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What stands in the way of Bosnia reconciliation

When will those involved in Srebrenica – including the UN – admit their responsibility and atone for the 1995 genocide?



Heather McRobie

guardian.co.uk, Monday 21 June 2010 14:30 BST



An UN investigator removes earth from bodies in a mass grave outside the village of Cerska, near Srebrenica, Bosnia on July 15, 1996. Photograph: Odd Andersen/Getty Images.

The admissions of the [Saville report](#) last week, and the government's apology for Bloody Sunday, remind us of the imperative to acknowledge responsibility for state crimes against civilians, however too little or too late. But in Bosnia, there's a palpable sense that justice for the brutalities of the 1990s [is still lacking](#).

The international criminal tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY) has already begun to discuss what to do if key figures like Ratko Mladić [cannot be tried before the ICTY closes](#). Almost 20 years after the start of the wars of the former Yugoslavia, accountability for war crimes still hasn't been delivered – not by the ICTY, whose narrow focus has always been limited to the top figures; not in the region's domestic courts, which should have been key to societal-level reconciliation yet still lack both capacity and transparency; and not against those who many feel were complicit in the Srebrenica genocide, the "international community", and the UN.

The conviction of the Bosnian Serb officers for genocide at the ICTY last week was, as [Slavenka Drakulić has written](#), a step in the direction of justice. But the same week, news came that [Mladić's family are pushing to declare the wartime commander dead](#), and Mladić's continued evasion of justice is a reminder that the ICTY has failed even in its narrow aim of prosecuting those most responsible for war crimes such as Srebrenica. The absence of transitional justice mechanisms such as [a South Africa-style truth commission](#) "on the ground" means even the ICTY's modest successes are detached from the need for societal consensus on what happened, who did what. On top of this, the absence of accountability for the UN's own role in Srebrenica undermines the credibility of international justice as a whole.

An initiative by a German NGO is currently under way to construct a "[pillar of shame](#)"

intended to draw attention to the UN's failure to fully own up to its share of responsibility for the Srebrenica genocide 15 years after 8,000 unarmed Bosnian Muslim men and boys were murdered by Bosnian Serb forces in the UN "safe area". The pillar will spell out the letters UN using 16,744 shoes, representing the numbers of the victims of Srebrenica, and intends to "serve as a metaphor for the immense betrayal of the UN in Bosnia and Herzegovina". The pillar will be presented at The Hague on 1 July, and in Berlin on 11 July, the day Srebrenica fell to the Bosnian Serb army in 1995.

The pillar of shame project is supported by the Mothers of Srebrenica, the group representing survivors and relatives of those who were killed in Srebrenica, who filed a law suit against the UN at the Hague, accusing the peacekeepers of failing to take necessary steps to prevent the genocide.

The case was rejected earlier this year on the grounds of the UN's immunity from prosecution, yet the UN itself has admitted its failure in Srebrenica – it just refuses to do so legally. Kofi Annan himself acknowledged that force should have been used to stop the killings, and that peacekeepers "must never again be deployed into an environment in which there is no ceasefire or peace agreement".

But on any attempts to bring legal redress for the UN's own admission of failure, the international organisation is unwilling to waive its own immunity from prosecution. The UN's desire to restore its credibility on the genocide was also undermined by its own admission that evidence from Srebrenica had been destroyed at the ICTY.

The UN's reluctance to acknowledge its share of responsibility is compounded by the failures of domestic and regional transitional justice, which means the nature of the crime of Srebrenica is still not adequately acknowledged. In 2004, the ICTY ruled that the Srebrenica massacre was a genocide according to the definition of the 1948 genocide convention, and the International Court of Justice concurred with this verdict in 2007. But it has taken 15 years for neighbouring Serbia to pass a resolution condemning what happened in Srebrenica – and even in 2010, the word "genocide" was notably absent from Serbia's statement. The failure of transitional justice on the ground means that the basic facts of the war are still openly contested, from endemic "whatabboutery" to politicians in the Republika Srpska entity of Bosnia demanding Srebrenica figures be "recounted", which the OHR's Valentin Inzko has condemned as a "despicable attempt to question that genocide took place".

In Bosnia, the lack of consensus on the war crimes committed by all sides is reinforced, among other things, by strictly segregated education, teaching children three different versions of their parents' war. And while EU conditionality has focused overwhelmingly on ICTY co-operation, rather than justice delivered through domestic courts, the vast backlog of domestic cases continues to pile up, and incomplete vetting of postwar judiciaries has understandably failed to foster faith in the rule of law. After many failed attempts, there has still not been a successful truth commission to establish a consensus of narrative that could allow the region to come to terms with its past; instead, divides are entrenched along the lines of contested recent history.

It took the British government 38 years to acknowledge responsibility for Bloody Sunday. In the Balkans, where the conflict is more recent and the death toll far higher, there's little hope of moving forward until there is accountability for all involved – including the UN, and through both the ICTY and regional truth commissions – and a clear acknowledgement of who, exactly, is responsible for what.

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Psalmist

21 Jun 2010, 2:36PM

This governments creepy appeasement of Irish Republicans has nothing at all in common with Bosnia.

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longlazydaysgoneby

21 Jun 2010, 2:42PM

Funny from this article it makes it look that only Serbs committed atrocities, and only on Albanians. The truth is it also happened vice versa, and Croats and serbs etc etc. ALL sides have to be held to account, not just the one's who are flavour of vthe month.

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longlazydaysgoneby

21 Jun 2010, 2:43PM

(by the way, I can see the tiny inclusion at the end of the article.)

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shalone

21 Jun 2010, 2:48PM

The comparison with Seville report with Bosnia is far fetched. In Bosnia the number of dead and destruction was much much higher. It was a ruthless racist cleansing of Bosnians. WE talk of Hitler and Nazis nearly 70 years after its demise, but do not bother about Bosnia of yesteryears. The facts about the war has been more or less

established by different international and national courts. We all know the truth. At least anybody who is decent has known it for a long time. The politicians are evidently not decent enough, even though they do know what happened and who did what. Nobody can be fooled any more. It is not that complicated.

BUt the missing link is the lack of interest in media and press. It is so easy to remind 'others' about morals, but forget it in cases where those involved are of different religion or caste. about

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Damntheral

21 Jun 2010, 3:10PM

Funny from this article it makes it look that only Serbs committed atrocities, and only on Albanians.

Albanians? What the hell? This is an article about Bosnia, not Kosovo, and doesn't mention Albanians.

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HammondOrganB3

21 Jun 2010, 3:21PM

Psalmist

This governments creepy appeasement of Irish Republicans has nothing at all in common with Bosnia

Apologising for massacring civilians on a civil rights march is creepy?

Christ on a motorbike, you're somewhat more Old Testament than New, eh?

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HammondOrganB3

21 Jun 2010, 3:28PM

shalone

In Bosnia the number of dead and destruction was much much higher. It was a ruthless racist cleansing of Bosnians. WE talk of Hitler and Nazis nearly 70 years after its demise, but do not bother about Bosnia of yesteryears.

Well, "not bothering" included successfully prosecuting the offenders for genocide, destroying the Serbian state, arresting their President, establishing a sovereign Kosovo, and the Dutch government whose peacekeepers failed so miserably collapsed on the back of this atrocity to subsequently face electoral oblivion.

But I agree Bloody Sunday is not the best comparison. Fallujah is much closer.

Srebrenica was an enclave, lightly protected by UN forces, which was being used as a base for attacking nearby Serb villages. It was known that there's going to be retaliation. When there was a retaliation, it was vicious. They trucked out all the women and children, they kept the men inside, and apparently slaughtered them. The

estimates are thousands of people slaughtered.

Well, with Fallujah, the US didn't truck out the women and children, it bombed them out. There was about a month of bombing, bombed out of the city, if they could get out somehow, a couple hundred thousand people fled, or somehow got out, and as you say men were kept in and we don't know what happened after that, we don't estimate [the casualties for which we are responsible].

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HeatherMcRobie

21 Jun 2010, 3:45PM



Contributor

@shalone and HammondOrganB3 ...yes, sorry, I wasn't intending to make any comparisons of scale, if that was implied. I was trying to indicate the sense of waiting for justice, as there's been a lot of commentary on the frustrating wait for justice for the survivors and relatives of victims of Bloody Sunday -- if we think 38 years for the Saville report's admissions is too long, waiting 15 years for justice for atrocities of a far higher magnitude is unjustifiable. that was the correlation i was trying to make.

@ longlazadaysgoneby - *Albania?* how did you come up with that? Bosnia is clearly written in the title... anyway, my article didn't say that only Serbs committed atrocities -- all sides committed atrocities -- but the article was about Srebrenica specifically.

Srebrenica was not only a war crime but a genocide, under the definition of 1948 Genocide Convention (actions with the "intent to destroy, in part or in whole, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group" :

<http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html>).

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cbarr

21 Jun 2010, 3:46PM

They're are lots of very guilty parties for the Balkan bloodbath on all sides but voices in the IMF, Western Europe and in the Kremlin sure as hell should be held to account for they're direct influence on the creation of the conflict. It wasn't just internal issues that caused the war the outside influences have to be brought to book as well they are as culpable for the war crimes that took place.

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QuoVadis

21 Jun 2010, 4:09PM

You want to blame someone, blame Germany for jumping up and recognizing Croatia's independence before it had a thought or an inkling of the consequential landslide into

chaos it would cause. Boo on the rest of us for following their lead.

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capmint1

21 Jun 2010, 4:12PM

Heather

I agree with the sentiments of the article.

My understanding is that the Dutch Parliament issued an apology, but should the apology extend not just those who carried out the massacre, but also:

- the architects of the 'safe haven' policy i.e. the French government and UK government led by John Major; for not ensuring the UN mandate was backed up with adequate troops and robust rules of engagement
- include other 'safe havens' e.g. Gorazde

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shalone

21 Jun 2010, 4:29PM

This comment has been removed by a moderator. Replies may also be deleted.



wh1952

21 Jun 2010, 4:34PM

There is one teensy difference between Sebrenica and Derry. In the latter case the British government was responsible for the soldiers of the Parachute regiment and even though they didn't directly order the soldiers to shoot unarmed protesters, the chain of command did lead up to them, and thus they carry some direct responsibility. In the former Yugoslavia however, while the UN can be blamed for various failures, while the Germans and others can be blamed for various diplomatic mistakes, none of these had direct responsibility. Direct responsibility lies with the thugs, the ignorant stupid men who committed the violence, rape and killing, and the small time gangsters who played at big shots by spilling the blood of others. What's needed is for those men to own up to what they did, and the pressure should be on them to do so and not dissipated on getting meaningless words out of the UN or the Dutch government. If those men go into old age shunned and hated by their families, well that would be apt punishment.

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nishville

21 Jun 2010, 4:58PM

"In the Balkans, where the conflict is more recent and the death toll far higher, there's little hope of moving forward until there is accountability for all involved – including

the UN, and through both the ICTY and regional truth commissions – and a clear acknowledgement of who, exactly, is responsible for what."

In other words, Bosnian Muslim Army officers, American and Croatian politicians, Albanian terrorists and German diplomats should appear before an objective, independent, not-the-ICTY court and probably be imprisoned for their share of ripping Yugoslavia to shreds so that all what's left of it can be happy again.

How can that science-fiction goal be achieved, mrs.McRobie, when your own article which precedes the quote from the top doesn't mention anybody else but Serbs?

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Nik41

21 Jun 2010, 6:14PM

This article has no real contextual background explaining the Bosnian conflict nor the war itself. Since Yugoslavia began the strength of ethno nationalism and other factors have unleashed a state which was inherently unstable.

Bosnia finds itself as Yugoslavia 3 now an international protectorate which is a pack of cards. 15 years since Dayton there is no common view of a state, a nation or where this country is going. Indeed it exists because the West insists it does so.

There has never been an independent assessment Of Srebrenica and what happened, The parrot type 8000 Muslim men and boys has never been fully investigated apart from the ICJ whose chief witness couldn't even identify one of the accused in an identity parade.

There is no mention made of Nasir Oric whose crimes committed outside the safe zone of Srebrenica including the attack on Kravica in 1993 produced a butchery unparalleled even by Balkan standards. The Hague said there was not enough evidence. The Serb eagerness to take revenge at Srebrenica produced a scenario where Oric had fled with his principal commanders.

People were killed at Srebrenica, but how many and the background to this are never looked at. Moreover to took of this as Genocide makes me beg the question how exactly do you define the slaughter of 700000 Serbs in the charnel house of Croatia and Bosnia from 1941-45, to which most of the world is in ignorance and was suppressed after 1945.?

This historical background which dates back to 1918 runs through 1941-45 and into the 1990s is the dreadful legacy of war and revolution.

Bosnia whom the Bosniaks see as their country and the liberal west who are insistent to create a centralized s

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Nik41

21 Jun 2010, 6:22PM

state again are creating fraction and an unstable situation.

Bosnia cannot have unity if the Serbs and Croats do not share the Bosniak view of a common home. Serbs nad Croats have no loyalty to this pack of cards. The notion of reconciliation is nonsense where the only time they did live together successfully was under the brutal dictatorship of Broz Tito who suppressed any disquiet and contary

views with force.

Bosnia has no future until there is a peaceful disengagement. Like the folly in Afganistan where politicians continue to persist in a blind alley this country is more unstable than Yugoslavia and why didn't the West insist on that staying together?

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HammondOrganB3

21 Jun 2010, 6:48PM

HeatherMcRobie

@shalone and HammondOrganB3 ...yes, sorry, I wasn't intending to make any comparisons of scale, if that was implied. I was trying to indicate the sense of waiting for justice, as there's been a lot of commentary on the frustrating wait for justice for the survivors and relatives of victims of Bloody Sunday -- if we think 38 years for the Saville report's admissions is too long, waiting 15 years for justice for atrocities of a far higher magnitude is unjustifiable. that was the correlation i was trying to make.

I wasn't making a comparison of scale either, Fallujah is as far above Srebrenica as Srebrenica is above Bloody Sunday. I was comparing actions. The British Government did not send the paratroopers into an enclave to execute every last male without exception, as was the case in both Fallujah and Srebrenica.

In terms of comparing to Bloody Sunday, the British Government has only just apologised, and prosecutions appear unlikely; whereas the Serbian Government has **already** apologised (March 2010) and those considered guilty have been arrested and charged with genocide (e.g. Radovan Karadžić). Yes the apology could have been fuller - in each case.

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sarka

21 Jun 2010, 8:05PM

Um, while apologies and declarations deploring etc etc are all to the good, it is naive to think to think that they will somehow bring about peace and stability...

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MCollins

21 Jun 2010, 8:27PM

While a war crime it was not genocide. They did let the women and children go. Sadly similar actions have taken place in war throughout history. Does not make it right but dont miss use the term genocide. The serbs did face that from the Germans and their allies in Bosnia during the 2nd World War.

Also not ever one follows the Neo-Habsburg adgenda of the E.U inbetraying our allie in both wars. If the Serbs vote to break free of Bosnia they should have our backing for a peaceful seperation.

Also did you ever bother to find out what the Muslim forces were doing before the Serbs took the town?

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bluevisitor

21 Jun 2010, 9:04PM

What stands in the way of Bosnia reconciliation

Abuse of compound nouns?

"Bosnian reconciliation" or "reconciliation in Bosnia"

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butwhatif

21 Jun 2010, 9:40PM

You want to blame someone, blame Germany for jumping up and recognizing Croatia's independence ...

I blame Hitler.

Hitler led to a post-war public pacifism in German society, which was behind the decision to go with the flow of mass-public/democratic wishes in Slovenia and Croatia.

This led to Balkan instability.

Balkan instability led to Srebrenica, to the cold-blooded, worse-than-any-animal, massacre of 8,000 men and boys.

Historical causality?

Ridiculously simple, it's got to involve Hitler, 'cos I saw it on Channel 5. Innit,

QuoVadis.

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jeremyjames

21 Jun 2010, 9:47PM

Srebrenica was not a genocide. It was a crime against humanity.

Iraq was not a war crime. It was a crime against humanity.

Until the International Court is given teeth (that means either the UN or America supporting it) to prosecute the perpetrators of such crimes, and until countries like Serbia are ostracised until they surrender those charged, atrocities will continue.

There is a sacre list of people who ought to be before the courts starting with Mladic and going on through Kissinger, Hurd, Juppe, Major, Blair and his cohorts of the infamous or notoriously incompetent.

When is a government going to have the teeth and guts to arraign those who have betrayed their office? Will Cameron dare?

All the rest is scribbling and bibbling.

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[Clip](#) |[Link](#)**MacAdder**

21 Jun 2010, 10:18PM

a slightly confused article. She ends with the pious hope

In the Balkans, where the conflict is more recent and the death toll far higher, there's little hope of moving forward until there is accountability for all involved – including the UN, and through both the ICTY and regional truth commissions – and a clear acknowledgement of who, exactly, is responsible for what

but spends most of the article making it clear that what's wanted not a possibly awkward picture of what actually happened but a simple outright condemnation of Serbs, their cause, and the UN's failure not to just prevent massacre but apparently to its failure to enlist itself even more on the side of the Bosnian and Croats.

This not only shows a lamentable ignorance of the complexities of the Yugoslav war, where there is no question that while the Srebrenica massacre was an egregious war crime, the role of the UN and its constituents, notably the USA on the Bosnian side was extensive. It also shows an ignorance re Srebrenica, where the fall, though not the massacre, was the doing of a number of actors working towards the apparent endgame, in which the removal of the Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves was widely conspired at to give orderly front lines. Read Mischa Glenny's excellent 'the fall of Yugoslavia'.

It may be of course malice not ignorance, I notice she carefully refers to the UN convention on genocide, which handily defines killing of any part of any group - one person is enough - as genocide. Such a broad definition makes the use of the g-word entirely political. This is a bad thing. It was probably drawn so broadly to include all misdeeds, the end of the Moriori as well as as the Herero or Holocaust but its effect, like a law which criminalises widely, is to make enforcement politically selective and therefore unjust.

[Recommend?](#) (9)[Report abuse](#)[Clip](#) |[Link](#)**bob10**

21 Jun 2010, 11:05PM

germany recognized croatia in january 1992. the war started in june 1991. the recognition by germany of croatia has nothing to do with the start of the wars in the balkans. get your facts straight before posting comments.

[Recommend?](#) (1)[Report abuse](#)[Clip](#) |[Link](#)**bob10**

21 Jun 2010, 11:07PM

genocide is genocide is genocide. srebrenica was genocide. to deny that genocide has taken place is a criminal offence in many countries. it should be a criminal offence globally.

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21 Jun 2010, 11:10PM

it's perhaps a good thing that the world is ignorant of the ww2 atrocities committed in the former yugo. many of the numbers were inflated in order to secure greater war reparations. check all the statistics then go with the smallest numbers. in most cases, those are the most reflective casualties.

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21 Jun 2010, 11:12PM

good article. i appreciate the balanced and objective views of this journalist.

[Recommend?](#) (3)[Report abuse](#)[Clip](#) |[Link](#)**[rsc82](#)**

21 Jun 2010, 11:27PM

Don't suppose anyone minds if I just say "Blair" around here, seems the right place? Atrocity was his middle name.

[Recommend?](#) (0)[Report abuse](#)[Clip](#) |[Link](#)**[Axandar](#)**

21 Jun 2010, 11:36PM

The thema of this article seems to be a poorly-concealed attempt to demonise the Serbs of Bosnia, and so lend retrospective justification to NATO's actions in the area. The problem is not so simplistic, and neither are the "solutions" offered. Bosnia suffered a century of ethnic conflict - for long periods of which the Serbs were the ones being massacred - and in far greater numbers than at Srebrenica. For real reconciliation BOTH sides of these crimes have to be recognised and apologised for. The West's culpability is great. Caring little about the history of Yugoslavia, **western countries for geopolitical gain, conspired in the destruction of Yugoslavia - a state in which there were large numbers of checks and balances to allow the different peoples to live in peace.** Yugoslavia was left-leaning and statist, however, and had to be destroyed. This was done by giving open and tacit support to ethnic groups (including openly Fascist-leaning ones as in Croatia) - to break up Yugoslavia along ethnic lines.

In a land with the history of Yugoslavia, this was sure to lead to ethnic killings and clearances. **However the west agreed (illegally) to recognise the "independence" of ethnic regions of Yugoslavia, after simple majority**

referenda - even if large numbers of people in these new "nations" were violently opposed to being taken out of their home nation to live as oppressed minorities in newly created statelets. This was an open incitement to the sort of violence that took place.

"Bosnia" was typical of this, where a 60% majority of Muslims and Croats was allowed to create a never-before-seen "nation" of Bosnia in which the Serb population would be an impotent 40% minority. Having unleashed the whirlwind of ethnic hatred and rivalry - the west then affected horror at the results. The Serbs understandably said No. We don't want to be torn out of our country to live under Muslims who don't want to live in Yugoslavia. So began separation, ethnic cleansing and war.

In Croatia the west actively assisted in the ethnic cleansing and genocide in the Serb-populated Kraina region. Are we to see the Clinton administration brought to trial for this?

If not, then end the hypocrisy. Trying to force an "agreed" (by whom?) history of the Bosnian war on the different peoples will not work until EVERY element of this disaster is gone into. WHO sponsored the ethnic strife and destruction of Yugoslavia? ALL sides have to admit to their crimes and seizures of power. And it has to be acknowledged that Serbs too have a right of self-determination, whether in Kosovo, Bosnia or Croatia.

So let's remember the WHOLE truth - not just selective bits of it.

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Axandar

21 Jun 2010, 11:41PM

In Croatia the west actively assisted in the ethnic cleansing and genocide in the Serb-populated Kraina region. Are we to see the Clinton administration brought to trial for this?

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maraq

22 Jun 2010, 12:32AM

@bobo10

>>germany recognized croatia in january 1992. the war started in june 1991. the recognition by germany of croatia has nothing to do with the start of the wars in the balkans. get your facts straight before posting comments.<<

Germany's BND started interfering in the SFRJ in 1987! Germany sent covert arms shipments via Hungary starting in November 1990, Germany and Austria were sabre-rattling "military reprisals" against the central government in Beograd in July 1991 after falsely claiming Yugoslav MiGs had violated Austrian airspace and had endangered Klagenfurt with bombing, Germany wrecked the Brioni Accords in July 1991, Germany appointed the chief members on the prussian-style arrogance of the Badinter commission along with the hilariously named M. Poos of Luxembourg (-who the hell are they to adjudicate on the legitimacy of a sovereign state outside the the EEC?)Germany sent ex DDR Migs and tanks to Zagreb in October 1991, Germany's Genscher used Slovene and Croatian recognition by London as a bargaining chip with

Douglas Hurd at the December 1991 Maastricht summit, The Axel-Springer Die Welt run a ludicrous headline in May 1992 about Milosevic having a "stolen Soviet SS20 nuclear missile from the DDR and would fire it on Wien or Graz"...

Get you facts straight before....

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bob10

22 Jun 2010, 1:42AM

i can't believe how the break up of the former Yugoslavia unleashes all these conspiracy theories...

economic collapse lead to political bickering which lead to nationalistic policies

blaming each side for the problems which lead to armed conflict

basically a plot for those in power to stay in power while pillaging the state and its remnants for their own interests

nice theory about how those in america, russia, germany, turkey, and perhaps even on the moon were responsible for the break-up of the former yugo...

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Marathon490BC

22 Jun 2010, 3:04AM

the time is long past for european to stop deflecting all blame for the muslim genocide on the UN, and rather to fix it precisely where it belongs: on themselves.

the simple fact remains that decadent, pacifist europeans share guilt with the serbian barbarians for this crime against humanity; a crime committed in their midst and which could never have occurred without their acquiescence.

to the average european, the moslem is now regarded as a new untermensch. very few europeans accept that the liberation and protection afforded to them by the usa in their hour (and weeks and months and years and decades) of need provided any moral guidance for themselves to extend the same protection to a bosnia or liberation to an iraq.

instead, the sordid european now hides behind the UN as a fig leaf to deflect blame from his own failure to behave in a civilized and moral fashion. it is precisely the same tactic used by decadent europe in its evasion of their moral and historical responsibilities in iraq. how convenient to have this alleged "international law"--itself an obscene fallacy--be capable of being interpreted in any way one pleases.

the moral imperative to prevent genocide in bosnia in 1995 was clear to all european governments. the war had been progressing for three years, with many reports of civilian slaughter on both sides. the particularly precarious nature of the moslem civilians in srebrenica was well known and documented.

but instead of sending serious military formations to protect these civilians--as america was finally forced to do in order, as usual, to bring european slaughter to an end--the french and germans did nothing at all.

where the german panzers, and the french foreign legion when needed to keep the peace, to preserve civilization, and--yes, europe--to defeat the "bad guys"? the answer of course, is that the european mind simply cannot comprehend any imperative

beyond its own narrow self interest.

so instead an undermanned, underequipped, undertrained, underled and undermotivated ragtag bunch of dutch were sent. its behaviour was morally criminal, including toasting the serbian butchers after it was known that they were massacring unarmed civilians, and releasing to the butchers thousands of bosniaks who were subsequently slaughtered.

the time has indeed come for a serious trial of the butchers of srebrenica. first in the dock: europe.

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Tanglong

22 Jun 2010, 3:51AM

People were killed at Srebrenica , but how many and the background to this are never looked at. Moreover to took of this as Genocide makes me beg the question how exactly do you define the slaughter of 700000 Serbs in the charnel house of Croatia and Bosnia from 1941-45.

Well, genocide, obviously. What's your point?

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Tanglong

22 Jun 2010, 3:58AM

Previous post and quote was for Nik41

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Tanglong

22 Jun 2010, 7:16AM

Heather McRobie

In Bosnia, the lack of consensus on the war crimes committed by all sides is reinforced, among other things, by strictly segregated education, teaching children three different versions of their parents' war.

Yes the schools are segregated but regarding the war and the history of the region I was under the impression they all got the same NATO sanitized version what with Paddy Ashdown's book-banning spree, 'Bridge on the Drina' (Nobel Prize 1961) being one example of books he banned in Serb schools. Has he ever explained himself over that?

He also dismissed reports by Bosnian Serbs on atrocities committed against them out of hand without ever having read them, and had his own people do the reports instead.

So to answer the title 'What stands in the way of Bosnia reconciliation', one of the obstacles perhaps could be the lopsided and incomplete history of the region preached by NATO and the Western media.

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22 Jun 2010, 7:53AM

Axandar, yes, the nations of the West were responsible for letting the Bosnian Serbs getting away with what they did (along with the United Nations which adopted finely-worded resolutions but when it counted failed to act).

But who was it who organised the Pirjedor death camp system, who organised the starvation and killing of the civilian population of Sarajevo, who organised the rape camps like Vilina Vlas, who organised the ethnic cleansing of the Drina valley, with the burning alive of crammed houses at Pionirska Street and Bikavac (per Patrick Robinson, crimes that rank high in the history of man's inhumanity to man), and who organised the crowning glory of the Bosnian War, the industrial scale mass executions of civilians and prisoners from Srebrenica and the concealment of the their graves? Other parties committed atrocities but where was there anything on the triumphalist scale of what the Bosnian Serbs achieved?

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22 Jun 2010, 8:06AM

I can't read this Guardian propaganda anymore!

Serbs, Serbs, Serbs... tell me, why are you always silent when it comes to Muslim Dudakovic, for example, who filmed his atrocities, but is still free and makes political career???

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mFF4_yCrno

As for Srebrenica... this tired argument that Srebrenica took place because Serbia accepted a declaration is ridiculous! Tadic is far from being a representative of Serb's interests, and what he does contradicts Serbian interests. I do really hope that the next Serbian president will be a nationalist and, then, all these dirty publications about Serbs, this promoted hatred, will have a backflash!

Lermontov, "The hero of Our Time":

"..they said I was sly, so I grew reticent. I was keenly aware of good and evil, but instead of being indulged I was insulted and so I became spiteful... I was ready to love the whole world, but no one understood me, and I learned to hate. My cheerless youth passed in conflict with myself and society, and fearing ridicule I buried my finest feelings deep in my heart, and there they died. I spoke the truth, but nobody believed me, so I began to practice duplicity. Having come to know society and its mainsprings, I became versed in the art of living and saw how others were happy without that proficiency, enjoying for free the favors I had so painfully striven for. It was then that despair was born in my heart--not the despair that is cured with a pistol, but a cold, impotent desperation, concealed under a polite exterior and a good-natured smile..."

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Photo
pending
approval**bouwman**

22 Jun 2010, 8:11AM

Kofi Annan himself acknowledged that force should have been used to stop the killings, and that peacekeepers "must never again be deployed into an environment in which there is no ceasefire or peace agreement"

He seems to be saying, that rather than have UN peacekeepers standing around idly during a massacre, they would preferably not be there at all. The UN Peacekeepers aren't the A Team, that's for sure. What's needed is a well armed, crack brigade of soldiers who would act as umpire, and intervene where civilians need defending. That is a tall order, given the chain of command goes all the way up to a disparate 'committee' of countries that includes China, Israel, the USA etc. Kofi may well acknowledge that force was needed, but in the same breath, says that if it was a conflict zone, UN Peacekeepers should not be there in the first place since there is no peace to keep. I don't know the solution. There is no 'world police', although the idea is being unilaterally trialled in Iraq and Afghanistan, with disastrous results.

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22 Jun 2010, 8:13AM

The U.N. didn't kill those people, it failed to protect them. There is a difference. What I find most shocking about the whole thing is the Serb mentality about this, and their supporters outside Serbia who really should know better. They justify the violence against Bosnian and Kosovo muslims or 'ethnic muslims' (many non -practicing) with absurd reference to some medieval battle between Christians and Turks. Idiots every one of them.

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22 Jun 2010, 8:33AM

wh1952, the point about criticising the Dutch and the UN is that even though the Bosnian Serbs committed the murders, it was the Dutch and the UN who took it upon themselves to promise the people of Srebrenica their protection and more importantly who had various opportunities to take action that might have thwarted Mladic's thugs but chose not to.

It's not simply for the sake of the dead of Srebrenica that the UN and individual governments have to be held to account for their undertakings, it's for the sake of anyone anywhere else who might be led to believe that fins-sounding words from the powerful represent any real protection against a plan of extermination .

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**Peculiar Democracy**

22 Jun 2010, 8:37AM

Baron and bou, why do you write about what you are absolutely unaware?

Izetbegovic said that "we need 5 000 dead for foreign interference" and he was interested in it. Even a witness against Karadzic confirmed that:

The witness confirmed that during the war civilians could not leave Sarajevo without a permit and that President **Izetbegovic would not agree to the evacuation of Srebrenica.**

<http://www.sense-agency.com/en/stream.php?sta=3&pid=15796&kat=3>

What would you feel like if you were not allowed to leave the war area? And you don't like to recall that it was Mladic who evacuated civilians, women and children/ All they were transferred to Tuzla safe and sound, and the Red Cross confirmed that, registered them, there are figures etc.

At first, Srrebrenica propagandists claimed that "men and women" were executed, but when the facts became known, they said, Ok, "just men" were executed... Sure, men, the majority of whom died in a fight... How much time will pass until "the world" learn the real truth??

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**East**

22 Jun 2010, 9:00AM

Heather, if you're in Sarajevo, you might be interested in knowing about the commemoration of the Bikavac Fire near Visegrad on 27 June.

On 27 June 1992 at least 60 Bosniak civilians, most of them women and children, were burned alive after the house in which they were confined was set on fire. This will be the first commemoration since Milan Lukic was finally convicted last July for his role in this and a few of his other atrocities.

There'll be a bus will be going from Sarajevo in the morning. Like the Pionirska Street survivors, who commemorated the deaths there on 14 June, the one survivor of Bikavac and the victims' relatives get some some slight reassurance from the interest of foreigners that the outside world hasn't forgotten their unresolved situation.

Visegrad is still a place of too much hatred, denial and comfort for war criminals.

Reconciliation starts with being able to go back to your own home and live there without fear. Many of the people responsible for Milan Lukic's crimes are still in positions of power and authority in Visegrad.

If you're interested in attending the commemoration contact Women Victims of War / Zene Zrtve Rata or Visegrad Genocide Memories Blog.

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**Peculiar Democracy**

22 Jun 2010, 9:33AM

Sarajevo is a city of hatred. I have experienced it myself when I came there last week.

While Republika Srpska is tolerant to all nationalities and religions, they build

mosques and don't discriminate people, whereas, in Sarajevo, according to the survey, Serbs and Croats (to a lesser degree) don't have an opportunity to get a good job. This survey was conducted by Sarajevo, not Serbian institute.

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East

22 Jun 2010, 10:01AM

Peculiar Democracy, Mladic's "evacuation" was a forcible transfer of population completed by the slaughter of those women's fathers, husbands and sons. Don't try and put Christmas tree decorations on it.

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madhatter

22 Jun 2010, 10:28AM

When will those involved in Srebrenica – including the UN – admit their responsibility and atone for the 1995 genocide?

Well for a start you can stop conflating *massacre* with *genocide*

What happened in Srebrenica was appalling but the constant inflation of any such act to the status of genocide starts to rob the word of it's unique horror

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Ian70

22 Jun 2010, 10:52AM

Well, the UN could accept some kind of financial responsibility (they have already set out their responsibility in the 1999 report) but I don't see that it will make much difference to reconciliation within Bosnia itself. The issues also go far deeper than any Truth and Reconciliation commission could resolve.

As you can tell from many of the posts above, unless any commission places equal blame on all parties (which would not be the truth) a lot of people will consider it to be biased and anti-Serb.

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East

22 Jun 2010, 11:00AM

Madhatter, you should stop trying to divest what happened of its legally established confirmation as genocide in accordance with the provisions of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide.

The word genocide was coined by Raphael Lemkin, the father of the Convention. Lemkin specifically saw genocide as a process to be interrupted not simply a fait accompli to be punished, hence the wording of the Convention's title and the reference to the partial as well as total destruction of the group.

The existence of the Convention was intended to deter what happened in Bosnia and Rwanda. The most positive thing to have come out of those two terrible episodes has been a determination to make the Convention an effective instrument of international law.

The highest international legal forum, the International Court of Justice, has confirmed that what happened at Srebrenica was genocide. Karadzic's Directive 7 makes it clear that he and Mladic and their associates and subordinates, including last week's convicts Popovic and Beara, set out to eliminate the Bosnian Muslim / Bosniak population of Eastern Bosnia.

What they did has been recognised for what it was. What is important is for the legal findings to serve as a warning to anyone who may contemplate the same sort criminal enterprise in the future.

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[LostinSweden](#)

22 Jun 2010, 11:05AM

What the hell has Bloody Sunday got to do with Srebrenica? imagine every male in the Bogside over the age fifteen being rounded up by paramilitaries and summarily shot, while the army, although there to protect them, turned their backs and let it happen. Bloody Sunday was a chaotic f**k up. Twenty-six people were shot, fourteen died. 8,372 men were murdered in Srebrenica. Yes, Bloody Sunday was terrible, but you lose sympathy and trivialise a much, much worse act of barbarism when you compare it to Srebrenica in any way.

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[MacAdder](#)

22 Jun 2010, 11:29AM

@East

read my earlier posting.

the definition of genocide is drawn so widely that almost any action by any side in an ethnic civil war technically fits the bill, so enforcement is selective, and therefore political and therefore loses credibility. This is demonstrated by its relative failure since 1995 (darfur..) to deter anyone, since it is clear that the genocide label is not dependent on actions but political expedience.

There is a lot of propaganda emphasis on the 'legal' condemnation of the Serbs, partly to distract from the basic fact that genocide in the commonly accepted sense - round 'em up and kill all you possibly can - did not take place. A ghastly and criminal massacre did, for which all the culprits should be hung higher than Haman. but If Mladic et al wanted to 'eliminate' the local bosnian muslim population in the Final Solution sense, letting most of them go and killing only the military-age males - the most expendable part of any population as endless European wars will attest - is a

ridiculous way of doing it.

The legal 'genocide' ruling has been pure gold not to truth, justice, and reconciliation but to obfuscation, misrepresentation and conflict.

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