plural Bosnia.⁵⁸

As the reports of genocide became more public, the SOC took an active stance in spreading denial as well as the guilt and responsibility, instead of taking a moral position regarding the loss of innocent lives and targeting of innocents.⁵⁹ The intermingling of political and religious leaders, especially in the Republika Srpska helped to galvanize their cause and influence Bosnian Serbs, Serbians, and the Serbian diaspora to at least condone the events or to even join a paramilitary organization and participate in ethnic cleansing. Ethnoreligious nationalism was instrumental to galvanizing and rationalizing the war’s atrocities.

⁵⁴ Canadian Orthodox History Project. “Patriarch Pavle II (Stojcevic).”

⁵⁵ Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed*, 79-92.

⁵⁶ Canadian Orthodox History Project. “Patriarch Pavle II (Stojcevic).”

⁵⁷ Italics added by author. Canadian Orthodox History Project. “Patriarch Pavle II (Stojcevic).” Sells, *A Bridge Betrayed*, 83.

⁵⁸ Society for Threatened Peoples. “The Serbian Orthodox Church supported the genocide of Bosnians.”

⁵⁹ Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*, 5 Sells, *Bridge Betrayed*, 84. The Holy Episcopal Synod went so far as to issue a statement of denial “In the name of God’s truth and on the testimony from other trustworthy witnesses, we declare, taking full moral responsibility, that such camps neither have existed nor exist in the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.”

Ultimately the war was not based on differences of religious doctrine but of national origin which became sanctified by religious institutions.⁶⁰ This is more nuanced than the predominate Western understanding of the war in BiH. For example, Susan Woodward's book, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, did not capture the role of religion within the ethnonationalist chauvinism thesis. Moreover, from the Western perspective, South Slavs were secular and largely unpracticing. However, as the war endured, each nationalist government found political support from their religious institutions. While this resulted in increased religiosity, the upsurge of religion was mostly political movements that leveraged religion for political purposes, as opposed to movements genuinely inspired by faith.⁶¹ Elites used religious and intellectual leaders to mobilize the people to support their political agendas and to build nearly homogenous nation-states. While this was more easily obtainable in Serbia and even Croatia, given that the preponderance Orthodox Serbs lived in the eastern part of Croatia, this was far more difficult in plural Bosnia. In Sarajevo, which was home to the most self-identified Yugoslavs, the othering process left them without a group of identity. As the war waged on, the nexus between religion, identity, and nationalism grew closer and was reinforced by actual and perceived atrocities.

The Media- Strategic Means

Mark Thompson's book *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia Herzegovina*, is a highly focused project investigating the role of the media and propaganda in the breakup of the former Yugoslavia. His central thesis argues that while the conflict was portrayed as deep-rooted, tribal and impenetrable. In fact, there was nothing inevitable about the conflict in former Yugoslavia.⁶² Within the context of studying modern warfare, the wars of former Yugoslavia are critical. The media was no longer on the sidelines; it was an essential part of the frontline.⁶³ In an ethnoreligious conflict, psychological operations are directed towards influencing civilians. Under Communism Yugoslavia, the media was the state-owned and thus controlled by the party. State ownership of media remained during the rise of nationalist parties and the tradition of manipulating (falsifying) the media continued. It is also important to note that although the former Yugoslav republics were enduring a semi-democratic rebirth, a powerful independent media never existed.⁶⁴ Nationalistic propaganda campaigns began almost immediately after Tito's death, long before the first shots were fired. The major themes included victimization, the inevitability of future conflict, and the impossibility of cohabitation. It was created and sustained by intellectuals, political leaders, and religious leaders alike. The myth of ancient hatred became a perceived reality.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*, 5.

⁶¹ Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*, 218.

⁶² Thompson, "Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina," 15.

⁶³ Thompson, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 15.

⁶⁴ Thompson, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 282. A rare exception was in Slovenia where independent media was strong. This does not suggest that independent media did not exist throughout Yugoslavia, it certainly did but their resources were limited, and their circulation was small. They were also subject to intimidation and threats. Milosevic in particular allowed certain independent newspapers to continue, most notably the *Vreme*. As long as small voices like that of *Vreme* remained limited Milosevic would be able to claim to the international community that Serbia had independent media and thus encouraging democratic processes such as political dissent.

⁶⁵ Thompson, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 289.

The pivotal moment that gave intellectual legitimacy to the ethnoreligious nationalist movement began in 1986 with the ‘leaked’ Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU).⁶⁶ The SANU memorandum offers a revisionist history that challenged the legacy of Tito and exacerbated increasing concerns in the wake of Serbian political and economic failures. The main theme of the document became a mantra of Serbian nationalism: Yugoslavia’s constitutional structure actually discriminated against the Serbs. The increasing decentralization, which began with the 1974 Constitution, weakened the central government of Yugoslavia, which weakened the Serbs.⁶⁷ When the infallibility of Tito was questioned in the 1980s, grievances of the past resurfaced. As noted earlier, Tito’s Yugoslavia made no effort to truly reconcile history, particularly the lived experiences of WWII.

The media was Milosevic’s most powerful tool. According to a media expert for Milosevic’s Hague proceeding, “Without the media, and especially without television, war in the former Yugoslavia was inconceivable.”⁶⁸ Milosevic portrayed Serbs as the perpetual victim in a long historic tragedy best captured in the legacy of King Lazar which was manifested in Milosevic’s speech on the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. Given three years before war in Bosnia, on June 28, 1989, Milosevic spoke of continuous unity among the Serbian people: “Six centuries later, now, we are being again engaged in battles and are facing battles. They are not armed battles, although such things cannot be excluded yet. However, regardless of what kind of battles they are, they cannot be won without resolve, bravery, and sacrifice, without the noble qualities that were present here in the field of Kosovo in the days past.”⁶⁹

In preparation for the celebration, Milosevic commissioned the creation of a full-length film that recreated the Battle of Kosovo for the masses.⁷⁰ Building on historic memory, the ethnoreligious nationalism that characterized the war in Bosnia was forged. Frequently, scenes of the movie and other films were manipulated with images of battles in modern Bosnia, to reinforce the impossibility of Serbians and Muslims living together and to build a narrative of continuity between ancient grievances and modern victimization.⁷¹

With a history of multiethnic tolerance and religious plurality, establishing an acceptable narrative of division was especially difficult in BiH. This conflict required a process in which ordinary people, neighbors, were transformed into enemies. In that regard, Thompson asserts directly that the use of the media was essential to the strategy of the various leaders.⁷² Building on South Slav myths, Muslims were constantly portrayed as race-traitors and the decedents of oppressors.⁷³ The Serb and Croat media strategy in Bosnia was to generate fear, hatred, and

⁶⁶ Most scholarship discussing the rise of Milosevic and the impending Yugoslav wars cite the SANU Memorandum as the source of Serbian nationalism.

⁶⁷ Mojzes, *Yugoslav inferno*, 161-162. The 1974 Constitution gave Muslims titular recognition in Yugoslavia and in particular Bosnia, but it also expanded the rights of the autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, which served as a continuing trend of decentralization among the republics.

⁶⁸ Armatta, “Milosevic’s Propaganda War.”

⁶⁹ Slobodan Milosevic’s 1989 St. Vitus Day Speech, June 28, 1989 Retrieved from the University of Arizona Center for Middle Eastern Studies. Transcript. A key reminder in history, June 28th 1914 was the day in which the a Bosnian Serb, Gavrilo Princip, assassinated the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria.

⁷⁰ Sotra, Zdravko, dir. *The Battle of Kosovo*. Film.

⁷¹ Williams, “Serb Using Grisly Film as Propaganda.”

⁷² Thompson, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 291.

⁷³ Wilmer, *The Social Construction of Man, State, and War*, 163.

racism to serve two purposes: homogenize the people into national or ethnic groups thus gaining wide support for their objectives and then to place the responsibility of the atrocities back onto the people, not the political leadership.⁷⁴ This created the perception that war was a civil war and not one of aggression. Even prior to the independence of BiH, the Yugoslav Army controlled the radio and refused access to Muslim leaders while providing the Serbian SDS party unlimited access. Those efforts built a perceivable connection between the SDS's political goals and the necessary acts to achieve those goals, thus creating an atmosphere that made it easier for average individuals to commit atrocities.⁷⁵ From December 1991 through the start of the war in April 1992 there was a marked increase in local weapon purchases among average Bosnian citizens, especially Serbs. Tensions were building long before the first shots were fired.

On the local tactical level video, radio, and print propaganda preyed upon the divisions between the ethnic groups. The more tribal, ethnic, and religious the wars were perceived the more it played into the goals of the aggressors. At the most basic level, tensions were not about resources and interests but identity and territory. Thus, all propaganda encouraged divisions among identities. Paul Mojzes refers to this as a "return of primitivism." Dualism, good versus bad, was used by the intelligentsia through the media to encourage group identity over the individual. As Mojzes argues, "In the Balkans the most frequent manner of appropriating one's identity is by rejecting and destroying the identities of others."⁷⁶

Within the Republika Srpska, Karadzic was at the forefront of the campaign to persuade all Bosnians of the impossibility of cohabitation. After setting up the Bosnian Serb proto state, he also created an independent television network, Chanel S, and the Bosnian Serb News Agency (BNSA). It officially launched April 8, 1992, within days of BiH gaining independence and the war beginning. To support ethnic cleansing, the BSNA created a standardized narrative that was replicated throughout the war. A "warning" of an impending attack or "genocide" against Bosnian Serbs would be reported through Chanel S which was then followed up by a direct attack on a certain city or town by the Serbs, citing false victimization and Serbian defense. Using forced confessions, Channel S would tape a supposed confession of a planned attack and then use the confession as propaganda and justification for previous and future attacks. Often these "reports" would go back to Belgrade to shore up continued support from the motherland.⁷⁷

Throughout the siege of Sarajevo, Karadzic and other leaders constantly employed misdirection techniques to suggest that Muslims were attacking themselves, even when the Muslims, as a result of international sanctions had very limited weapons.⁷⁸ So effective was this narrative that even the first UNPROFOR Commander, General Mackenzie, was convinced the Muslims were attacking the city, despite contrary evidence.⁷⁹

In a more traditional approach, Channel S televised ceremonies of soldiers receiving awards for the number of Muslims they had killed. Maintaining support for the fight, despite increasingly economic difficulties was paramount. Throughout these images, religious symbols, idols, and liturgical practices were invoked to reinforce the spiritual righteousness of the events and the cause.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Thompson, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 300.

⁷⁵ Thompson, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 215-220.

⁷⁶ Mojzes, *Yugoslav Inferno*. 61.

⁷⁷ Thompson, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 250-252.

⁷⁸ Thompson, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 250-252.

⁷⁹ John Burns, "Bosnian Troops to Fail to Break Serb's Tight Siege of Sarajevo" *New York Times*. August 2, 1992.

⁸⁰ Thompson, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 293.

A pivotal example in the role of the media and its contributory influence on operations was revealed in 2010. The ICTY noted how false and misleading propaganda were used in the events leading up to the massacre at Srebrenica that occurred in July 1995. Following the capture of the UNPROFOR base at Poticari, the Serbs took a video of General Mladic that portrayed him as the empathetic leader.⁸¹ He was seen greeting children, talking to women, and ordering food and water for the terrified Muslims. All along he assured them that they have nothing to fear. These videos were then sent back to Belgrade to bolster support for the Serbian cause. After these videos were shot, the Serbians rounded up all military aged men and boys and executed the largest mass killing since WWII.⁸²

Paramilitary organizations and Disparate Leaders- Strategic Means

As a result of Milosevic's nationalist campaign, Serbian unity spread quickly. Within Bosnia, Milosevic supported the rise of extreme ethnoreligious nationalist Radovan Karadzic. He also supplied the Republika Srpska with military might.⁸³ What became evident through the ICTY investigations was the deliberate political maneuvering Milosevic performed in the leadup to and throughout the war. In December 1991, Milosevic ordered the reorganization of the JNA and withdrew all non-Bosnian born soldiers. He also "transferred" all Bosnian born Serb JNA soldiers back to Bosnia.⁸⁴ With Bosnian independence under consideration, these moves would prevent the perception that the JNA was a "foreign force", and thus help to solidify a civil war narrative. By 1992, only ten to fifteen percent of the JNA soldiers in BiH were from outside the republic. A newspaper article from April 1992, just as the war the war began, is particularly revealing. Milosevic commented that the "JNA was putting down a Muslim rebellion in an area that had backing from Libya and Iran... as part of an Islamic conspiracy." "Paramilitary formations in Serbia are forbidden and no paramilitary formations will be allowed to cross into Bosnia and Serbia." While he drew a direct parallel between Bosnian Independence and an Islamic conspiracy, he was also careful regarding paramilitary formations. Perhaps paramilitary formations were forbidden in Serbia, but they were already present in Bosnia months before the conflict. Milosevic was able to assert plausible deniability with carefully chosen words and narrative.⁸⁵

In many ways, the complexity of Milosevic's connection to the Bosnian and Croatian Serbs were not completely known until his tribunal proceedings. While the US held him responsible for the Dayton proceedings, the details of the criminal enterprise were not revealed until much later. From a ICTY witness:

"The Serbs relied almost entirely on the support they got from Serbia, from the officer corps, from the intelligence, from the pay, from the heavy weapons, from the anti-aircraft

⁸¹ Ahmetasevic, "Hague Recognizes Propaganda's Role in Srebrenica Genocide."

⁸² Rhode, *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica, Europe's worst Massacre since World War II*, 51-181.

⁸³ Uzelac, "Milosevic wiretap revelations." *The Guardian*.

⁸⁴ See BBC documentary, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, this five-part documentary, produced in 1995 actually has the main actors, Milosevic, Tudjman and Izetbegovic among others, directly interviewed. Milosevic actually discusses how he transferred the Bosnian born Soldiers back to Bosnia prior to the conflict. Transcripts of the interviews were used in the ICTY proceedings. Full transcripts are held at the Liddell Hart Center for Military Archives at King's College London.

⁸⁵ Harden, "Serbs Tighten Grip on Bosnian Town Despite Strong International Outcry."

arrangements. Had Belgrade chosen even to significantly limit that support, I think that earlier rather than having to force them militarily into a weaker position.”⁸⁶

In 2001 the ICTY labelled the relationship as a joint criminal enterprise aimed at “the forcible removal of Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats from large areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina.”⁸⁷ Because the complexity of these connections was not entirely evident until much later into the war and thereafter, suggests that the narrative of ethno-religious nationalism was highly persuasive not only in generating the tensions on the ground but in deceiving the international community. Through 1995, the Bosnian Serbs continued to claim that they were Europe’s protector from a Muslim invasion.

Throughout the conflict, Milosevic remained distanced from culpability. This was reinforced by the presence of paramilitary organizations which, as noted, bolstered the civil war narrative and prolonged peace negotiations. Previously introduced, the most famous paramilitary organization was the Tigers under the command of Arkan. Prior to the war, he was in exile in Europe, running criminal enterprises which put him on Interpol’s most wanted list.⁸⁸ The Serb volunteer guard, roughly 200 highly radicalized men, were the first force to execute ethnic cleansing in Eastern Bosnia and thus established the egregious precedent and process. Throughout the war, it was assumed that there was a connection between Arkan, Karadzic, and Milosevic. Declassified CIA documents demonstrate conclusively that Arkan received his orders and direction from Belgrade. Arkan’s criminal enterprise was also vital to arming Serbs in both eastern Croatia (Krajina) and throughout BiH.⁸⁹ These documents are dated October 1995 which suggests that war when broke out and reports of ethnic cleansing surfaced, the larger military strategy was unknown. There were at least eleven known Serbian paramilitary organizations operating in Bosnia, all of which officially were separate and thus unaccounted for by the state.⁹⁰

The narrative of Serbian victimization continued when the West, led by the United States, increased hefty sanctions on Serbia. America and the West became the enemy. Milosevic appealed to the international community as well, aligning himself with Russian hardlines. United by history and Orthodoxy, Russian nationalists viewed themselves as the traditional allies of Serbia and were resistant to the New World Order that the United States pursued. They argued that America would benefit from a destabilized Balkan region and resisted increased American intervention.⁹¹ This weak alignment continued until Russia became concerned that the conflict would escalate beyond the Balkans and thus supported the efforts by the contact group for peace.

War Aims- Political Ends- Bosnian Serbs

From the onset of the war, Karadzic’s and Milosevic’s media campaigns were highly influential in fomenting a rebellion against Bosnian Independence. The propaganda was so significant that the international community remained divided over whether to evaluate the war, as one of aggression by a foreign force or a civil war. Based upon evidence from the

⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch, “Lessons from the Trial of Slobodan Milosevic.”

⁸⁷ Human Rights Watch, “Lessons from the Trial of Slobodan Milosevic.”

⁸⁸ Carol Williams, “Profile: ‘Arkan’ a Suave Serbian Rogue.” *LA Times*.

⁸⁹ Director for Central Intelligence, “The Military Role of the Serbian Interior Ministry in the Yugoslav Conflict.”

⁹⁰ Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts on the Bosnian War, 28 December 1994. Bruce Campbell & Arthur Brenner, *Death Squads in Global Perspective: Murder in Denial with Deniability*. James Ron Chapter 11 “Territoriality and Plausible Deniability: Serbian Paramilitaries in the Bosnian War.”

⁹¹ Spolar, “Serb Russian Nationalists Forging Alliance from wreckage of Bosnian Strife.”

International Criminal Trial of the former Yugoslavia, this paper supports the claim that this conflict was intended by Karadzic and Milosevic to create a homogenous Serbian State through forcible expulsion of the other ethnic communities. Concerning net assessment and strategic approach, the Croatian war was the example that Milosevic followed. While the international community debated the principles of the right of self-determination and the permanence of international borders established by the Helsinki Accords, it was the Serbian objectives that determined to homogenize BiH that remained unknown to the international community and was the catalyst to genocide.⁹² Not mentioned in any of the significant sources of scholarship consulted for this study, but revealed through the ICTY, the Bosnian Serbs had clear political ends. On May 12, 1992, Radovan Karadzic, under the approval of the Bosnian Serb Assembly, published the six strategic objectives of the Serbian People in Bosnia and Herzegovina:⁹³

- 1) Establish State borders separating the Serbian people from the other two ethnic communities.
- 2) Set up a corridor between Semberija and Krajina.
- 3) Establish a corridor on the Drina river valley, that is, eliminate the Drina as a border separating Serbian states.
- 4) Establish a border on the Una and Neretva Rivers.
- 5) Divide the city of Sarajevo into Serbian and Muslim parts and establish effective State authorities in both parts.
- 6) Ensure access to the sea for Republika Srpska.

Shortly thereafter, Karadzic placed Ratko Mladic in command of the Army of the Republika Srpska. In November 1992, General Mladic issued a military directive that expanded on a strategy to achieve the six objectives. The order included clear language such as “launch offensive operations to crush Croatian Defense Council and Muslim groupings in the territory of Republika Srpska and force them into unconditionally surrendering their weapons or destroy them.” And in the eastern parts of Bosnia, “The Drina Corps: from its present positions, its main forces shall persistently defend Visegrad (location of a dam connecting BiH and Serbia proper)... and exhaust the enemy, inflict the heaviest possible losses on him and force him to leave.... Offer able-bodied men to surrender, and if they refuse, destroy them.”⁹⁴ It is not the intent of this section to retry the proceedings of the ICTY, but to use the evidence to demonstrate the clear language of both strategic and military objectives. The connection between Milosevic and Karadzic was also considered a joint criminal enterprise by the ICTY. As the military lines in Serbian controlled Krajina (Croatia) hardened under the UN's control, Milosevic pursued an additional rapid military success in Bosnia to create a larger contiguous state using Karadzic, the JNA, and paramilitary organizations to pursue these objectives.⁹⁵ These objectives and the subsequent operational approach, as described by Mladic, were direct and clear, indicative of a high level of sophisticated planning and personal operational oversight.

Strategic Ways-Bosnian Serbs

⁹² Debates on the Helsinki accords are well covered in Woodward's, *Balkan Tragedy*, pg. 150-153.

⁹³ International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. “Mladic Indictment.” October 10, 2002.

⁹⁴ Main Staff of the Army of Republika Srpska.

⁹⁵ International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. *Prosecutor v. Ratko Mladic*. Judgement Summary. 22 November 2017.

For Bosnian Serbs, the two main *ways*, or methods, used to achieve the objectives were siege warfare and ethnic cleansing. This first section will evaluate the siege and then will be followed by an analysis of ethnic cleansing. The tactical goal of the Siege was to split the city into two and the strategic goal was to destroy the multicultural history of Bosnia and Sarajevo. Ethnoreligious nationalism justified the universal destruction of plural history and incited localized hatred and distrust. Often targeted for attack were religious and historical buildings. These locations served limited to no tactical purpose. Yet, ethnoreligious nationalism justified the universal destruction of plural history and incited localized hatred and distrust for political purposes. Ethnoreligious nationalism connected the totality of siege warfare with the localized brutality of ethnic cleansing. Additionally, this section demonstrates that until the Serbs faced tactical defeat, strategic resolution and peacemaking would not occur. Surprisingly, the Dayton Accords closely solidified the Serbian goals outlined above. However, if the Bosnian Serbs achieved control of a significant portion of Bosnia through a total victory they would have likely done so. This section does not include every detail of the Siege of Sarajevo or of the ethnic cleansing but highlights important aspects from the strategic analysis.

Siege of Sarajevo- Strategic Way

The Siege of Sarajevo began on April 4, 1992 and ended February 29, 1996. For 1,425 days, the longest siege in modern history, the European symbol of plurality and tolerance was under attack. As scholar James Turner Johnson argues, the employment of the siege is critical because it represents three interrelated factors that dominated the Bosnian War. First, local undisciplined tribal militias states replaced disciplined military forces. The conflict, ethnic cleansing, and destruction of cities were indicative of a localized intractability. Second, the tensions were deep-rooted and exasperated by a media campaign that began years before the Balkans erupted in conflict. This type of uncertainty does not encourage compromise or settlements. The war becomes total. Finally, the conduct of the war, one that is dominated by the pursuit of territorial gain through force and the homogenization of the territory, is costly in both blood and treasure because there is no distinction between the army and the people. Everyone and all that are considered the “other” are ultimately targets.⁹⁶ Implied in his argument and what connects the three interrelated factors is ethnoreligious nationalism. The prevalent destruction of historical religious and cultural centers that previously survived conflict, including WWII, indicates that conditions were different from what had previously been characteristic of the ethnic tensions.

As Robert Kaplan argues in *Balkan Ghosts*, the Balkans is where history is alive.⁹⁷ As such, there is a persistent focus on historical memory. In evaluating the characteristics of the Bosnian War, siege warfare is an example of ancient history becoming alive for those fighting. It is often considered the oldest form of total war.⁹⁸ One side uses the isolation and destruction that siege warfare encompasses to force the population to capitulate and leave. Destroying and defeating an opponent’s military is secondary to obtaining and maintaining control of physical territory and cleansing it of the ‘other.’ Geographically, like Sarajevo, many Bosnian cities are in valleys surrounded by mountains and hills. As a result, there was minimal maneuvering to seize

⁹⁶ James Turner Johnson, “War for Cities and Noncombatant Immunity in the Bosnian Conflict”, in *Religion and Justice in the War in Bosnia*, 65.

⁹⁷ Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts*, 33.

⁹⁸ James Turner Johnson, *Religion and Justice in the War in Bosnia*, 80.

control of the high ground and lines of communication. Facing rugged terrain, armed predominately with small arms and unadvanced weaponry, each force had to occupy and defend territory. Through persistence, siege warfare can coerce the civilian population to flee without fighting house to house. In a war to gain territory, those who remain in a besieged city, regardless of ethnicity, relegate themselves to being classified as the “other.”⁹⁹ It was also a powerful visual for the world. It was unfathomable that citizens of a European country would willingly destroy an entire city for specific tactical purposes.

The UN Commission on the study of the Siege of Sarajevo provides the most detailed account of the Siege. The 1994 report described three types of shelling: 1) specific targeting, 2) indiscriminate shelling, and 3) random shelling. As reported by the United Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR), daily shelling included 200-300 impacts on a quiet day with roughly 800-1,000 shells on an active day. While the city was under Siege for over 1400 days, the UNPROFOR was limited to actively counting shells for only 196 days. In under 200 days, the city was subject to shelling no less than 65,000 times.¹⁰⁰ The UNPROFOR also confirmed that the majority of the targets were religious, historical, governmental buildings, hospitals, infrastructure, and utility networks. While it is difficult to ascertain how the siege impacted the psychological well-being of the citizens, the government of BiH reported a rapid increase in suicide rates, a near double abortion rate, and a 50% decrease in birth rates during the siege.¹⁰¹

Tactically, an operational approach began that continued throughout the war: JNA regular artillery supporting paramilitary infantry. Multiple reports demonstrate that the JNA often followed the Geneva law of armed conflict while the paramilitary forces were accused of the most severe atrocities.¹⁰² When Serb forces, with overwhelming firepower began their effort to split the city, the tactical objectives took on an ethnoreligious character. General Mladic targeted the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo, which was the largest repository of Islamic and Jewish manuscripts in South Eastern Europe.¹⁰³ Over five thousand priceless manuscripts in the South Slav language of Aljamiado, Hebrew, Persian, Arabic, and Turkish were destroyed. If that was not enough, on August 25-26, 1992 the forces under General Mladic burned the National Library in Sarajevo and its 1.2 million volumes of shared history. The building itself was an example of Austrian neo-Moorish architecture.¹⁰⁴ From a military point of view, the building was of zero value, but it housed centuries of interreligious and interethnic tolerance and history. For Sarajevans, the purpose became evident, “To tear forever the threads that link us, and to erase any traces of the different people had shared lives together.”¹⁰⁵

While the world watched on, Mladic’s forces replicated a pattern of targeting ancient religious and historical artifacts. As the Serbs, and increasingly after 1993, Croats, seized control of territory they destroyed symbols of religious and historical tolerance. Serb and HVO (Croat) troops leveled all representation of the “other.” Hundreds of Catholic churches and Muslim mosques were destroyed, including the nearly 1000-year-old mosque in Stolac.¹⁰⁶ After

⁹⁹ Johnson, *Religion and Justice in the War in Bosnia*, 70.

¹⁰⁰ United Nations Commission of Experts, “Final Report: Study of the Battle and Siege of Sarajevo.”

¹⁰¹ Tabeau, “Population Losses in the ‘Siege of Sarajevo.’”

¹⁰² James Turner Johnson, *Religion and Justice in the War in Bosnia*, 65.

¹⁰³ Though largely overlooked in scholarship, for over 500 years there was a small but thriving Jewish community in Bosnia, many of whom left and never returned after the war began.

¹⁰⁴ Davis. *Religion Justice in the War in Bosnia*, 25.

¹⁰⁵ Deutsche Welle, “Burned Library symbolizes multiethnic Sarajevo.”

¹⁰⁶ United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization. “The Natural and Architectural Ensemble of Stolac.”

destroying all the mosques in Zvornik, the local commander Branko Grujic declared, “There were never any mosques in Zvornik.”¹⁰⁷ As Michael Sells poignantly observes, “History is recreated in the image of the destroyer.”¹⁰⁸

By May 1992, Bosnian Serbs secured a total blockade of the city. Tactics included shutting down major access roads, which cut off food and water. The city’s water, power, electricity, and heating were shut off. While the Serb forces had superior weaponry, the local forces, the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, had the manpower. After multiple attempts to take and split the city, the Serb forces dug in and fully embraced siege tactics. Radovan Karadzic was quoted in Belgrade newspaper, saying that Sarajevo “will be liberated by an agreement or by other means.”¹⁰⁹ May 27, 1992 was labeled the breadline massacre. Three shells hit the bread line at the Vase Miskina street market, killing sixteen and injuring nearly 70.¹¹⁰ After the attack, as the Serbian forces acknowledged the shelling but accused the Muslims of committing fratricide to gain international sympathy. All retrospective analysis implicated the Serbs, but at the moment, so powerful was the Serbian media apparatus that there was a significant concern that the Bosnian forces had committed fratricide.

The blockade of humanitarian aid was a critical intermediate or supporting objective of the siege. During the siege's peak, an estimated four hundred thirty thousand people were dependent on imported aid in Sarajevo and the surrounding areas.¹¹¹ Lack of food and water adversely affected the population in the city. The corresponding malnutrition rates were similar to that of developing nations. Fuel shortages and the breakdown in infrastructure resulted in the shutdown of water pumping stations and other essential services. The city’s hospital had to function without lights, x-ray machines, and monitors. Due to the location of Sarajevo, aid could only be transported via air. As a result, the Sarajevo airport was one of the most shelled areas of the city. A chronological overlay suggests a possible correlation between the airport's shelling with an intent to prevent the arrival of humanitarian goods.¹¹²

Beyond controlling humanitarian aid, the use of utilities was also a coercive weapon of war. Throughout the siege, the Serbian forces destroyed the main gas, eclectic, phone, and water lines. Accusations of using utility control as a weapon of war came from both the defenders and the enemy forces.¹¹³ Additionally, UN-led and local efforts to repair the infrastructure proved futile due to shelling and sniper fire, resulting in numerous injuries and deaths. The control of water was particularly dire. Public water points were targets for sniper fire and shelling. The tough winter conditions put the city’s inhabitants at risk for starvation and freezing. Because of a shortage of heating and fuel sources, many citizen’s cut down the city’s trees and used their own personal furniture and books for heat. As the siege took its toll, parks were turned into graveyards.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ Williams, “Serbs Stay Their Ground on Muslim Land.”

¹⁰⁸ Sells, *Religion Justice in the War in Bosnia*, 25.

¹⁰⁹ Harden, “Serbia Unmoved by Western Warnings: Belgrade Presses Offensive in Bosnia.”

¹¹⁰ Burns, “Mortar Attack on Civilians Leaves 16 Dead in Bosnia.”

¹¹¹ Tadeusz, “Commission on Human Rights, Situation of Human Rights in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia.”

¹¹² Flights were frequently grounded. The reports reviewed demonstrate that on certain instances, even a single shot fired in the direction of a relief aircraft suspended the humanitarian airlift. It is easy to deduce that the forces therefore knew that any shelling or combat near the airport will likely suspend airlift operation. United Nations Commission of Experts, “Final Report: Study of the Battle and Siege of Sarajevo.”

¹¹³ United Nations Commission of Experts, “Final Report: Study of the Battle of Siege of Sarajevo.”

¹¹⁴ Shenon, “A postwar shortage in Sarajevo: Space for Graves.”

Ethnic Cleansing- Strategic Ways

In addition to siege warfare, ethnic cleansing was the dominant way in which ethnoreligious nationalism was used to achieve the Bosnian Serb objectives. The JNA supported paramilitary organizations, orchestrated and executed ethnic cleansing.¹¹⁵ As noted, siege warfare is a form of total war. Despite its destructive nature, there remains a certain amount of distance between the defenders and aggressors. While sniper fire and shelling cause incredible damage, rarely did the aggressors know the person on the other end. In the rural areas outside of Sarajevo and other cities, the towns and villages were much more insular. With lower education rates, lack of employment opportunities, higher rates of weak religion, and an emphasis on shared and collective memory, the breakup of Yugoslavia pushed these inhabitants into an identity crisis.¹¹⁶ The leaders, particularly Milosevic and Karadzic, “made a conscious choice to rally support appealing to grievances which had long been the subject of political discourse, which were constructed in terms of identity with political, historical, and religious narratives.”¹¹⁷ Under the leadership and command of paramilitary organizations, neighbors committed atrocities.

While the international community focused on the events in Sarajevo, the spring and summer of 1992 was also the dominant period of ‘ethnic cleansing’ in northern and eastern Bosnia. The siege began on 6 April. On April 7 and 8, 1992 following the international recognition of the independent Bosnian State, Serb forces crossed the Drina from Serbia. They quickly absorbed local Serbian paramilitaries and took control of Zvornik, Visegrad, and Foca, firmly establishing the pattern of ethnic cleansing along the way.¹¹⁸ These atrocities were most notably captured by Roy Gutman in his 1993 Pulitzer Prize winning reporting.¹¹⁹ Initially reported by Gutman, and subsequently confirmed by many journalists and investigators for the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), the most egregious ethnic cleansing occurred in the smaller and more rural parts of Bosnia, which were largely isolated geographically. The topography and geography are similar to western Virginia and West Virginia, with steep hills and isolated towns. The strategic objective of ethnic cleansing was to forcibly remove or “cleanse” heterogeneous populations and therefore achieve homogeneous footholds, independence, and autonomy within Bosnia. Though lacking the strategic terminology, the role of ethnic cleansing as a strategic way is best summarized by Paul Mojzes in *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the 20th Century*. According to Mojzes, ethnic cleansing created an environment in which it was impossible for people of various ethnoreligious groups to continue to live together peacefully.¹²⁰ As the 1990 census map demonstrates, the territories where Bosnian Serbs lived was scattered. Therefore, the singular

¹¹⁵ Director of Central Intelligence, “Bosnia: Serb Ethnic Cleansing.”

¹¹⁶ Appleby, *The Ambivalence of The Sacred*. 77. Religious illiteracy, according to Appleby, leads to a prevalence of weak religion. “ ‘Weak religion is one in which the people retain meaningful contact only with vestiges of the broader religious worldview and network of meanings and resources, in which they are isolated from one another and from educators, spiritual-moral exemplars, and in which ethnic, nationalist, secular-liberal, and other worldviews and ideologies have a free reign to shape the meaning of those vestiges.’ ”

¹¹⁷ Wilmer, *The Social Construction of Man, the State, and War*, 29.

¹¹⁸ Burg and Shoup, 130.

¹¹⁹ The entire collection has been consolidated into a book with a foreword and conclusion added by the author with all dispatches unedited. See. Roy Gutman, *A Witness to Genocide: The 1993 Pulitzer Prize-Winning Dispatches on Ethnic Cleansing of Bosnia*. New York: Macmillan, 1993.

¹²⁰ Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides*. 172.

way to unify all Serbs was to dislocate the other populations through force.¹²¹ The rhetorical rationale for ethnic cleansing followed an unsophisticated logic of chauvinistic othering. The land belongs to the “original” inhabitants and must be regained. It was inadequate to have a numerical advantage, future generations had to be protected. This led to the egregious justification of killing children and infants as well as the targeting of women through rape.¹²² Tactically, it is easier to maintain and hold territory that you decisively control. This reduces the chance of partisan or guerilla type tactics undermining tactical superiority.

Reports on ethnic cleansing established a clear pattern of events. When Bosnian Serbs took physical control of the smaller towns and villages, prisoner of war camps (POW), and rape centers were established. The first victims were local elites. The prevalence of these events led to the term ‘eliticide.’¹²³ Doctors, lawyers, local political leaders, business leaders, religious leaders, artists, and musicians were targeted. This gave way to more random and less deliberate cruelty directed towards randomly targeted civilians. After the Serbs (and less often Croats) consolidated their gains, tactical operations took an increasingly administrative form. Official looking individuals under the guise of bureaucratic titles would create the necessary paperwork trail, resulting in institutionalized stealing.¹²⁴ Those who survived were then sent through a final process which included the stripping of personal property and the confiscation of anything of value. Prior to departing, they were forced to sign away the deed to their homes and businesses. Busses of refugees (often “secured” by the UNPROFOR) were stopped and what small possessions remained were often taken. This included money but also clothes, shoes, and jewelry. Journalist Peter Mass reflected on a conversation with a Bosnian refugee that asked for safe escort of the only remaining pieces of value: high school and college diplomas.¹²⁵

By the fall of 1992, Bosnian Serbs had control of nearly 70% of BiH. Establishing prisoner of war camps along the way, 96 would be established before the wars end. Omarska, the most famous due to its atrocities, was the location of a reported 11,000 deaths.¹²⁶ A guard from the camp reported to the UNHCR that because the prisoners were isolated with nowhere to go, “We won’t waste our bullets on them. They have no roof. There is sun and rain, cold nights, and beatings two times a day. We give them no food and no water. They starve like animals.”¹²⁷

In Banja Luka, a historically mixed city near the Serbian border, the images of Bosnian Muslims being packed into trains conjured images of Nazi atrocities. The Serbian police chief went on to remark, that after taking control of the city the Bosnian Serbs secured safe transportation because the Croats and Muslims had *asked* to move to central Bosnia after being stripped of all material possessions.¹²⁸ Eventually all sides carried out ethnic cleansing, taking on the reciprocal nature that was dominant in World War II. This included the Muslims as well, who replicated the tactic beginning in 1993 when the International Community, after becoming aware

¹²¹ Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides*. 172.

¹²² Wilmer *The Social Construction of Man*, 212-220. Wilmer Notes that the experiences of the women in the of former Yugoslavia convinced the UN to add rape as a crime against humanity under article 5. For a full understanding on the role of rape in the War in Bosnia see. *Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina* edited by Alexandra Stiglmeier.

¹²³ Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides*, 188.

¹²⁴ Gutman, *A Witness to Genocide*, 20-23.

¹²⁵ Mass. *Love Thy Neighbor: A Story of War*.

¹²⁶ Gutman, *A Witness to Genocide*, 94.

¹²⁷ Gutman. *A Witness to Genocide*, 47.

¹²⁸ Gutman, *A Witness to Genocide*, 36.

of ethnic cleansing, did little prevent it.¹²⁹ While there were guilty parties on all sides, in the end the Bosnian Serbs were the major culprit of ethnic cleansing, executing 80-90% of the atrocities.¹³⁰

Analysis of Alija Izetbegovic

Strategic Ends- Political Aims Bosnian Muslims

Opposite of Milosevic, there is comparatively limited English scholarship on Alija Izetbegovic. Centered between Croatia and Serbia, Bosnian history shows that it was always caught between Croatian and Serbian tensions. Izetbegovic's leadership style is reflective of the contextual challenges of Bosnia's position between these two states. This section evaluates Izetbegovic's strategic approach to defending Bosnia and his leadership style in building an independent state through war. His primary means, or resources, were international public opinion through the media, material support from the Islamic nation through finances and manpower, economic and eventually military pressure from the West. Unlike Milosevic who orchestrated a civil war, Izetbegovic's approach and significant method (*ways*) to the war was first survive and resist, and then seek international support and aid. His political objective (*ends*) remained the maintenance of a plural and united Bosnia. What this section demonstrates is in using the opposite approach of Milosevic, Izetbegovic employed ethno-religious nationalism externally, by seeking support from the greater Islamic world. However, with a political goal of maintaining a plural and diverse Bosnia, Izetbegovic also sought additional support from the West. Izetbegovic had the challenge of recognizing the value of using ethno-religious identity as a tool for survival and resistance but also not allowing it to overpower and challenge Bosnia's plural identity.

Throughout the war, Izetbegovic's past was used as evidence that he had ulterior goals for Bosnia, which skewed and influenced Western perception at the time. Izetbegovic was jailed twice in his life. First, as a young man under Tito's regime, he published the *Islamic Declaration* which provided an academic and theoretical account on the incompatibility of Islam with non-Islamic systems. Second, in the summer of 1983, thirteen Bosnian Muslims were tried and convicted of conspiring to transform Bosnia into an *Islamistan* (purely Islamic State). Alija Izetbegovic was among the 13 of them and received the longest prison sentence of fourteen years.¹³¹ At the time, Westerners and Yugoslavs were fearful of a resurgent Islamic fundamentalism coming out of Iran. However, the case actually centered on the secularity of Bosnia. The Muslim leadership in the Bosnian Communist Party (LCY) wanted to ensure that the newly recognized Muslim nationality was secular and not religious in its political aims.¹³² Serbs and Croats played on this fear in nationalistic propaganda leading up to the war. Multiple editorials written by the Serbian diaspora during the war referenced these documents as proof that Izetbegovic's goal would be to build a purely Islamic nation.¹³³ Izetbegovic fought against

¹²⁹ Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides*, 176

¹³⁰ Mojzes *Balkan Genocides*, 172.

¹³¹ Donia & Fine, *A Tradition Betrayed*, 200-201.

¹³² Donia & Fine, *A Tradition Betrayed*, 201.

¹³³ An Example was written by Menard, Michael. Letter to the Editor, "Islamic Republic," *New York Times*. October 20, 1992.

this rhetoric throughout the war. Serbs and Croats argued that he was a hidden Islamic radical and that given the chance, he would turn Bosnia into an Islamic state. However, multiple scholars cite his continued commitment to the multicultural tradition of Bosnia. They argue that his writings were focused on the need for an intellectual and spiritual Islamic nation, one that supports tolerance.¹³⁴ His strength as a leader was his ability to understand and manage Islamic religiosity, Bosnian tolerance, and Western secularism.¹³⁵

Devoutly Muslim, Izetbegovic resisted the use of religion to justify war and hatred.¹³⁶ Western scholarship and media accounts of Izetbegovic suggest a contradiction between his devout faith on one hand and his support for secular and pluralistic policies on the other. Bosnian scholars Robert Donia and John Fine offer an analysis of this contradiction in their book *Bosnia & Hercegovina: A Tradition Betrayed*. They argue that Izetbegovic followed a traditional approach reminiscent of Bosnian Muslims throughout Bosnia's history. These leaders often used their influence to support broader, multinational policies that would serve and protect Bosnian Muslims. This tradition is found as far back as Muslim participation in the ruling coalition of the Austrian-era Parliament, through Parliamentary participation during the Yugoslav kingdom from 1918-1941, and finally Muslim leaders supported the Communist party and socialist government. Each of these political entities preserved the integrity of Bosnia which in turn provided protection for Bosnian Muslims against partition between Serbia and Croatia.¹³⁷ Izetbegovic's perseverance for a policy that protected Bosnian Muslims is best captured by the persistence to not capitulate Sarajevo during the siege. Izetbegovic knew that if Sarajevo fell it would have been impossible to preserve a united Bosnian state.

Throughout the war Izetbegovic consistently supported the continuation of the multiethnic state as his political *ends*: Yugoslavia in early 1991 and then as an independent Bosnia after it was clear that Yugoslavia was no longer a viable political entity.¹³⁸ At the last Yugoslav Communist party summit in June 1991, Izetbegovic and Macedonia's President, Kiro Gligorov, presented a compromise between Milosevic's call for greater centralization of power through a federation and Slovenia's and Croatia's desire for a loose confederation. Their combined solution would be an "asymmetrical federation" to preserve Yugoslavia. Under this system, Bosnia and Macedonia would remain part of a confederated Yugoslavia comprised of Serbia and Montenegro. Additionally, Croatia and Slovenia would be able to exercise as much sovereignty and autonomy as they desired. Ultimately, though, Yugoslavia would remain intact.¹³⁹ As Croatia and Serbia were arming themselves to dismember Bosnia, Izetbegovic played mediator to defend Yugoslavia.¹⁴⁰ Arguably, Izetbegovic was idealistic in his hope that Bosnia could have avoided war without major external presence and assistance. A close look at the ethnic maps of Bosnia reveal how intermingled the population was and how challenging it would have been to separate the population by ethnoreligious categories.¹⁴¹

Strategic- Means- Foreign Fighters- Building a Bosnian Army

¹³⁴ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*, 67.

¹³⁵ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*, 68.

¹³⁶ Al Jazeera World. *Bosnian Leader Alija Izetbegovic: From Prisoner to President*, video.

¹³⁷ Donia and Fine, *A Tradition Betrayed*, 237.

¹³⁸ Donia and Fine, 238

¹³⁹ Silber & Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*. 148-149.

¹⁴⁰ Donia & Fine, *A Tradition Betrayed*, 211.

¹⁴¹ Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 331.

On April 4, 1992 President Izetbegovic mobilized all police and reservists in Sarajevo. Simultaneously, the Republika Srpska called all Serbs to evacuate the city. At this point Izetbegovic did not know which side of the war the JNA would be on. Eventually it was clear that the preponderance of the forces would fall under the control of Bosnian Serbs.¹⁴² The city and the country would therefore be defended by the *people* and those who remained committed to a plural and multi-ethnic state. A closer evaluation of Alija Izetbegovic's policies and actions reveal his usage of ethnoreligious nationalism was in many ways the opposite of Milosevic. Izetbegovic resisted domestic ethnoreligious nationalism and the othering process until it became necessary to defend Bosnia and his powerbase. Despite this, Izetbegovic balanced against radicalizing forces while defending a plural Bosnia and building a Bosnian Army. The Bosnian Army was founded by paramilitary organizations. Unlike the Serbs obscure power dynamic between Belgrade and Pale, which purposely maintained a distance between the paramilitary organizations and the state apparatus, all of the Muslim paramilitary organizations eventually were incorporated into the Bosnian Army. The Patriot League, the territorial Defense Force, and the Green Berets were all incorporated into the Army of the Republic of Bosnia Herzegovina. Thus, they would be held accountable to the same international standards as a formalized force. Many of these paramilitary organizations were started by former JNA officers who were ethnically Bosniaks or Yugoslavs.¹⁴³

When the Bosnian Serbs quickly took control of nearly 70% of the state, Izetbegovic's allies became the larger Islamic community. Largely bolstered by Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the Islamic Conference Organization, sympathy for Bosnian Muslims coupled with outrage directed at the West's failure to protect Bosnians resulted in military assistance for Bosnian Muslims. Support included people, money, weapons, and military training. In the early months of the war, Bosnia received \$150 million in aid from Saudi Arabia.¹⁴⁴ The 7th Muslim Brigade was a territorial defense unit formed prior to the start of the war and were outwardly religiously motivated to defend and preserve Muslims in Bosnia.¹⁴⁵ They received training and arms from Iran and were eventually incorporated into the 3rd Corps of the Army of BiH. In comparison to Milosevic who used radicalized paramilitary organizations to foment rebellion and resist formal connections to the state, Izetbegovic attempted to incorporate the paramilitary fighters within the Bosnian Army command structure. He additionally made efforts to resist and fight anti-Serbian sentiment. A keen example of this is when Colonel Jovan Divjak, the highest-ranking Serb in the Muslim-led Army, submitted his resignation due to fears of lack of trust and anti-Serbian sentiment, Izetbegovic refused to accept it and kept him in position. Divjak served along side Stjepan Siber, who was a Croat and a senior leader in the Bosnian Army.¹⁴⁶ Anti-Serb sentiment was prevalent throughout Bosnia but in particular in Sarajevo. Izetbegovic established policies to reign in the worst of the Muslim gangs in Sarajevo, but often at a cost. Paramilitary gang members were the most resolute in fighting. Placing them under control of the Bosnian army was difficult.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Al Jazeera World. *Bosnian Leader Alija Izetbegovic: From Prisoner to President*, video.

¹⁴³ Baumann, Gawrych, Kretchik *Armed Peacekeepers in Bosnia*, 25.

¹⁴⁴ Caryle, "Fahd Urges Arms Aid for Bosnia: Stronger U.N. Action Needed to Protect Muslims, Saudi King Warns."

¹⁴⁵ Promfret, "Arming the Bosnians."

¹⁴⁶ Promfret, "In Sarajevo, A lust for Vengeance Grows: Serb Couple Executed as Muslims Lash Back."

¹⁴⁷ Burns, "For Sarajevo's Fearful Serbs, Misery Cushioned by Mercy."

For Izetbegovic, keeping Bosnia plural was his ultimate political objective. Plurality carried over into the defense of the city. Serbs made up one-third of the Territorial Defense Forces defending Sarajevo and a Bosnian Serb was the deputy commander. The Croats provided their own brigade for the defense of the city during three years of fighting.¹⁴⁸

The most well-known contribution of foreign fighters was the arrival of the mujahedeen from Afghanistan. Their numbers ranged between 500-6000 individuals fighting for the defense of Islam.¹⁴⁹ The Bosnian government attempted to incorporate them into the Bosnian Army command structure. However, in many ways, they remained insular and separate from the formalized Bosnian Army and debatably provided little in regard to tactical impact. Their presence had strategic implications, however, and further bolstered the Serbian and Croat narrative of impending Islamic fundamentalism. The range regarding the number of mujahedeen fighters suggests two possibilities. The first is that Croats and Serbs embellished their presence to support their narrative. Or, secondly, some mujahedeen fighters accepted efforts to blend in and be fully incorporated with in the Bosnian Army.¹⁵⁰ Both are likely true.

Strategic Way- Balancing ethnoreligious nationalism

What became evident in this research on Izetbegovic was the overwhelming challenges he faced in simultaneously resisting ethnoreligious nationalism but also recognizing that it too was a powerful resource to motivate individuals to fight and defend Bosnia, especially when atrocities were clearly directed at Bosnian Muslims. With the rise of the Izetbegovic's party the SDA, the Muslim community in Bosnia demonstrated their support for a party that had a religious identity. As Perica demonstrates in his book *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in the Yugoslav States*, Imams were essential to mobilizing voters for the SDA. In many ways the rise of the SDA and unity among Muslims were in reaction to the radicalization occurring in Serbia and Croatia. In what became his characteristic strength, balance and moderation, Izetbegovic choose to play the role of "moderator between the SDA radical nationalist fundamentalist wing.... And the liberal secular Muslims."¹⁵¹ In his first address as chairman of the party Izetbegovic spoke about full religious freedom for all. Moreover, the SDA founding convention released a declaration on religious liberty to which pluralism and tolerance were viewed as fundamental preconditions for success for a democratic Bosnia.¹⁵²

As tensions increased, Izetbegovic consolidated power not in an ethnoreligious way but indicative of a communist approach to power.¹⁵³ Despite the promising hope for democracy, the political culture of the setting encouraged such maneuvers. Unlike Milosevic who was not religious, Islam defined who Izetbegovic was. He could not separate himself or his beliefs from his political choices.¹⁵⁴ However, this does not suggest that he was exclusionary or radical. He had the challenge of managing a powerful Islamic Mufti who remained loyal to Izetbegovic but pushed for more pro-Islamic, nationalistic policies. Mustafa Cerić was the grand Mufti of BiH during the war and welcomed radicalization to catalyze support for the Bosnian Muslim cause. In

¹⁴⁸ Donia & Fine, *Bosnia and Hercegovina: A Tradition Betrayed*, 9. For an account of Sarajevo's resistance, see Roger Cohen's *Hearts Grown Brutal: Sagas of Sarajevo*.

¹⁴⁹ Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, 288.

¹⁵⁰ William Flavin, interviewed by author, reconfirmed during Bosnian discussion October 29, 2020.

¹⁵¹ Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*, 87.

¹⁵² Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States* 87.

¹⁵³ Roger Cohen, "Bosnians Fear A rising Islamic Authoritarianism" *New York Times*. October 10, 1994.

¹⁵⁴ Al Jazeera World, *Bosnian Leader Alija Izetbegovic: From Prisoner to President*. Documentary.

response to the lack of help from Europe and the arrival of foreign fighters, Ceric said “If we have to choose between life and death, we will go to anyone to help us.” Ceric pushed for strict policies such as banning Serb music and preventing mixed marriages and while repeatedly speaking out against European betrayal.¹⁵⁵ Ceric’s hardline rhetoric undermined Izetbegovic’s more plural position, but Ceric was instrumental in securing Muslim loyalty to Izetbegovic. Conversely, Izetbegovic also empowered Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic. Silajdzic was a vocal critic of Ceric’s policies. The discourse between Ceric and Silajdzic suggests that Izetbegovic maintained relationships with those who disagreed and challenged his position.¹⁵⁶ More pragmatically, Izetbegovic ensured that his powerbase was strong. He effectively balanced between more progressive and radical positions. Though ethnoreligious nationalism existed within the Muslim community, Perica asserts that Islam remained the least nationalist and militant religion in Yugoslavia.¹⁵⁷

Strategic Means- Media

I choose to discuss the role of international media within the framework of analyzing Izetbegovic for two reasons. First, it continues the external trend of ethnoreligious nationalism employed by Izetbegovic. Instead of focusing on a narrative within Bosnia that resisted the civil war narrative pushed by Milosevic and Karadzic, Izetbegovic’s efforts were primarily focused on gaining international sympathy and support. Secondly, the international community ultimately came to Izetbegovic’s aid, but it was nearly four years after the war started. The ethnic civil war narrative was so effective that it persuaded the West to view intervention as futile. Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia were of little strategic value, and was regarded that way until the legitimacy of the UN and NATO were under attack.¹⁵⁸

With the opening of the Balkan archives, President Clinton remarked on the failures and challenges that the international community faced in bringing peace to Bosnia. He added his own analysis, “Some European leaders were not eager to have a Muslim state in the heart of the Balkans, fearing it might become a base for exporting extremism, a result that their neglect made more, not less, likely.”¹⁵⁹ This statement reveals two things. First, it demonstrates an inherent European prejudice against Islam but also how the continued inaction by European nations resulted in Izetbegovic turning to the Islamic world for support. Secondly, it also reveals the inaccurate but prevalent perception that Bosnia was somehow independently Muslim, despite the fact that the government and military remained plural. However, aspects of the same report reveal that in every interaction with President Clinton, Alija Izetbegovic remained firm that he would accept peace as long as it was fair to Muslims. This is the driving wedge in the narrative of Izetbegovic, that despite the continued suffering of Bosnia and the Siege of Sarajevo he would not accept peace. A more nuanced understanding is that he would not accept a peace that was not enforceable, not fair to the Muslim community, or one that challenged the plurality of the state.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States* 101.

¹⁵⁶ Al Jazeera World, *Bosnian Leader Alija Izetbegovic: From Prisoner to President*. Documentary.

¹⁵⁷ Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States* 87 & 88.

¹⁵⁸ Holbrooke, *To End a War*. 68-73.

¹⁵⁹ William J Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, “The Role of Intelligence and Political Leadership in Ending the Bosnian War.”

¹⁶⁰ Donia, & Fine, John, Jr. *Bosnia and Hercegovina: A Tradition Betrayed*. 235-237.

The preponderance of newspaper articles written about the cease fire and peace negotiations assert that Izetbegovic's primary focus was on gaining international aid to resist Serbian aggression. Izetbegovic recognized Serbian aggression and in particular looked to the US for leadership. Appealing to past grievances, Izetbegovic called on Europe and stated that Europe was like Chamberlain, simply appeasing the Serbs.¹⁶¹ Assessing that the West was resistant to putting boots on ground, Izetbegovic asked for weapons and air support; arguing the right to self-defense.¹⁶² Throughout the conflict Izetbegovic remained firm in Bosnia's right to self-defense and that an external force would have to be present to enforce the peace. The atrocities on the ground were hard to ignore, and Izetbegovic recognized that the most powerful resource he had was international public opinion.

The role of the media on the international community was also highly influential. From the onset of the war, the international media hesitated in clarifying who the main aggressors were. Gutman notes, "Using their best public relations techniques top [Bush administration] aides expressed that the war in Bosnia was a civil war in which all sides were to blame and that all sides were *crazy*."¹⁶³ These types of reports played into the ethnic hatreds narrative and the incompatibility of the groups. Some analysts suggest that the international media's coverage signaled to the public the futility of foreign involvement, which gave the Serbs precious time to achieve their goals through ethnic cleansing.¹⁶⁴ This is despite the fact that CIA and human rights reports placed the preponderance of guilt on the Serbs, only seconded by the Croats. By playing on Islamic prejudices, inconsistent media terminology, confusing images, and weak U.S. foreign policy, the media portrayal provided enough time for the Serbian and Croatian forces to dramatically change the situation on the ground and pursue their goals.¹⁶⁵ The most pivotal example of the influence of the civil war narrative was the continued arms embargo against Bosnia. On September 25, 1991, in response to the tensions in Slovenia and Croatia, the UN Security Council passed resolution number 713 which was a total arms embargo against Yugoslavia. When this passed, the Yugoslav army was considered one of the best in Europe and a neutral party in the conflict. However, as the conflict spread the JNA, with its sophisticated heavy equipment and artillery, fell under the control of the Bosnian Serbs. When Bosnian army was created most weapons, beyond small arms, had to be smuggled into the country. Aljia Izetbegovic often referred to how hypocritical this position was and that if Europe was not going to defend Bosnia, at least the world would allow Bosnia to defend themselves.¹⁶⁶

As the conflict went on, and video coverage of human suffering continued, international public opinion centered on the lack of Western and American leadership. One of the most frequently quoted speeches on the failure of American leadership was at the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in April 1992. Elie Wiesel turned to President Clinton and spoke to world. Invoking the spirit of never again, he ended his powerful speech with the following statement:

¹⁶¹ Burns, "The World: Tribal War? Bosnians Don't See It That Way."

¹⁶² Burns, "Bosnian Leader Says He Needs Arms, Not Just Food and Medicine."

¹⁶³ Gutman, *A Witness to Genocide*, 15.

¹⁶⁴ Ricchiardi. "Confused Images: How the Media Fueled the Balkans War."

¹⁶⁵ Ricchiardi. "Confused Images: How the Media Fueled the Balkans War." The most prevalent example of the continued usage of misleading terminology was the reference to the Bosnian Muslim government. While yes Izetbegovic was a Muslim and his Muslim party was in charge, the Bosnian government remained plural. Even as late as February 1993, a year after the outbreak of war, the Bosnian cabinet was made up of nine Muslims, six Serbs, and five Croats.

¹⁶⁶ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 12.

“We have learned that when people suffer, we cannot remain indifferent. And, Mr. President I cannot not tell you something. I have been in the former Yugoslavia last fall. I cannot sleep since for what I have seen. As a Jew I am saying that we must do something to stop the bloodshed in that country! People fight each other and children die. Why? Something, anything must be done.”¹⁶⁷

Slowly a reductionist narrative took hold, the Serbs became the *bad* guys and Bosnian Muslims became the *good* guys. Through the power of mass media, video reporting, and near real-time coverage, the entire world was enthralled with the violence. Video coverage had a transformative influence on perception of the war in Bosnia.

Finally, it is important to provide a point on the neutrality of the media, Izetbegovic and the Bosnian government were often portrayed erroneously. Early in the conflict nearly every newspaper article referred to Izetbegovic as a devout Muslim that was jailed under Tito for religious extremism. These assertions were given without any context regarding how religion was viewed within a communist state. Religion was a threat to the party and was thus controlled. Moreover, the Bosnian government which was led by the Muslim faction was only referred to as such, “the Muslim government,” “the Muslims,” and “Muslim dominated government.” To western readers, this would suggest an Islamic religious government, and therefore the ethnoreligious narrative of a civil war made sense. Often these newspapers made little mention of what “Muslim” referred to under Tito, as a titular nation. Despite multiple references to “secular” Muslims, very little provided the necessary background information to understand the complexity of the situation. This categorization was constantly in the background and did not help the Bosnian position. Despite the fact that the international community was nearly unanimous in their regard of who was the victim and who was the aggressor, any mention of Islamic fundamentalism undermined Izetbegovic’s position and inflamed the ethnoreligious narrative.¹⁶⁸ Ultimately, it took four years for significant external leadership and the willingness to enforce a position. In many ways the media failed to recognize the identity of being a Bosnian Muslim as a unique contextual and historical identity, often generalizing Bosnian Muslim traditions and practices with those seen in different parts of the Islamic world.¹⁶⁹

The Arrival of Dayton

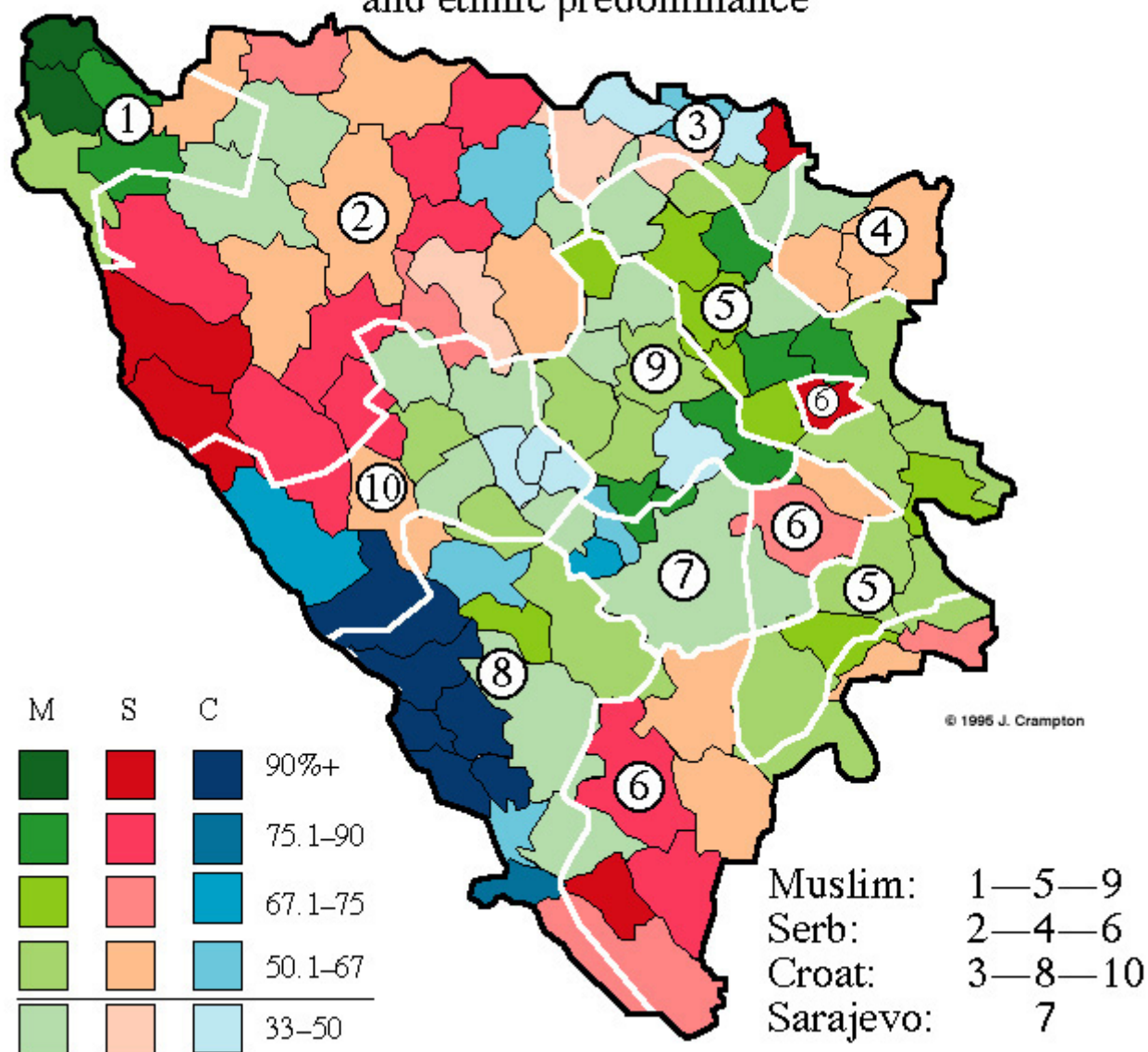
By 1993, things looked grim for the Bosniaks. The breakdown of the Vance-Owen plan was particularly challenging. The Bosnians had a series of tactical defeats, and the Serbs maintained a tactical advantage. However, by the fall of 1995 the newly affirmed Bosnian-Croat Federation had significant success. The overwhelming lethality and commitment displayed by NATO through Operation Deliberate Force had quieted Serbian guns. Having provided a strategic analysis of Milosevic and Izetbegovic in their approach to pursuing their political ends, it is important to evaluate the last 18 months of the war and link how the choices and decisions the leaders made set the context for the Dayton accords. These decisions connect tactical operations and strategic outcomes.

¹⁶⁷ Wiesel, “Remarks at the Dedication Ceremonies for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.”

¹⁶⁸ Ricchiardi, “Confused Images: How the Media Fueled the Balkans War.”

¹⁶⁹ This oversimplification is evident in many of the newspaper articles read but also seen in influential works like Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations*.

Vance-Owen Peace Plan and ethnic predominance



Summary of the last Eighteen Months of the Bosnian War

The Vance-Owen deliberations demonstrated the keen delaying tactics of the Bosnian Serbs.¹⁷⁰ While maintaining the military and tactical initiative, Karadzic refused to wholly support the plan, arguing that all decisions would have to be approved through the parliament of the Republika Sprkspa. The highly radicalized Bosnian Serb enclave rejected all plans and throughout the spring of 1993 the Bosnian Serbs continued to gain territory. At this time the weak Bosnian Croatian alliance broke down. The war took on a three-way character and harsh fighting broke out in Western Bosnia, most especially around the city of Mostar. The Bosnian

¹⁷⁰ Shanker, “The Serbs Kill Vance Owen Peace Plan.”

Muslims were slowly losing more territory. Despite the losses the “spirit of Sarajevo,” continued to be a symbol of resistance and hope.

Karadzic continued to delay peace negotiations by arguing that they were futile since the tactical situation was fluid. By the second half of 1993, Karadzic’s goal for Sarajevo and BiH was more evident. The Bosnian Serbs desired to split Sarajevo into “twin cities.” The Bosnian Serbs tried to force the BiH government to negotiate and settle through forced suffering.¹⁷¹ As the Vance-Owen plan failed, efforts to force capitulation were manifested through relentless shelling of the city. In a 16-hour period on 22 July 1993, 3777 shells were launched toward areas in the city.¹⁷² Karadzic was quoted saying that Izetbegovic should accept partition of BiH into three states or that the Bosnian Serb forces would settle the issue on the battlefield. As noted, by this time, the war took on a three-way nature. The continued efforts to delay arbitration, coupled with continued military success, suggests that the Karadzic believed that by winter 1994 Bosnia would capitulate without the backing of the international community. The Bosnian Serbs would be the undisputed winners.¹⁷³

As the leaders went to Geneva in the winter of 1993-1994, the city endured significant shelling. A short ceasefire was agreed upon for the Christmas holiday. The breakdown of the cease-fire was on February 4, 1994. It was one of the deadliest days in Sarajevo. A mortar round hit the market in Markale, part of the old city of Sarajevo and 68 died and nearly 200 were wounded.¹⁷⁴ The Bosnian Serbs claimed that they did not possess the weapons to inflict such damage and suggested that the Bosnians again had inflicted it on themselves. This event proved pivotal for the US to increase its role and presence. The international community universally condemned the Serbs and President Clinton used it as a moment to seek NATO intervention.

Despite the rhetoric for needed action, the approval process to use NATO airpower continued to face challenges. Often during much of 1994 and into 1995, American threats of force were largely only that, threats.¹⁷⁵ However, a diplomatic breakthrough occurred in Washington in March 1994. President Clinton pressured both Croats and Bosniaks to cease the infighting and join together in a federation. This proved to be a major diplomatic win for the US and had almost immediate impact on tactical operations. The Serbs became a common enemy and it strategically provided the justification for the US to help supply arms and tactical support.¹⁷⁶ The Bosnia-Croat Federation was born.

Within western Herzegovina the new Bosnian and Croat alliance began to have tactical success. The friction continued between the Croats and Muslims throughout the war, but President Tudjman was amicable to the Bosnian and US position because he had international support for his main objective of regaining control of the Serbian controlled area of Croatia; Krajina.¹⁷⁷ The continued alliances between Milosevic and the Serbian autonomous regions in both Croatia and BiH were beginning to break. Though at the time, these fractures were not known.

Winter 1994-1995 in Sarajevo was comparatively calm, for United States President Jimmy Carter secured a four-month cease-fire. By March 1994, fighting resumed when the Serbs violated the cease-fire and blocked international peace efforts. For all sides, the war was

¹⁷¹ Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 307-308.

¹⁷² United Nations Commission of Experts. “Final Report: Study of the Battle and Siege of Sarajevo.”

¹⁷³ Associated Press, “Serb Gunners Pouring Fire Into The Heart Of Sarajevo.”

¹⁷⁴ John Kifner, “Toll is the worst in 22 months of Attacks.”

¹⁷⁵ John Kifner, “Serbs agree to Give Up Sarajevo Guns”

¹⁷⁶ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 60.

¹⁷⁷ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 60.

becoming desperate. On February 13, 1995, the ICTY charged 21 Serb commanders with genocide and crimes against humanity.¹⁷⁸ The international community now visualized the war less of one of civil war and one of aggression.

After the Serbs broke the cease fire in February 1995, they blocked humanitarian aid and resumed shelling Sarajevo. They disregarded international sanctions and increasingly challenged the direction and credibility of the UN and NATO. In a moment of desperation, after the cease-fire broke down, NATO bombed the Bosnian Serb positions. In response, the Bosnian Serbs seized more than 350 U.N. peacekeepers as “human shields” from enclaves outside of the city. From a wire report of the events, “If NATO’s display of airpower was supposed to coerce the Bosnian Serbs into good behavior, it clearly produced the opposite effect. Now NATO, with all of its technological superiority, was locked in a deadly standoff with the military inferior Serb forces.”¹⁷⁹ By May 1995, the UNPROFOR mission faced failure.

Assessing catastrophe, the U.S. and NATO began planning high-risk operations for the withdrawal of the UNPROFOR. OP-Plan 40-104 was the US plan to deploy 20,000 American troops to exfiltrate the UN forces if the UN choose to cease its mission. The realization that the US could not stand on the sideline was increasingly evident. Executing OP-Plan 104 would likely produce American casualties and signal to the rest of the world, especially Milosevic, Karadzic, and Tudjman, that the international community failed to prevent Bosnia's destruction. Even more so, a UN withdrawal, in the face of massive civilian deaths and casualties, would signal to both friendly and enemy nations that without the overpowering threat of the Cold War, the US “lacked the resolve to be the *leader of the free world*”¹⁸⁰ The UN and NATO's potential failure rapidly elevated Bosnia to a position of vital interest for the US. As Richard Holbrooke remarked, “It was not an overstatement to say that America’s post World War II security role in Europe was at stake.”¹⁸¹ Below is a map that demonstrates the decreasing territory controlled by the Bosnian government from January 1993-1995.

¹⁷⁸ Mojzes *Balkan Genocides*, 171.

¹⁷⁹ The Spokesman, “Peacekeepers Used As Human Shields Serbs Take U.N. Troops Hostage, Chain Them To NATO Target.”

¹⁸⁰ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 66.

¹⁸¹ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 67.



Library of Congress, Source Central Intelligence Agency, 1995. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2009584251/>

July 1995 proved to be the turning point for the international community. Feeling empowered by his success in intimidating the U.N., Mladic focused on establishing complete control over three eastern enclaves in Bosnia, thus securing the Republika Sprksa's territory. The three regions were Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde. From the beginning of the conflict, they were isolated and surrounded by Serb forces. They had been designated "United Nations Safe Areas" by UN Security Council resolutions in 1993, but they were anything but safe.¹⁸² As Muslims controlled the towns, backed by small contingents of poorly armed UNPROFOR units, they

¹⁸² Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia- Herzegovina*, 149.

became increasingly swelled with Muslim refugees. In many ways, the remarkably isolated UNSAs became the symbol of weak decision making by the international community in their attempt to show resolved with minimal presence and commitment.¹⁸³

By the summer of 1995, all three of the towns were in a precarious situation. Surrounded by the BSA, swollen with refugees, and increasingly cut off from humanitarian aid, their future survival appeared bleak. In response to Mladic's decision to take UNPROFOR hostages, the EU sent a British rapid reaction force with a limited mission to support a potential withdrawal. Mladic feared a direct confrontation with these forces if they moved to the Safe Areas. In theory, the Bosnian Serb forces would face the superior European professional soldiers. Provoked, Mladic responded.¹⁸⁴ On July 6, 1995, the Bosnian Serbs began shelling the town of Srebrenica. By July 10, they had control of the town and took 30 Dutch peacekeepers hostage. On July 11, Mladic grandiosely entered the city and stated his intention of "Presenting this city to the Serbian people as a gift." "Finally, after the rebellion of the Dahijas, the time has come to take revenge on the Turks in this region."¹⁸⁵ Mladic invoked the failed 1804 Serbian rebellion against the Ottoman Empire, nearly 200 years after the events occurred.

Over the next few days, the single largest mass killing in Europe since WW2 occurred. Mladic calculated each step, executing the destruction while the outside world remained ignorant. The precise details would not come known for days, months, and years afterwards. The ICTY reveals how coordinated and deliberate this attack was. On 8 March 1995, Karadzic issued directive number 7 and ordered the Drina Corps to "create an unbearable situation of total insecurity with no hope of further survival or life for the inhabitants of Srebrenica." Mladic subsequently operationalized these objectives into a coordinated military plan, 7-1. Approximately two weeks before the take-over of Srebrenica Town, within the Srebrenica enclave, the VRS developed plan Krivaja-95 to attack the enclave, intending to make it "disappear, to empty it, and to make the area Serbian territory by forcibly removing the Bosnian-Muslim population."¹⁸⁶

In a show, Mladic's forces coordinated for busses to remove the Muslims from the town. With limited options to resist, the UNPROFOR looked on and, at some points, facilitated the cleansing. They separated the women and children from the men. The women and children were loaded onto busses and transported to Bosniak controlled areas. Often being dropped off a few miles short, these women and children carrying all their belongings had to walk the final distance. The men were systematically moved to remote areas and killed. It is estimated that somewhere between 7000-8000 men were killed in a matter of a few days. Mass graves continued to be found years after the war.¹⁸⁷ The ICTY summarized how calculated and coordinated these operations were:

The Bosnian-Muslim men taken from Potočari were detained in temporary detention facilities and later, together with others captured from the column fleeing on foot, bussed to various execution sites in Srebrenica, Bratunac, and Zvornik municipalities. The Chamber found that many of these men and boys were cursed, insulted, threatened, forced to sing Serb songs, and beaten while awaiting their execution. Bosnian-Serb forces, primarily members of the VRS, systematically murdered several thousand

¹⁸³ The National Security Archive, "Srebrenica Oral History Conference."

¹⁸⁴ Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 382.

¹⁸⁵ Public Broadcasting Service, "The Trial of Ratko Mladic."

¹⁸⁶ International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, "Trial Summary for Ratko Mladic."

¹⁸⁷ Alt-Habbouche, *Srebrenica: Autopsy of a Massacre*.

Bosnian-Muslim men and boys, the vast majority over just a few days, from 12 until 17 July 1995.¹⁸⁸

As the events became known, the world was shocked. France and the Netherlands, who provided UNPROFOR ground forces, pushed to remove their troops as quickly as possible. Their mission was a failure.¹⁸⁹ The great powers met in London and clarified policies that streamlined NATO's ability to use force without continuous UN approval.¹⁹⁰ Tudjman pushed to regain lost territory in Krajina and in the East while the last two enclaves of Zepa and Gorazde were left defenseless.¹⁹¹ While the Serbs reconstituted towards securing these two areas, the international community tried to prevent Tudjman from launching an offensive in the West. Analysts feared that the Croats would face the regular Serbian Army. In early August, the Croats launched a destructive yet effective operation to regain Krajina. Belgrade no longer provided unconditional support to the Serbian proto states. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, the calculus on the ground was changing; the Serbs were no longer the undisputed winners. The Bosnian-Croat federation was gaining the tactical initiative helping to forge the path towards peacemaking.¹⁹²

In early August, under US leadership, the international community pushed for a diplomatic resolution with a renewed resolve to use force if talks were not productive. On August 28, 1995, the Serbs refocused on Sarajevo and shelled the Markala open market (second time), killing 38 people and injuring 85. From the Western perspective, it was difficult to ascertain if the Serbs were trying to bait the UN and NATO to respond.¹⁹³ The Bosnian Serbs followed their traditional line, saying the Muslims bombed the city to gain international sympathy.¹⁹⁴

Operation Deliberate Force began on August 30, 1995, which was the largest NATO operation in its history. More than 60 aircraft flying from US aircraft carriers and European airbases launched attacks on Serbian targets. In addition to the air attack, British and French artillery targeted positions around Sarajevo. It also served as the pivotal moment when the US asserted its leadership.¹⁹⁵

The success of the NATO operation demonstrated the fractures between the Bosnian Serbs and Milosevic. Belgrade was distancing itself from Pale and Krajina. Most importantly, the narrative began to change. Mira Markovic, a powerful political player and Milosevic's wife challenged Karadzic in a Belgrade Newspaper. She argued that for 40 years, Bosnia was inhabited by Serbs, Muslims, and Croats, and "ethnically pure states are an impossibility in today's world, and it is ridiculous to try and create and maintain such a state, even when there is just one nation."¹⁹⁶ This was a stark change from Milosevic's Kosovo speech a few years prior.

¹⁸⁸ International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, "Trial Summary for Ratko Mladic."

¹⁸⁹ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 70.

¹⁹⁰ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 72.

¹⁹¹ Pomfret, "Bosnian Serbs Claim Fall of 2nd U.N. Safe Area." This article published on July 20, 1995, within days of the fall of Srebrenica confirms that there was a lack of definitive truth that Milosevic was directing Karadzic or what the nature of their relationship was.

¹⁹² Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 70-73.

¹⁹³ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 91.

¹⁹⁴ Cohen, "Shelling Kills Dozens in Sarajevo."

¹⁹⁵ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 142

¹⁹⁶ Markovic, *Night and Day: A Diary*, 17-18.

Below is a map of Operation Storm (Operation Oluja) which shows the rapid gains of the Croats and Bosnian Army. It was a huge strategic victory that helped to regain lost territory and confirmed that the Bosnian-Croat federation owned the tactical initiative.

Source: Library of congress

Operation Deliberate Force proved pivotal; the Siege of Sarajevo reduced significantly in the fall of 1995. Efforts in the first half of 1995 proved that the pathway to peace was through coercive diplomacy. With the threat of continued airstrikes, Milosevic, now held liable for Karadzic and the Bosnian Serbs' actions, accepted NATO terms for a cease-fire and the relief of Sarajevo. It was formally accepted on September 14, 1995 and went into effect in October. The BSA remained just outside the city, and while small skirmishes continued, the fighting and bombing finally ceased.¹⁹⁷ Throughout Fall 1995, the combined Bosnian and Croat Army regained significant ground and pushed back Bosnian Serb forces, bringing the territory breakdown closer to 50/50 breakdown. As a result, the international community increased pressure on all sides to negotiate. The Dayton Accords met in November 1995 and were officially signed on 21 November 1995.

Analysis of the leader's actions leading to Dayton

Milosevic

Milosevic and Radovan Karadzic were politically united until Western sanctions crippled the already weak Serbian economy, and the threat of NATO force hardened. The fractures began when Bosnian Serbs would not accept the Vance-Owen Plan of 1993. This would have partially partitioned BiH into 10 provinces essentially along ethnic lines. For Karadzic, under the VO plan, the Republika Srpska was not recognized as a legitimate political entity. The international community continued to sanction Serbia and pressure Milosevic to disassociate from the Croat and Bosnian Serbs. After the failure of the Vance-Owen Plan, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 819, which put pressure on The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to cease their support to Bosnian Serb paramilitary formations.¹⁹⁸ However, the borders between Serbia and Bosnia were porous and military and financial support continued to flow. To what extent this continued through Dayton is not known but it likely remained with or without Milosevic's direct knowledge until peace was struck. Ultimately ethno-religious nationalism served Milosevic until it threatened his position in Belgrade. Spring and Summer 1995 were pivotal to breaking Serbian unity. Actions on the ground escalated when the Bosnian Serbs gained control over the eastern enclaves and the Bosnian-Croat Federation regained territory in the West. Escalation in force led to the massacre at Srebrenica. What became evident is that Milosevic would not mobilize the entire JNA to defend the territory seized by the Bosnian or Croatian Serbs.¹⁹⁹ Under amassing economic pressure from the West, Milosevic changed his nationalist rhetoric. Now, the actions of the Bosnian and Croatian Serbs threatened the security of Serbia proper, "ten million citizens (referring to Serbs in Serbia proper)... cannot be held hostage to any leader who came from the territory of Yugoslavia, neither Republika Srpska Krajina or Republika Srpska."²⁰⁰ His abandonment of the Serbian unity rhetoric led him to be a key player in the Dayton Accords peace process and to be viewed by the West as the lynchpin to peace. This conciliatory position actually proved to be misleading to the West when the war

¹⁹⁷ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 142-150.

¹⁹⁸ Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 412.

¹⁹⁹ Cohen, "Power Shift: Recent Serb Exodus Clears a Peace Path."

²⁰⁰ Silber & Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, 336.

transitioned to Kosovo, the center of gravity for Serbia. In summary, Milosevic, whose power was reliant on ethnoreligious nationalism, effectively abandoned it and achieved the preponderance of his political ends, demonstrating a sophisticated strategic pragmatism.

Izetbegovic

In order to survive and prevent the complete destruction of Bosnia, Izetbegovic turned to every resource he had. His reliance on the larger Islamic community mobilized Serbian and Croatian fears of Islamic fundamentalism coming to Bosnia which catalyzed local ethnoreligious hatreds. However, given the available resources Izetbegovic had, he had few, if any, other options to survive and defend the nation. By 1994, the US ceased enforcing the arms embargo and encouraged Saudi Arabia and Turkey to continue to support the Bosnian Muslims. Though both Serbs and Muslims rejected the Vance-Owen Plan, the Vance-Owen plan actually failed to provide strong provisions for enforcing the reversal of ethnic cleansing, nor did it provide the pathway for Bosnians to defend themselves, and it potentially challenged the legitimacy of the Izetbegovic government.²⁰¹ In short, it was not an enforceable peace, nor was it a fair peace to the Bosnian Muslims and the multiethnic community. Izetbegovic persisted, despite continued tactical defeats, for a unified Bosnia and peace that was enforced and backed by American power. Peace efforts were often met with increased shelling of the city. The Serbs were most often responsible for violating ceasefires or rejecting peace plans. What became evident in the continued rejection of peace plans were disputes on the details of the map and the territorial breakdown. These maps were not representative of the tactical situation on the ground. That is, from the Bosnian Serb perspective, the Serbs would receive less territory than they had tactically “owned” as a result of offensive tactical operations and ethnic cleansing. Gaining tactical advantage would be key for the Bosnians. Recognizing the value in regaining the Croatian-Muslim alliance, Izetbegovic supported the Washington agreement that resulted in the Bosnian-Croat Federation.²⁰² Izetbegovic even keenly remarked that the “best safeguard against preventing the renewal of ethnic nationalism is actually defeating the Serbs on the battlefield.”²⁰³ As the Bosnian and Croat federation were successful in regaining territory in 1994 and 1995, the Serbs were on the defense. Despite overwhelming early tactical defeats, being held hostage, and literally having his Presidential offices targeted by Serb attacks, Izetbegovic persisted. He demonstrated a significant amount of strategic perseverance, using all available means to defend Bosnia, to build an Army from the ground up, while his city was under siege. It is a profound achievement that he preserved Bosnia through the 51/49% breakdown of Dayton.²⁰⁴

Conclusion:

This paper evaluated the War in Bosnia by applying U.S. Joint Doctrine. Strategically analyzing the war through the ends, ways, means paradigm, as applied to evidence from the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, President Clinton’s declassified Balkan documents, and past scholarship, this paper claims that the character of the war was dominated by ethnoreligious nationalism. It was neither a civil war nor a war of aggression, but

²⁰¹ Burns, “Bosnia Government Sets Conditions for Accepting Proposal to end War.”

²⁰² Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War*, 315.

²⁰³ Burns, “Bosnia Government Sets Conditions for Accepting Proposal to end War.”

²⁰⁴ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 73.

both. Moreover, the targets, tactics, and objectives were all influenced by ethnoreligious nationalism. This was fueled by the breakdown of Yugoslavia, weak religion, and weak economic and political structures that were exploited by nationalist chauvinism. The two main leaders in the Bosnian War, Slobodan Milosevic and Alija Izetbegovic, applied ethnoreligious nationalism asymmetrically in support of their political objectives which directly contributed to the Dayton Accords. In the end, both leaders were highly effective in pursuing their strategic objectives. Milosevic rose to power, transforming himself from a communist boss to a nationalist leader, using ethnoreligious nationalism directed at all Serbs throughout Yugoslavia to foment conflict. Izetbegovic resisted internal ethnoreligious radicalization only to rely on ethnoreligious unity within the greater Islamic community. Sarajevo remains a multiethnic city. When the narrative broke down, the true character of Bosnia shined and continued to shine through the peace-making process. Although there were indeed guilty individuals on all sides, the people, who endured a siege, ethnic-cleansing, and abandonment by the world, demonstrated the true limitations of the ethnoreligious nationalism in their continued support for peace and resolution. The people brought peace. As the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre recently passed, the UN Office of the High Representative recognized the continued tension between the different groups and encouraged continued reconciliation, “Srebrenica should always remain a place of remembrance... but also be a place demonstrating the power of forgiveness, a place demonstrating that through forgiveness, the whole of humanity wins.”²⁰⁵

Areas for continued study

This paper contributes to Western scholarship on the War in Bosnia which has generally gone unevaluated or challenged despite new information. As a result, this study offers three points worth considering for future scholarship.

The first assertion is that much of the narrative and analysis of Izetbegovic is unnecessarily critical. Western historiography on Izetbegovic is largely underdeveloped and often describes Izetbegovic as easily shaken and or swayed by the last person he spoke to. Burg and Shoup stated he was “notoriously indecisive and prone to change his mind when dealing with international negotiators.”²⁰⁶ A few sentences later they go on to say, “Izetbegovic allowed corruption and crime to flourish in Sarajevo during the first year and a half of the war.”²⁰⁷ This sort of assessment provides no contextual analysis. Throughout the negotiating process, Izetbegovic was striking a balance in negotiations, trying, under constraints of tactical losses, to leverage as best position as possible for Bosnia. Additionally, it is noted that during the early part of the conflict Izetbegovic allowed corruption and crime to go unchecked in Sarajevo, a time in which the city had very limited resources for its defense. More to the point, eventually he rose above that of his peers and asserted control over these factions. At points throughout the conflict he was described as too idealistic in his commitment to a unified Bosnia. However, 25 years later there is peace in Bosnia and Bosnia is a unified state. He was a much sounder statesman and leader than these scholars suggest. He accurately understood the multiple dynamics at play and leveraged all available ways and means to pursue his ends. First, his net assessment of the political objectives of Milosevic and Karadzic were accurate. They sought territorial gains and

²⁰⁵ Office of the High Representative, “Respective Srebrenica through justice, truth, and reconciliation is the path for the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina.”

²⁰⁶ Burg and Shoup, *The War In Bosnia- Herzegovina*, 66.

²⁰⁷ Burg and Shoup, *The War In Bosnia- Herzegovina*, 66.

used ethnoreligious nationalism with support by the JNA to achieve those ends and thus turn the people against each other. The ICTY proceedings demonstrate how deep and complicated these connections were and how deliberately those leaders planned. This suggests that when the war started, the international community could not effectively assess Izetbegovic's position nor his pleas for assistance. During negotiations on the Owen-Stoltenberg plan in summer and fall of 1993, Izetbegovic clearly requested approval or support to defend his country. "Defend us or let us defend ourselves. You have no right to deprive us of both."²⁰⁸ Ultimately, he recognized that hard power would be necessary to defeat the Serbs and force the peace-making process.

Secondly, he knew that American leadership was necessary to ending the war. Throughout the breakup of the former Yugoslavia old alliances were critical. Croatia had strong international backing from Germany. Serbia, though less successful in its pursuit, turned to Orthodox nations Greece and Russia for international leverage. Regardless of the parameters of these relationships they played into the narrative of historic hatreds and past victimization.²⁰⁹ While the scholarship on the Bosnian war cites the importance of old alliances, they do not recognize that Izetbegovic acknowledged this necessity and remained committed to drawing in US leadership.²¹⁰ After enduring the perpetual cycle of broken cease-fires and false diplomatic assurances from Serbian forces, Izetbegovic acknowledged that the only way to force and enforce the peace process would be a strong response led by and enforced by Americans.²¹¹ As the Bosnian-Croat Federation regained territory, there was accurate concern from the International Community that the Bosnian force would continue the fighting to regain as much territory as possible and avoid the diplomatic process.²¹² Arguably Izetbegovic was focused on the parameters and enforcement of reversing ethnic cleansing and sought to regain territory by force. After Srebrenica, a Western response to Serbian aggression became necessary for maintaining the legitimacy of the UN and NATO. Very quickly after Operation Deliberate Force the Bosnian Serbs, under Milosevic's leadership, agreed to peace-negotiations and followed through on cease-fire parameters. Up to this point over fifty cease-fires were broken, the majority of which were broken by Bosnian Serbs. American presence and coercive power were the difference. Coupled with the assurance that American forces would lead the implementation of the Dayton Accords, Izetbegovic along with Milosevic signed. Throughout the conflict Izetbegovic managed overwhelming odds to maintain a plural and united Bosnia, often responding to the will and the spirit of the people.²¹³ Without his commitment to this ideal and perseverance it is likely that a united Bosnia would not have existed. When America made assurances that the peace would be fair to the Bosnian Muslims, though perhaps not *just* after 1400 days of siege, Izetbegovic endorsed peace.

²⁰⁸ Lewis, "At U.N., Bosnian Presses for more Land." September 8, 1993.

²⁰⁹ Glenny, "Carnage in Bosnia for Starters." July 29, 1993.

²¹⁰ Huntington also discusses this in *Clash of Civilizations*, 281-290. He discusses how the wars of the former Yugoslavia are the ideal representative situation of his *Clash* thesis. However, according to his thesis, the actions of the US were not easily accountable in Bosnia. Huntington suggests that it was a smart *realpolitik* move or that Americans strategic culture encourages Americans to want to be on the side of the 'good guys,' but Huntington's assessment separates the situation for the actions of the leaders. Given the 'anomaly' in the behavior of Americans as suggested by Huntington, I would argue this reinforced the effectiveness of Izetbegovic as a leader.

²¹¹ Cohen, "For Bosnia's President, An Agonizing Choice."

²¹² Cohen, "Power Shift: Recent Serb Exodus Clears a Peace Path."

²¹³ Fall 1993 representatives of all three groups that comprised the Bosnian Convention rejected any peace plans, effectively subjecting the people to another harsh winter during war. Associated Press. "Bosnian Chief Sees Wretched Choices."

The second point evaluates Bosnia as an ethnoreligious total war. A total war is considered one in which the objectives are unlimited scope and scale. The most obvious examples are the Allied defeat of the Third Reich and Imperial Japan in WWII. From a strategic perspective the ways and means of the Bosnian war were total. Creating and exploiting ethnoreligious tensions resulted in civilians as the main targets of aggression. Moreover, there is a strategic heuristic that suggests a total war will be characterized by ends, ways, and means that are all total. The totality of the ends, ways, and means in Bosnia were not explicit. As noted from Karadzic's ICTY trial, the objectives of the Bosnian Serbs were clear and direct. Despite the dire consequences, destruction, and genocide that resulted from the pursuit of these aims, the objectives were centralized on building an independent Serbian state and not the destruction of Bosnia. Through 1993, the US assessed the Serbian war aims to be total, "The central Serb goals in Bosnia have been and remain the destruction of Bosnia as a viable and independent state."²¹⁴ However, the same document goes on to accurately assess and predict the nature of conflict more broadly. This subtle misreading is based on a misunderstanding of the limited political ends and the totality of the ways and means in which the Bosnian Serbs were willing to employ to pursue those ends. From a constructivist soft power perspective, the ethnoreligious narrative was so effective that it led to more than the mobilization of ethnic division in Bosnia, it influenced the international community to misunderstand the scope of the political objectives.

Additionally, if the objectives in Bosnia were total and Milosevic was indeed pursuing the "Greater Serbia" idea, he would have mobilized the entire JNA out of Belgrade to defend the Bosnian Serbs and force the partition of Bosnia, which was a major American concern throughout 1995. This misreading also contributes to how quickly the Serbian narrative changed leading up to Dayton. Holbrooke's account of the peace-making process captures how effective Milosevic was and how quickly he became critical to the signature process. Ultimately, despite the territorial losses in Croatia, many of the Bosnian Serb objectives, though not independence, were solidified in Dayton. Most importantly, the Dayton accords legitimized and recognized the Republika Srpska as an entity. To be sure, if Bosnia collapsed and ceased to exist, thus allowing the Greater Serbia idea to come true, Milosevic would have capitalized on the opportunity, but he was not willing to mobilize the entire JNA to pursue this end.²¹⁵ Despite a rhetoric of total war aims, Milosevic's and Karadzic's political objectives were limited in comparison to the level of destruction that resulted.

A final point also relates to the total war analysis. More specifically the persuasiveness and limitation of soft power and the shallowness of the ethnoreligious nationalism. As noted above, if Serb objectives were total, then despite America or Western efforts the Serbs would be expected to continue to resist intervention. This was a real fear of American leaders. Part of this concern was a result of past experiences. Many of the American policy makers were veterans of Vietnam and directly experienced the moral persistence of the North Vietnamese. Clearly, Serbia was not the North Vietnamese.²¹⁶ Though the Russians were involved in negotiations as part of the Contact Group, the Russian position was generally aligned with the U.S. and NATO, desperately seeking a way to end the conflict and prevent it from spreading elsewhere. Through sanctions, the United Nations had economically crippled and pressured The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Until summer of spring 1995, Milosevic portrayed the West as the enemy of the Serbs which followed the ethnoreligious narrative of Serbian

²¹⁴ Director of Central Intelligence Interagency Balkan Task Force. "Serb War Aims."

²¹⁵ From a strategic analysis point of view this a clear assessment of risk.

²¹⁶ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 216-218.

victimization. However, the hard power sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia became increasingly impactful. Serbs in Serbia began to resist the war and seek economic relief. This was also met with increased Croatian and the Bosnian Army strength. As soon as the ethno-religious narrative no longer benefited Milosevic's powerbase and his political security, he abandoned it and adopted one of a conciliatory tone.²¹⁷ This change was coupled with the tactical defeats of the Croatian Serbs as the Croats retook Krajina and Bosnian-Croat successes in central Bosnia. Effective hard power demonstrated the limits of ethno-religious nationalism. American led, NATO strikes, through Operation Deliberate Force destroyed any lingering notions of "Greater Serbia." The narrative and thus the cause for war within Bosnia was gone.

After four years of war, all parties arrived in Dayton ready to pursue peace. How quickly and effectively hard power brought the peace-making process reinforces the notion that the war in Bosnia was a fabricated civil war, a hybrid war. When the war in Bosnia began it was viewed as an ethnic civil war, one in which external intervention was considered futile. In the 1992 Presidential debates President Bush remarked that "ethnic rivalries cropped up" as Yugoslavia dissolved. Former acting Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger remarked that there were centuries of conflict in Yugoslavia and intervention in this " 'civil war' won't work." George Kenney, Former U.S. State Department Yugoslavia Desk, was accurate when he remarked, that "it's not official statements but often repeated comments that mold and inform public opinion."²¹⁸ The power of the media, images, and video, coupled with a purposeful narrative greatly influenced the strategic perception of Bosnia. The major takeaway for future conflict is to assess both within the conflict itself internally but also externally, how the narrative surrounding the conflict is impacting the strategic understanding of the issues at play. Simply stated, how did the narrative create bias?

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