

9 The ethnic cleansing of a "safe area"

The fall of Srebrenica and the ethics of UN-governmentality

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On Tuesday July 11 1995 a Bosnian Serb army led by General Ratko Mladic triumphantly entered the eastern Bosnian town of Srebrenica. The town, named after its long historic association with silver mining, was at the center of a multi-ethnic region of 36,666 people in 1990, 75.2 percent of whom identified themselves in the 1990 Yugoslav census as "Muslims" while 22.7 identified themselves as "Serb" (Honig and Both 1996: xviii). Swelled by refugees from years of civil war, the population of Srebrenica had reached 50,000 in 1993. Certain groups had been able to flee the town and as the Bosnian Serb army encroached others tried to escape their clutches. However, an estimated 30,000 people were eventually surrounded by Mladic's army near the United Nations compound at Potocari, on the outskirts of the town.

Over the next four days, the Bosnian Serb army, with the reluctant acquiescence of the Dutch UN troops, expelled an estimated 23,000 women and children, permanently evicting them from their lands and homes. The men were treated differently. Separated from their families, they were driven off in buses to various locations, to an abandoned gymnasium, an athletic field, and clear patches in forested areas. There almost all were murdered, either by being enclosed and shot from a height or by mass executions at close quarters with bullets to the back of the head. A few miraculously survived, left for dead by those charged with liquidating them. An estimated 3,000 men were killed. A further 4,000 people were murdered as they tried to outrun the Bosnian Serb army which had organized "hunting expeditions" to track, stalk and kill them. In total, over 7,000 people, the vast majority of them men, are missing and presumed dead as a consequence of the fall of Srebrenica.

The ethnic cleansing of Srebrenica was not an unusual act of violence in the post-Cold War world. In Afghanistan, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Chechnya, Croatia, Rwanda, Sri Lanka and many many other places political, ethnic and religious conflicts have degenerated into bloody wars of often shocking brutality. The New World Order promised by President Bush and the United Nations immediately after the Gulf War has become a new world disorder where anarchy, chaos and brutal violence are widespread. Yet geography made the violence of Srebrenica unique in two ways.

The first was its location in Europe. In the scorching July of 1995 I was visiting

Italy for the first time and watched with horror what was unfolding only a few hundred miles south-east of Trieste. Bosnian Serb television footage of Mladic addressing those captured was broadcast around the world. What was happening in Srebrenica was close both geographically and visually to "us," to the safe and civilized world of the European Union. Subsequently, the violence of that July was represented as "Europe's worst massacre since World War II" (Rohde 1997), the European location granting the violence unusual significance.

Srebrenica was also special because it had been declared by the United Nations a "safe area" in April 1993. Designating the town as a "safe area" represented an effort by the international community to legislate a special zone of order and security amidst the generalized disorder and warfare in Bosnia. The United Nations demonstrated its commitment to the town by placing a battalion of troops there. Airplanes from the NATO base of Aviano in northern Italy and from ships in the Adriatic were charged with protecting these troops and making sure that the safe area remained safe. Srebrenica was part of a United Nations ethical order imposed upon the new world disorder. In driving past the Aviano air base that July, it was clear that the high tech warplanes based there were on full alert. Yet with the exception of one minor attack, no serious effort was made by the UN to repulse the Bosnian Serb army as it began transforming the "safe area" into an expulsion and killing zone. In violently rearranging the human geography of Srebrenica, the Bosnian Serb army revealed the limits of the United Nations' commitment to the people of Srebrenica, exposing its ethics as a self- rather than other-directed code of bureaucratic procedures and professionally delimited response-ability (Campbell 1994).

This chapter seeks to explain how the United Nations' governmental and ethical system pronounced Srebrenica a "safe area" yet nevertheless allowed this "safe area" to become the site of the worst massacre in Europe since the Second World War. The chapter addresses three themes; first, the strategic and ethical re-spacing of world order by the Western alliance system after the Cold War; second, the establishment of a United Nations governmentality in Bosnia as a particular strategic and ethical order; and finally, the contradictions and failure of this ethical order to take moral responsibility for Srebrenica. While many of the essays in this volume understand "ethics" as positive normative reflection upon codes of behavior, this chapter considers how codes of behavior are already implicitly ethical orders sustaining certain forms of normative behavior that may not necessarily be moral or reflective. I wish to suggest that, in this case at least, there is an important difference between ethics as a *set of socially institutionalized rules promoting normative behavior* and morality as a *primordial and open-ended responsibility towards otherness*. Bauman (1993, 1995), Herzfeld (1992) and others have argued that ethical orders routinely produce moral indifference and suppress open-ended moral responsibility towards otherness. I wish to argue that the institutionally proclaimed, bureaucratically supervised and professionally administered ethics of the United Nations in the former Yugoslavia so constricted expressions of moral responsibility that they effectively promoted immoral purposes and ends (Barnett 1996). In the case of Srebrenica at least, professional

ethical orders tried to capture and control morality, to strait-jacket it within a code of conduct and bound it with rules of engagement and delimited responsibility. The result was an evasion and occlusion of morality, and eventual acquiescence with the genocidal practices of the Bosnian Serb army.

The new world (dis)order and UN-governmentality

The Cold War between an Eastern bloc led by the Soviet Union and a Western bloc led by the United States organized the geopolitics of the world order for over 40 years after the Second World War. Its alliance systems and economic institutions organized international space into two distinct zones of allegiance, while a third non-aligned movement attempted, with a variable record of success, to distinguish itself from both of these zones. In giving international affairs a geopolitical intelligibility the Cold War also helped establish a geography of strategic responsibility and obligation through its systems of alliances, treaties and international organizations. These specified, often in legal and contractual detail, certain structures of authority, spheres of influence and systems of obligation and military security. As a consequence, politics and diplomacy during the Cold War was conducted in a world marked by reasonably distinct maps of proximity and difference in international affairs. Certain countries were recognizably close to the Western alliance system and its way of life while others were perceived as distant from the imagined ideals of "the West." Proximity and distance in international affairs encompassed but was not reducible to territorial proximity and distance. A state like Cuba, for example, was territorially close to the United States but beyond its self-constructed civilization of values, a satellite orbiting in the foreign ethical universe of the Soviet Union.

Revolutions in communication and transportation together with economic globalization were already forcing a re-spatialization of international affairs before the collapse of the Communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe and the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991. The end of the Cold War made such a re-spatialization an imperative and when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1991 President Bush proclaimed a New World Order with the United States and its allies working through the United Nations and re-directed Cold War alliance systems like NATO to thwart aggression against lawful sovereign states and maintain peace and security in the international system. For a moment it seemed that the United Nations could become something it was not during the Cold War, an institutional expression of a universal will and the organizational center of a more inclusive and proactive international community.

As the rhetorical hubris of Bush's New World Order faded, however, the daunting challenges of the actually existing new world disorder became more apparent. In many places, like Yugoslavia, Somalia, Rwanda and Haiti, states were breaking apart in violent struggles and ceasing to function. When states failed and became ungovernable, the United Nations was frequently called upon to act as an international rescue service, an emergency paragonovernmental service of last resort for states that had descended into chaos. Governmentality, which Foucault (1991)

defines as "the right disposition of things so as to lead to a convenient end," had first emerged as a modern administrative and ordering project focused on state building in eighteenth-century Europe. In the new world disorder of the late twentieth century, with state governmentalities failing across the globe, the United Nations became the institutional locus of a world governmentality. Its various administrative agencies and peacekeeping missions to particular failing states represented forms of UN-governmentality in places that had lost their own local governmentality and become ungovernable (Luke and Ó Tuathail 1997). The United Nations represented the hope and promise of a universal modernity, the possibility of a minimal form of governmentality in regions that appeared to have become engulfed by anarchy and to have reverted to tribal and feudal systems of governance.

One region of chaos where the United Nations was soon deployed was in the former Yugoslavia. A nominally non-aligned location during the Cold War, Yugoslavia was of marginal strategic interest to the United States and NATO after the end of the Cold War (Zimmermann 1996; Ó Tuathail 1999). After the wars triggered by the push to break up Yugoslavia started, it was quickly agreed in the United States that Yugoslavia was a regional problem that was best left to the European Union. While the European states were geographically closer to Yugoslavia, they also initially had little strategic stake in the conflict. The dominant European interest was represented as "humanitarian," which in practice meant, first, concern with population displacements and refugee flows into the states of Western Europe and second, concern with human rights abuses and genocide. However, this last humanitarian interest was to prove the most troubling of all and over time made the wars in the former Yugoslavia a more strategic challenge to the West than first anticipated. The proliferation of new media technologies like direct satellite broadcasting and new media programming like 24-hour news broadcasting made wars in distant locations appear much closer and more visible than ever before. This put the bloody brutality of war in Europe's own backyard into the homes of Europeans and Americans on a nightly basis. It created moral pressure and imperatives for the Western powers to do something about this brutality while also conditioning the possible nature of their response (whether they could use national troops and what they could or could not do).

The European and United Nations' response to the Yugoslavian wars was shaped by all these factors. There developed an ethic of engagement with Yugoslavia that comprised, on the one hand, an exhaustive search for a diplomatic solution with, on the other hand, the deployment of a "peacekeeping" force with a purely humanitarian mandate to secure the delivery of food and medical supplies to civilians that most needed them. This ethic of engagement was a clearly circumscribed and limited one. The European Union and the United Nations would facilitate efforts to find a diplomatic or an undiplomatic solution (i.e. surrender by the Bosnian Muslims) to the conflict but would not impose any solution. Progress towards such a solution was ultimately dependent upon the warring parties themselves. The United Nations Protection Force

(UNPROFOR) sent into Bosnia in 1992 had a mandate that required it to adhere to a policy of strict neutrality towards the varying warring parties. UNPROFOR could defend itself if attacked but it was under strict instructions not to aid one side or the other in the conflict. The response of the European Union, the Western alliance and the United Nations towards the crisis in Yugoslavia was thus enframed by a strong ethics of professionalism, the professionalism of the diplomat who must always be neutral and willing to negotiate with any of the warring parties, and the professionalism of military commanders charged with carrying out their mandate and strictly following their chain of command, rules of engagement, and standard operational procedures.

The problem with these ethics of engagement is that they became substitutes for morality as responsibility for and to otherness. They became, in effect and practice, substitute moral choices that propelled diplomats for the Western powers and the United Nations to negotiate with war criminals and UNPROFOR to remain neutral in a country where acts of indiscriminate mass murder and crimes against humanity were being committed. Ethics substituted for and attempted to contain the "unreasonable" demands generated by Bosnia as a challenge to morality.

Ethical engagement without moral responsibility: the creation of "safe areas"

Until 1995 the disposition of the West and the United Nations towards the Bosnian war is best summarized as one of ethical engagement without moral responsibility. Bosnia was represented as part of a general universal of obligation on the part of the West and the UN but this obligation was a circumscribed "humanitarian" one that defined and described itself in terms of diplomatic and peacekeeping professionalism. Bosnia was also consistently represented by the leading powers in NATO as a place beyond its domain of strategic obligation and responsibility. While many European NATO members were willing to provide the troops necessary for UNPROFOR to establish and carry out its "humanitarian" mandate, no NATO state was willing to have its troops take a side in the Bosnian war and fight in the region. The United States was not even willing to have any of its troops deployed on the ground. Military neutrality was the best course. Bosnia, in short, was not worth dying for.

Sustaining this attitude of military neutrality were a number of strategic calculations by NATO. Yugoslavia as a whole and Bosnia in particular, as we already noted, was generally represented as having marginal strategic value and interest to the West. The region contained no major resources vital to the West's way of life and had no weapons of mass destruction that could potentially threaten members of NATO. The war in the region was also frequently depicted as a centuries-old conflict between competing tribal identities. It was not the postmodern or even the modern war that NATO was trained and equipped to fight but a particularly brutal "premodern war" between combatants locked in history. Those who represented the war as one between the values of multiculturalism and fascist

nationalism or between Western democracy and Communism – and certain influential figures in the West like Margaret Thatcher and George Schultz publicly called for greater Western military involvement in the conflict – were generally represented as naive and simple-minded, figures that did not understand the supposed complexity of the conflict and tended to idealize one side over the other. Many Western military leaders, including some of those with leadership positions in UNPROFOR, repeatedly noted that all parties were at fault in the Bosnian war and that the Bosnian Muslim side in particular were not the victims they were often portrayed as in the Western media. A number of military commanders held the Bosnian Muslim army in contempt and tended to bond more easily with Serbian military leaders. The strategic thinking of NATO was also shaped by the danger of an emergent Islamic fundamentalism amongst Muslims in Bosnia (Rieff 1995).

As a consequence, many Western military and diplomatic leaders tended to reason in a *realpolitik* manner about the conflict in Bosnia. *Realpolitik* reasoning on Bosnia represented ethical engagement without moral responsibility *par excellence*; it was the product of a masculinist culture of professionalism and expertise that defined itself by its ability to suspend moral questions and judgments, often recognized and coded in feminine terms as "passion" and "emotional" arguments, in order to "see things in a realistic and hardheaded way" and to eventually "get the job done" (Ó Tuathail 1996a). The military diplomacy of General Rose and the civilian diplomacy of David Owen, in particular, are examples of this masculinist culture of *realpolitik* reasoning (Owen 1995). For them and many others, the most realistic solution to what was represented as the "Balkan quagmire" was for the Bosnian Muslim army to face up to the fact that it was militarily weaker and effectively defeated on a number of fronts. The Bosnians, as a consequence, needed to think seriously about surrender.

One place where *realpolitik* reasoning dictated that the Bosnian Muslims should cut their losses and surrender was Srebrenica. Initially seized and raided by paramilitary Bosnian Serb militias (Arkan's Tigers) in April 1992, the town had been recovered by the Bosnian Muslims under the leadership of Nasar Oric, only to be surrounded and in dire need of food by February 1993. In March the United States began airdrops of food and medical supplies to it and other cities in eastern Bosnia, the detached aerial action a manifestation of the circumscribed US involvement in the conflict. The United States was willing to treat the "humanitarian" consequences of warfare in Bosnia from a distance but refused, along with the other NATO countries, to do anything substantive about the cause of this "humanitarian" suffering.

The Serb advance on Srebrenica and other Bosnian Muslim-held towns in eastern Bosnia imperiled even the "humanitarian" mandate of UNPROFOR and the other key UN agency, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It was within the international humanitarian aid community that the idea of creating "safe areas" in Bosnia was first broached. Honig and Both (1996: 99) credit the idea to the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva but the general concept of secure zones had first been

implemented at the end of the Gulf War when the allied coalition declared northern Iraq a "safe haven" for Kurds fleeing an Iraqi army counter-attacking after a Kurdish uprising in the region. Forged at the birth of what was supposed to be a New World Order, the concept of a "safe haven" was a new type of space in international affairs, a zone within the territory of a sovereign state that was militarily protected from the air by an outside coalition of states. The concept helped cover up the embarrassment to the Western-led UN coalition caused by the Kurdish refugee crisis at the end of the Gulf War. It represented the desperate desire to maintain the pretense of a New World Order in the face of an actually existing new world disorder.

The concept of a "safe area," as it came to be delimited by the international diplomatic community, was different from a "safe haven." Whereas the "safe haven" in northern Iraq was a relatively large territorial area declared by a victorious coalition against a state they had defeated in war, "safe areas" or "protected zones" were envisaged as demilitarized areas which required the prior consent of the combatants in order to be established. Safe areas were conceived as humanitarian islands of relative peace and security in a sea of warfare. Unlike "safe havens," they required that the international community be politically and militarily neutral in their establishing and administration of these zones. They represented territories of UN-governmentality that sought to maintain the conceit that the United Nations and the international community could avoid taking a side in the Bosnian war. As such, they represented an intensification of the principle of ethical engagement without moral responsibility. The international community wanted to strengthen its ability to carry out its "humanitarian mission" yet without imperiling its neutrality and the supposed moral authority that derived from this.

Most members of the Western military community and many Western diplomats opposed the concept of "safe havens." The Pentagon considered them unrealistic and unsustainable. If implemented they held the risk of dragging the Western alliance further into the "Balkan quagmire," contributing to what Joint Chiefs Chair Colin Powell saw as "mission creep," the type of expansion in mission that the United Nations undertook in Mogadishu and eventually led to a humiliating withdrawal of US forces from Somalia (Ó Tuathail 1996b). David Owen and Cyrus Vance felt they would further encourage ethnic cleansing by implicitly designating other areas as unsafe and abandoned by the international community, and therefore fair game for ethnic cleansing. The permanent members of the Security Council were also reportedly skeptical while the UNHCR produced a study arguing that they should be used only as a last option.

Despite all of these reservations and concerns, the UN Security Council nevertheless passed Resolution 819 on April 16 1993 declaring Srebrenica a United Nations' "safe area." Hastily adopted in the face of the imminent collapse of Srebrenica and the justifiable fear that the Bosnian Serbs would subsequently brutalize the population, the resolution offered the UN Security Council the pretense that it was "doing something" but did little to clarify or resolve the problems already identified with the concept. It did not define the extent of

the "safe area" and absurdly placed the onus upon the Serbs and the Muslims to make Srebrenica safe. UNPROFOR's role would be to observe and monitor the humanitarian situation in Srebrenica (Honig and Both 1996: 104). While no doubt well-intentioned, the resolution continued to cling to the notion that the international community could remain neutral in the conflict and that it could designate and work within a sphere of "humanitarian" interests without making moral choices about the larger military, political and moral context of the war. In responding as it did, however, the UN Security Council was making larger moral choices by default, choosing to care but only in a way delimited and circumscribed by an ethics of neutrality and professionalism.

Over the following weeks, the possible meaning of the concept of a "safe area" was debated within the international community and worked out on the ground by the competing warring parties and UNPROFOR leaders. Srebrenica's defenders were to be demilitarized by UNPROFOR soldiers and the geographical extent of the "safe area" eventually defined as the frontlines between the combatants. In New York, the non-aligned countries on the UN Security Council with the support of US Ambassador Madeleine Albright extended the concept of "safe areas" to other embattled towns in Bosnia. Two competing visions of "safe areas" were outlined in a French draft paper, a "light option" which would spread 9,600 UNPROFOR troops throughout six enclaves with a mandate to "deter aggression" or a "heavy option" with 35,000 to 40,000 troops to "oppose any aggression" (Honig and Both 1996: 111).

Eventually, on June 4 1993, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 836 which extended the mandate of UNPROFOR "to deter attacks against the safe areas, to monitor the ceasefire (and) to promote the withdrawal of military or paramilitary units other than those of the Government of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina" (cited in Honig and Both 1996: 114). Rather than oppose aggression, UNPROFOR was only allowed to "deter" and, as further specified by the resolution:

acting in self-defense, to take the necessary measures, including the use of force, in reply to bombardments against the safe areas by any parties or to armed incursion into them or in the event of any deliberate obstruction in or around those areas to the freedom of movement of UNPROFOR or of protected humanitarian convoys.

(cited in Honig and Both 1996: 114)

The key phrase was "acting in self-defense" for it specified UNPROFOR's responsibility as ultimately a self-centric one. For UN troops in "safe areas," the rules of engagement were to respond to use of force by the Bosnian Serbs only if they themselves came under direct threat. UNPROFOR's core universe of obligation was to itself and not to the refugees, civilians and soldiers fighting for their lives in the besieged enclaves. UNPROFOR's mandate, its professional ethics and code of behavior, ruled out any independent moral response-ability to the vulnerable others – the victims of ethnic cleansing and rape, those turned into refugees

and defenders by injustice, criminality and brutality, those fighting to live – encountered by UNPROFOR troops in the “safe areas.” In what became a deadly irony, UNPROFOR codified an ethics of UN-governmentality organized around its “humanitarian mandate” and the protection of “safe areas” which stifled moral response-ability in Bosnia and produced anti-humanitarian consequences including the ethnic cleansing of “safe areas.”

The ethics of UN-governmentality in practice

To understand how this happened we only need examine the self-imposed limitations, the bureaucratic chain of command, the rules of engagement and the professional codes of conduct governing the UN establishment and administration of the “safe area” in Srebrenica. First, despite the passage of the “safe areas” resolutions in the UN Security Council, nearly all states refused to provide troops to help create and run the “safe areas.” Of all the Western states, only the Dutch were willing to send national troops under UN command to the eastern enclaves (Honig and Both 1996: 126). The United States had been active in supporting passage of the “safe areas” resolutions yet it, like other members of the UN Security Council, refused to embody its commitment to these areas by placing the bodies of its troops on the line.

Second, the commitment made to those troops who did end up going to the “safe areas” was minimal. On March 3 1993, 570 Dutch troops officially relieved a force of 140 Canadian soldiers in Srebrenica, yet their weaponry was light and logistical supplies heavily dependent upon Serb cooperation. While some relief convoys got through others were turned back or plundered. Ammunition was particularly scarce with troops reduced to 16 percent of their operational ammunition requirements by July 1995 (Honig and Both 1996: 128).

Third, the chain of command governing the ability of UNPROFOR to “deter attacks against safe areas” was extremely cumbersome and bureaucratic. Control over the use of force by UNPROFOR was shared by the UN Secretary General, charged with carrying out the Security Council’s resolutions, UNPROFOR’s military commanders, and NATO, the alliance whose military forces would be used to carry out any response. This system proved to be ineffective for a number of reasons. For a start, any use of force potentially compromised the “humanitarian mandate” and the supposed neutrality of UNPROFOR in Bosnia. Clinging to the hope of progress in diplomatic negotiations, Boutros Boutros Gali and his special representative in Yugoslavia, Yasushi Akashi, were extremely reluctant to approve any use of force for fear of its political impact. This fear was compounded by the fact that the only practical way of responding to attacks was with NATO air power which, as an instrument of force, provided policy-makers with a limited gradation of force (the two choices were widespread strategic bombing and close area support; calculating, as the UN wished to do, “proportionate response” was as a consequence difficult) and was subject to numerous conditions and qualifications (flight time to the region, cloud cover, weather conditions, surrounding terrain, etc.). UNPROFOR commanders tended to be reluctant to approve force

for fear it might further endanger vulnerable UNPROFOR troops. The commander of all UN forces in the former Yugoslavia by 1995, Lieutenant General Bernard Janvier, was a particularly cautious and “by-the-book” commander (Rohde 1997: 368). In addition, the UN and NATO often had different interests, with both organizations driven by bureaucratic imperatives to protect their own image and shore up their increasingly tarnished credibility.

Fourth, UNPROFOR’s rules of engagement were circumscribed by its mandate to protect the safe areas but only to respond to force by acting in self-defense. Interpreting and operationalizing this mandate in a practical way as orders, procedures and codes of encounter to the foot soldiers stationed in the “safe areas” actually left an important degree of latitude with commanders and officers on the ground. Over the course of two years, this interpretative latitude became codified as increasingly conservative and restrictive rules of engagement by General Janvier as he conducted a campaign to re-consolidate UNPROFOR troops in central Bosnia and effectively abandon the “safe areas” in eastern Bosnia. Janvier’s proposal was rebuffed by the UN Security Council in late May 1995 after which his office issued new guidelines governing UNPROFOR troops in the eastern “safe areas.” Seeing no real political or military will to defend these areas, Janvier ordered that outlying observation posts in the “safe areas” were to be abandoned, instead of defended by troops and NATO planes, if attacked. This is precisely what happened in Srebrenica in July as the Bosnian Serbian army cautiously sought to capture the “safe area.” Over the course of the intense week of July 6 to 13, chronicled in detail by Rohde (1997), Janvier, Akashi and others managed to block numerous calls by the Dutch commander in Srebrenica for close air support to defend the “safe area”, thus fatally undermining the credibility of UNPROFOR and the international community. General Janvier’s May 29 1995 directive to Rupert Smith, the British commander of UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina and an advocate of a more forceful response to the aggression by the Bosnian Serbs, is perhaps the starkest statement of the ethics of UN-governmentality. “The execution of the mandate,” Janvier wrote, “is secondary to the security of UN personnel. The intention being to avoid loss of life defending positions for their own sake and unnecessary vulnerability to hostage-taking” (sic, cited in Honig and Both 1996: 156). The ungrammatical last sentence underscores the bureaucratic and institutionally self-centric sentiment of the memo. UNPROFOR’s personnel were more important than its mandate. Some of Srebrenica’s defenders had already grasped this. The Muslim officer who told a Dutch first lieutenant in Srebrenica that 30 Dutch were more important than the lives of 30,000 Muslims was correct (Rohde 1997: 68–69). In not executing their mandate Janvier and UNPROFOR were making it easier for the Bosnian Serbs to execute Muslim men.

Conclusion: ethics versus morality

While the Bosnian Serb army is ultimately responsible for the mass murder of Muslim men after the fall of Srebrenica, the international community bears

considerable responsibility, given what was already known about the behavior of this army and its leaders, for allowing this to happen, especially in a place it had designated a United Nations' "safe area." The Bosnian Serb capture and ethnic cleansing of Srebrenica revealed the limitations and conditionality of the United Nations' ethics of engagement in the former Yugoslavia. It revealed, as many commentators have noted, a systematic failure of leadership on the part of the United Nations and the dominant powers on its Security Council to respond to the Bosnian war by making explicit strategic and moral choices (Mendlovitz and Fousek 1996; Gow 1997). Rather, the United Nations and most of the dominant powers within the international community suspended moral judgments and occluded moral choice between the conflicting groups. Responding only to a decontextualized "humanitarian nightmare" (in George Bush's words) and not to the origins, nature and immorality producing this nightmare, the international community through the United Nations rendered the war itself a matter of moral indifference. The response to the war was one of adaphorization, the rendering of it as an object on which ethical authorities do not feel it necessary to take a stand (Bauman 1995: 152–158). In fact, what came to be constituted as the "ethical approach" to the war by the United Nations in Bosnia was precisely and scrupulously to maintain adaphorization by assiduously avoiding making a moral choice between the conflicting parties.

This logic of adaphorization structured all the activities of UNPROFOR in Bosnia. It expressed itself not only in the conceptual fiction of the "humanitarian mission" but also in the ethical codes of conduct governing negotiations with the conflicting parties, the administration of aid, the response to threats, the use of force, and an even-handedly limited responsibility towards the victims of war. Enforcing this UN-governmental system of ethical order required structured divisions of authority and expertise, precise calculations of means and ends, constant evaluations of the organizational consequences of actions and the assertion of professional rationalities amidst the chaos of the new world disorder. UNPROFOR invented Bosnia using an ethical map that defined it within a narrowly delimited "humanitarian" universe of ethical obligation but not within an open-ended universe of moral responsibility. Bosnia may have been somewhat close to "us" but it was nevertheless represented as sufficiently far away from being considered "us."

The UN's ethical map of Bosnia could not, however, contain the war in that country unfolding as an insistent moral challenge to the international community. The horrific violence produced by the Bosnian Serb army in randomly shelling the cities it surrounded and in ethnically cleansing territory it coveted incessantly deconstructed the ethical map UNPROFOR used to situate itself in the region. In a land of ethnic cleansing and genocide, UNPROFOR was proclaiming its neutrality. The moral order represented by its governmental ethics was being exposed as immoral, its "humanitarian mandate" revealed as a cover for a lack of humanitarianism.

The fall of Srebrenica is a parable of geography, ethics and morality. It is yet another reminder that ethics and morality are not necessarily the same thing, and

that ethical orders often produce and institutionalize moral indifference. Morality is not a foundational state but an insistent challenge to our identity. It cannot be contained by institutions and delimited by ethical codes. It does not have a calculus of rationality and a geography of limits. It is the challenge to be with and for the other no matter what the distances involved, to embrace this responsibility knowing that moral situations in the new world disorder are ambivalent and open-ended, and that moral choices are often "irrational" according to governing standards of rationality. Morality exceeds the borders and boundaries of ethical orders and selves. It is the call to transgress geographies of ethics in the name of a responsibility without limits.

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