

Unraveling the Humanitarian Intervention Dilemmas and Failures of the United Nations in “Quo Vadis, Aida?” film.

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ABSTRACT

This journal explores the United Nations' (UN) intervention in the conflict between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, while looking at the tragic events depicted in the film "Quo Vadis, Aida?" The study delves into the challenges faced by the UN, an actor well-known for their conflict resolution since World War, but it is relatively new in finding resolutions in terms of conflict between ethnicity, and its attempts to balance humanitarian and military interests. Despite initial efforts created by the UN, the actions were deemed as failures as the pinnacle of the conflict is Srebrenica Genocide. Through this research, the author aims to find the factors behind the failed efforts in peacekeeping in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Keywords: Srebrenica Genocide; The United Nations; Humanitarian Intervention.

ABSTRAK

Jurnal ini mengeksplorasi intervensi Perserikatan Bangsa-Bangsa (PBB) dalam konflik antara Bosnia-Herzegovina dan Serbia, dengan fokus khusus pada peristiwa tragis yang digambarkan dalam film "Quo Vadis, Aida?" Studi ini menggali tantangan yang dihadapi oleh PBB, sebuah aktor yang dikenal karena penyelesaian konflik sejak Perang Dunia, tetapi relatif baru dalam menemukan penyelesaian dalam konflik antar etnis, dan upayanya untuk seimbang antara kepentingan kemanusiaan dan militer. Meskipun upaya awal yang dibuat oleh PBB, tindakan-tindakan itu dianggap gagal karena puncak konflik adalah Genosida Srebrenica. Melalui penelitian ini, penulis bertujuan untuk menemukan faktor-faktor di balik upaya-upaya yang gagal dalam penjagaan perdamaian di Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Kata Kunci: Genosida Srebrenica, Perserikatan Bangsa-Bangsa, Intervensi Kemanusiaan.

Introduction

The summer, precisely, in July 1997, marked a horrifying moment for a small town in eastern Bosnia. At least 8,372 residents of Srebrenica, mostly preoccupied by men and children under 18, innocent civilians, were brutally killed without reason.¹ Bosnia-Herzegovina was currently in a conflict involving Serbia as its opposing actor, with their military allies committing violence actions against Bosnia-Herzegovina. The entire world, including several European countries and the United Nations (UN), watched these cruel genocide from afar, without being able to take any significant action. Numerous international media outlets covered this historic moment. After the end of World War II, genocides like this were hoped to never happen again, but sadly, it happened through the conflict of the

¹ Sonja Biserko, "The Srebrenica Genocide: Serbia in Denial," *Pakistan Horizon* 65, no. 3 (2012): 1, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24711409>.

Srebrenica genocide. Both news reports and International Relations journals discuss how genocide against the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina occurred. However, the media often frames narratives differently to achieve their respective goals.

One such narrative is depicted in a film set during the time and the whole tragedy of the Srebrenica Genocide. The film is titled "Quo Vadis, Aida?" and was written and directed by Jasmila Zbanic. The film illustrates a dark history with a visible impact towards the specific tragedy that impacted Srebrenica, allowing viewers to sympathize and feel frustration with the portrayal of a conflict that seems to have no way out. "Quo Vadis, Aida?" uses the conflict as true as possible with various fictional elements to create the sense of dramatization to enhance the message, making it intriguing and worthy of deeper analysis regarding its core conflict. "Quo Vadis, Aida?" explores themes of bureaucracy, ethical quandaries, and the human consequences of conflict. It underscores the deficiencies of international strategies in protecting vulnerable communities affected by war. The film's title, which if translated, means, "Where are you heading, Aida?" encapsulates her personal journey while also prompting broader questions of direction and responsibility in pivotal situations.

"Quo Vadis, Aida?" is an example of a film that has a unique power to depict complex narratives that can shape perceptions of nations, civilizations, and political ideologies, thus making it an important subject for international relations studies. Films can vividly depict the realities of foreign communities, present issues from several perspectives, and confront dominant preconceptions through storytelling.² Films like "Quo Vadis, Aida?" provide insight into Bosnia-Herzegovina and the consequences of conflict, fostering empathy and comprehension among international viewers. Through cinema, the story can contest the reductive narratives frequently propagated by conventional media by presenting complex depictions of varied communities.

Thus, the research question emerges: How did the UN's intervention in the war between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia lead to the Srebrenica Genocide, as depicted in the film "Quo Vadis, Aida?" With the UN's capabilities in both military and humanitarian aspects insufficient, followed with its lack of experience in handling such a new variety of conflict at that time, it became a limitation for preventing the genocide. In the real world and the way "Quo Vadis, Aida?" illustrates events closely resembling reality, the UN can be deemed unsuccessful in its humanitarian intervention efforts in the case of the Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia war that culminated in the Srebrenica Genocide.

Literature Review

Many writers have discussed the issue of the UN's attempt in mitigating the conflict between Bosnia and Herzegovina against Serbia, which then was assessed as failure. Most of these journals also analyze the role of the UN and how it failed to mitigate the situation at that time. Most of the literature discussed behavior and methods used by the UN. One such journal is titled "The UN's Role in the Bosnian Crisis: A Critique," written by Sheila Zulfiqar Ahmad. This journal compares the difference of the UN's behaviors in addressing the situation in Bosnia with what happened in the Gulf War. One similarity between the two conflicts mentioned in the journal is the involvement of the Islamic community as victims. Ahmad evaluates that there was hypocritical behavior and a double standard that the UN itself did not realize when facing the conflict in Bosnia. In this journal, Ahmad draws an interesting conclusion not touched upon by other journals in this literature review. Ahmad mentions the

² Robert W. Gregg, *International Relations on Film*, Lynne Rienner Publishers eBooks, 1998, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781685854034>.

role of ownership of vital natural resources needed in the international world, such as oil.³ This highlights that in interactions among state actors, they have priorities for their approaches, whether in terms of trade or agreements. The second literature is titled “Failures to Prevent Genocide in Rwanda (1994), Srebrenica (1995), and Darfur (since 2003)” written by Fred Grünfeld and Wessel Vermeulen. The literature explained about the Dutch Peacekeepers, under the UN mandate, at that time, had miscommunications between the ones on the ground in Srebrenica (Dutch Peacekeepers) and the Security Council by the UN Secretariat in New York. They perceived it as “not an outright aggression” and the ones with power and capabilities had become just mere bystanders. Considering the horrifying aftermath of these decisions, the behaviors seemingly again—highlight that the interactions between the state actors are visibly important and show more about them realizing that there is more about the underlying reasons besides protecting the safe zone.⁴

The next article groupings highlighted more about the mandate and the principles during the practice. In the next journal titled "The UN Role in Bosnia: Mandate, Means and Impartiality in Peace-Keeping" by Noman Sattar and Louise Liu, the approach to examining the UN's problem is almost similar. They question and convey how the UN operates in such situations. This journal also agrees that the UN can be considered a failure through an analysis of the mandate and principles in peacekeeping at the UN. Sattar and Liu assess that besides the UN playing a role in helping to mitigate the escalating conflict, Europe also played a part and even took the lead in finding negotiated solutions to this conflict. They struggled to find a solution due to internal issues between the UN and Europe and the political considerations of each country. Additionally, they note that this is one of the UN's first times in solving the problem because the UN is accustomed to resolving conflicts between countries rather than civil wars like what happened in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia at that time. They find it difficult to conclude whether it was an internal conflict or an international issue and the ongoing response and inadequate mandate for resolving the Bosnia conflict at that time. The UN still maintains its principle of impartiality, guiding external actors to intervene, causing many dilemmas to determine the next steps.⁵

The next journal to be discussed is titled "Does Peacekeeping Work? A Disaggregated Analysis of Deployment and Violence Reduction in the Bosnian War" by Stefano Costalli. Taking a similar approach to Sattar and Liu's journal, Costalli emphasizes the mandate related to peacekeeping and its ambiguity, dissecting how peacekeeping works as a whole. The UN had taken some correct initial steps in resolving the conflict and establishing a safe haven that had the potential to prevent intense violence. In explaining why this happened, Costalli states that there are about two reasons that can explain this. The United Nations Protection Force, a derivative force of the UN active during the conflict ranging from 1992 to 1995, did not have a strategy to reduce conflicts due to the ethnic composition in a region. This is at least more challenging for the UN, which is an organization with a slightly more international character. The second reason Costalli discusses is that in facing a war conflict, adequate preparation and

³ Sheila Zulfiqar Ahmad, “The UN’s Role in the Bosnian Crisis: A Critique,” *Pakistan Horizon* 51, no. 2 (1998): 88-90. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41394460>.

⁴ Fred Grünfeld, Fred and Wessel Vermeulen, "Failures to Prevent Genocide in Rwanda (1994), Srebrenica (1995), and Darfur (since 2003)," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*: Vol. 4: Iss. 2: Article 13. (2009)

⁵ Noman Sattar and Louise Liu, “THE UN ROLE IN BOSNIA: MANDATE, MEANS, AND IMPARTIALITY IN PEACE-KEEPING,” *Strategic Studies* 18, no. 4 (1996): 50-51, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45182216>.

ammunition are essential. The United Nations Protection Force lacked a balanced military logistics compared to the opposing forces and sufficient credibility.⁶

Methodology and Theory

The author intends to analyse the approach to historical event analysis. Examining historical events in films involves investigating how movies represent and interpret significant historical incidents. This methodology can elucidate the complexities of historical occurrences, the motivations behind them, and their impacts on contemporary society. Films can enhance our comprehension of historical events, but they also need critical thinking from the audience.⁷ Viewers should recognize the possibility of bias or misrepresentation in film interpretations. Scholars emphasize the importance of situating films within their historical contexts to avert misunderstandings that may result from dramatization or oversimplification. The construction of a film—its narrative framework, character development, and viewpoint—can significantly influence the interpretation of historical events, for example, in “Quo Vadis, Aida?”

This paper uses qualitative research for its analysis. Mainly based on literature that analyzes UN’s attempts and roles during Bosnia and Herzegovina war in 1997. The author also used “Quo Vadis, Aida?” a film written and directed by Jasmila Zbanic, telling the story of a dilemmatic UN Peacekeeper in trying to save her family from the tragedy. The author used that film in order to understand the powerful message and perspective from the UN themselves. Even though the characters were fictional it was heavily influenced by the real stories happening during the events.

To conduct the analysis, this paper uses the framework known as the "fiduciary theory" that has been developed to modernize humanitarian intervention. This theory outlines a structured approach to ensure that interventions genuinely uphold humanitarian goals. Under this approach, an intervening actor or country must first consult with the target country before initiating any intervention. Additionally, the intervening nation is obligated to adhere strictly to human rights standards.⁸ Finally, the United Nations Security Council is tasked with overseeing the intervention to hold the participating country accountable, especially if it misuses its authority. This oversight is essential to prevent any exploitation reminiscent of colonial practices, ensuring that interventions are purpose-driven and ethical.⁹ Furthermore, according to Seybolt, humanitarian intervention can involve four main actions: delivering aid, protecting humanitarian missions, rescuing victims, and defeating aggressors. Effective implementation of these actions requires robust economic and military capabilities.

Consequently, this theory of humanitarian intervention will be used as a basis to analyze how the UN’s measures during the Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia conflict aligned—or failed to align—with these standards.¹⁰ Examining Quo Vadis, Aida? Through the perspective of fiduciary theory offers a framework for comprehending the ethical obligations and shortcomings of the many participants in the Srebrenica tragedy. The fiduciary theory, which underscores the duty of one party to prioritize the

⁶ Stefano Costalli, “Does Peacekeeping Work? A Disaggregated Analysis of Deployment and Violence Reduction in the Bosnian War,” *British Journal of Political Science* 44, no. 2 (2014): 357–80, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43821972>.

⁷ Renira R. Gambarato, “Methodology for film analysis: The role of objects in films,” *Revista Fronteiras* 12, no. 2 (2010): 105–15, <https://publications.hse.ru/en/articles/103425957>.

⁸ Evan J. Criddle, (2015). Three Grotian Theories of Humanitarian Intervention. *Faculty Publications*. 1785. <https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/facpubs/1785>

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Taylor B. Seybolt, *Humanitarian Military Intervention: The Conditions for Success and Failure*, 2007, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1487382>

interests of another, is applicable to explain the dilemmatic interactions involving Aida, her family, the Bosnians, the United Nations (UN), and the Serbian forces.

Analysis

a. "Quo Vadis, Aida?" and How Closely It Depicts History

The film opens with a scene of a father and his two children sitting on a couch with bags on the floor, looking at their mother seated opposite to them. The scene is brief, serving as a quick introduction to the main conflict in "Quo Vadis, Aida?" will be told mostly from the perspective of the mother of this small family. Without wasting time, the scene transitions to a brief shot showing soldiers and a tank moving through the grass. Cut to action, the next scene is a crucial moment to introduce viewers unfamiliar with the conflict discussed in the film and what is about to unfold. The subsequent scene is a conversation involving at least eight people at a table, one of whom is the mother seen with her small family in the opening scene—her name is Aida. Aida is the fictional main character and protagonist in the film. Before the conflict erupted, Aida was an English teacher. She became a translator for UN soldiers assigned to a designated safe area under an agreement between the conflicting nations and some concerned Bosnian citizens fearing threats from the Serbs.¹¹

The discussion between Aida, UN representatives, and representatives of Bosnia-Herzegovina provides more context on how the UN is in a difficult and essentially powerless situation. An illustration in the next scene shows a frustrating conversation between both parties in action, leaving us as viewers frustrated witnesses. One of the parties is a UN soldier tasked with mitigating the conflict, who confesses that he is just a piano player. The Bosnia-Herzegovina side reacts emotionally to this disappointing response. With an impending crisis, they demand for the UN ultimatum on Serbia, but at that moment, the UN stated that it is still in the ultimatum phase and there is no urgent threat from Serbia to warrant the ultimatum. In reality, the UN did issue an ultimatum to Serbia in February 1994, ordering all parties within a 20-kilometer radius of Sarajevo to surrender their weapons and cease hostilities. If they failed to comply, NATO would launch air strikes. Ultimately, Serbia complied, and the attack was averted.¹² It showed that again "Quo Vadis, Aida?" draws inspiration from events leading to the one of the most horrifying Genocide recorded in history. Characters like Aida and the family are fictionalized to dramatize the situation and reinforce the illustration that the UN was severely lacking in military resources at that time.¹³

"Quo Vadis, Aida?" was selected as a nominee for the prestigious Oscar competition in the category of "Best International Feature Film." Although it did not win, the film had a significant impact by realistically depicting the phenomenon. Jasmila Zbanic, a Bosnian herself, is motivated to continue telling the story of this tragedy and expressing the pain experienced by the families of the genocide victims. In an interview with the Council of Europe, Zbanic mentioned living approximately 2.5 kilometers from the genocide site, with no electricity and slower information dissemination compared to the present day. She could only watch and listen to conflicting reports about what was happening in Bosnia.¹⁴ Despite "Quo Vadis, Aida?" seemingly cornering external actors who could have prevented

¹¹ "Quo Vadis, Aida?," directed by Jasmila Žbanić (2020; Deblokada Film, Digital Cube), Amazon Prime.

¹² Jim Headley, "Sarajevo, February 1994: The First Russia-NATO Crisis of the Post-Cold War Era," *Review of International Studies* 29, no. 2 (2003): 209, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20097846>.

¹³ "Quo Vadis, Aida?," directed by Jasmila Žbanić (2020; Deblokada Film, Digital Cube), Amazon Prime.

¹⁴ Jasmila Žbanić, "Director of "Quo Vadis, Aida" a Feature Film Supported By Eurimages: Interview with Jasmila Žbanić," by Sarah Hurtes, Council of Europe (2020) : 1, <https://rm.coe.int/interview-with-jasmila-zbanic/1680a0c1a5>

the Srebrenica genocide in 1997, Zbanic emphasizes that the film does not intend to take sides or lead viewers to blame one party. The sole perpetrator in this case is the nation that initiated the large-scale attack and the murder of innocent civilians.

b. The United Nations (UN) Lacks Adequate Capabilities For This Issue.

One of the main functions of the UN, best known for promoting and enforcing peace among individuals or nations, adopts three principle instruments to achieve this. One of them involves direct intervention in international disputes or encouraging peaceful resolution through the official Security Council. Additionally, the UN aims to enhance economic, political, and educational quality for its region's inhabitants. The third approach is how the UN works to create a stable and prosperous situation among nations through affiliated agencies related to the involved parties or the Economic and Social Council.¹⁵ Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, situated in the Balkans, become the epicenter of conflict. The conflict begins with Bosnia-Herzegovina's desire to break free from Serbs control and eventually gain independence. However, Serbia opposes this, and the conflict escalates into a more challenging issue, involving ethnic tensions. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, approximately 45% of the population is Muslim, while in Serbia, 31% is Orthodox Christian. Ethnic hatred becomes a significant factor leading to the genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁶

Based on the facts, the author finds that the root of this conflict primarily revolves around the unwillingness to lose power over certain regions by the Serbs and is further compounded by ethnic animosity. In addressing this ethnic conflict, the UN finds itself in a dilemma. This dilemma implies that international political interference, as significant as the UN's involvement, supporting one side could make the situation worsen and further exacerbate the conflict. However, the UN has principles that seem capable of resolving the dilemma that was mentioned before. One such principle is found in UN Resolution 1514, which essentially states that armed repressive actions by one party against another must cease, allowing the oppressed party to exercise its rights peacefully, emphasizing everyone's freedom to achieve independence.¹⁷

Therefore, the difficulty faced and the unfamiliarity in resolving this conflict does not mean the UN took no action for Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. In fact, in the Balkans, the UN and the European Union signed a land division plan between the two countries. The Vance-Owen plan and later the Owen-Stoltenberg plan served the same purpose, dividing 48% of the territory for Bosnia-Herzegovina and 48% for Serbia. This land division agreement plan was expected to be an attempt to resolve the existing conflict. Furthermore, in 1992, the UN declared several areas as "safe" zones, such as Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zepa, Gorazde, and Bihac.¹⁸ The UN also collaborated with the European Union to supply 14,000 peacekeeping troops under the name United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). This mission continued successfully, securing the Srebrenica area in 1993 under the command of French UNPROFOR Commander Phillipe Morillon.¹⁹ UNPROFOR also received a mandate to facilitate

¹⁵ Roger A. Coate and Donald J. Puchala, "Global Policies and the United Nations System: A Current Assessment," *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 2 (1990): 128, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343390027002003>

¹⁶ Ridha Ayu Rachmawati, et. al, "Analysis Of Bosnia-Herzegovina Armed Conflict," *International Journal Of Humanities Education and Social Sciences* 3, no. 3 (2023): 1484. <https://doi.org/10.55227/ijhess.v3i3.797>.

¹⁷ David Carment and Patrick James, "The United Nations at 50: Managing Ethnic Crises - Past and Present," *Journal of Peace Research* 35, no. 1 (1998): 62–63, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343398035001005>.

¹⁸ Sheila Zulfiqar Ahmad, "The UN's Role in the Bosnian Crisis: A Critique," *Pakistan Horizon* 51, no. 2 (1998): 86. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41394460>.

¹⁹ Ibid

humanitarian aid delivery, primarily the responsibility of UNHCR, monitoring the distribution of humanitarian aid to ensure it reached those in need. UNPROFOR and UNHCR responsibilities continued since 1991 throughout the conflict.²⁰

According to a UN report, humanitarian intervention in Bosnia is described as one of the largest peacekeeping operations that requires and ultimately consumes massive resources. This report also mentions that \$697 million was allocated for UNHCR operations in Bosnia, and \$1.7 billion for UNPROFOR operations. UNHCR had a staff of 263 in Bosnia and 678 in the former Yugoslavia, and 30,000 troops deployed in 34 countries, with 14,000 in 14 areas around Bosnia.²¹ Aid distribution methods included airdropping assistance, spreading at least 174,053 metric tons of aid. Although the method is not as effective as imagined, 87% of aid successfully reached somewhat isolated areas in central Bosnia. With the Sarajevo airport continuing to operate under UN control, aid delivery continued. Despite positive achievements recorded through the reports from UNPROFOR and UNHCR, numerous interruptions persisted in their operations. Many UNHCR and UNPROFOR staff experienced disruptions leading to hindering aid delivery. Serbian forces included the confiscation of operational or personal belongings needed for daily life, such as gas and stoves. Indications of malnutrition and hunger among Bosnian citizens as a consequence of the conflict were also found.

However, the author finds out that ultimately the UN's failure lies in its inability to maintain protection in those areas, illustrated in the film "Quo Vadis, Aida?" The film is set in a time when the situation becomes chaotic, fast-forwarding to 1997 in Srebrenica. At that point, the UN could no longer maintain control of the Srebrenica area. The film depicts how Major Frank, the commander, calls the authorities to inform them about the situation of Bosnian refugees they are sheltering in Srebrenica. Major Frank explains that food supplies are running low, almost depleted, water channels are completely cut off, and refugees have no access to toilets. To even more emphasize on this, there was a scene in the film after Serbs forces entered the base to “check” on the refugees whether there was a possession of weapons among them and found out that they were all clear, the Serbs later would distribute bread and chocolates to the civilian, as if they were making fun of the peacekeeping troops for not being able to provide food for the refugees.²² In reality, the number of peacekeeping troops was entirely inadequate to confront Serbian forces, and at the same time, UNPROFOR troops were often taken hostage. In 1994, the total number of troops prepared for the area was only 17,710, while at least 39,500 troops were needed to secure the entire region.²³ The troops' readiness to face extreme cold weather in Bosnia further complicated operations, as most soldiers had to undergo military training in cold air, withdrawing the soldiers from safe areas and continuing to reduce the amount of troops.²⁴ It was stated as well that the peacekeeping troops who were mostly Dutch were lacking in possession of weapons as well.

²⁰ Humanitarian intervention: Effectiveness of U.N. operations in Bosnia: Briefing report to the honorable Robert S. Dole, U.S. senate § (1994). <https://www.gao.gov/assets/nsiad-94-156br.pdf>

²¹ Ibid

²² "Quo Vadis, Aida?," directed by Jasmila Žbanić (2020; Deblokada Film, Digital Cube), Amazon Prime.

²³ Sheila Zulfiqar Ahmad, "The UN's Role in the Bosnian Crisis: A Critique," *Pakistan Horizon* 51, no. 2 (1998): 87. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41394460>.

²⁴ Humanitarian intervention: Effectiveness of U.N. operations in Bosnia: Briefing report to the honorable Robert S. Dole, U.S. senate § (1994). <https://www.gao.gov/assets/nsiad-94-156br.pdf>

c. The Challenges of Coordination and Planning In The UN's Operations In The Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia Conflict.

The insufficient number of troops was a primary issue, contributing to the perception of the UN's failure in maintaining peace in Bosnia. Another factor was the absence of a unified authority ensuring coordinated and continuous efforts between military and humanitarian needs. The dual role of UNPROFOR, supporting humanitarian aid while simultaneously ensuring area security, further weakened peacekeeping activities. The lack of a single leader to coordinate these aspects continued to undermine peacekeeping efforts. Officials also criticized the weak response from UNHCR and UNPROFOR, which, in turn, weakened subsequent steps. For example, UNPROFOR soldiers were sometimes passive in dealing with the enemy, allowing checkpoint guards to thwart their plans. The adversaries calculated their next moves based on the UN's weaknesses, therefore emphasizing the need for stronger leadership and proactivity in UN operations. However, the dilemma remained, as the use of violence in response could have negative effects on unarmed volunteers.²⁵

The Bosnia case was the very first attempt for the UN to combine military and humanitarian actions. Consequently, all parties, including UNHCR, were relatively inexperienced in strategic concepts or methods to optimize their operations. The author finds that different priorities existed between the military prioritizing on the protection, and humanitarian efforts emphasizing aid provision. Weak communication and distrust among staff further hindered effectiveness. Additionally, the involvement of additional aid organizations, in which they did not explicitly communicate their activities to UNHCR, further complicated the military protection. Clear plans or overarching concepts could have helped clarify all responsibilities. In 1993, NATO, with the UN and the International Red Cross Federation, held a meeting to address these issues. However, the results were considered not resolving to some extent, lacking discussion on aid delivery in conflict situations involving weaponry. They also failed to address the previously questioned firmness, optimal coordination between military and humanitarian needs during wartime. While firmness or assertiveness does not always mean the use of attack, it should include such as professional and determined attitudes in inserting the leadership.²⁶

The author also discovered that before the UN funded UNPROFOR's entire troop deployment, individual countries funded their own military personnel, making it difficult for the troops to adhere to UN principles and obeying the controls. The unclear chain of command highlighted the importance of central control and direction during operational missions, even though command authority should theoretically rest with the national level. Subsequently, after 1993, the UN took over the supplies for more troops which came from the help of European countries like the Netherlands.²⁷ Based on the third humanitarian intervention theory, the UN adhered to the basic human rights during the intervening period, including the refrain of using too much violence and putting forward negotiations. As it turns out, the author also finds that during the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) has not yet emerged; it is clear that the UN started making their way for the new upgrades to avoid replicating the same mistake. R2P was adopted in 2005 in the UN World Summit, a few years later after the violence happening in Rwanda.²⁸ From there, the UN continued to use the norm in order to ensure the protection of populations against genocides or ethnic cleansing. Based on Seybolt's

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ “The Responsibility to Protect: A Background Briefing,” Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, April 15, 2021, <https://www.globalr2p.org/publications/the-responsibility-to-protect-a-background-briefing/>.

understanding in humanitarian intervention regarding the 4 steps, it is safe to say that the UN had already implemented most of it in this conflict, but to be called as successful attempt requires the capabilities and strategies, in which the author has explained earlier that the UN lacks in those aspects, mainly regarding the military.

Furthermore, in the film, it showed the lack of strategy and planning of the UN's operation in this conflict. Due to the base being overloaded by the Bosnians, Aida was trying to get her husband and her two sons to enter the base since they were held outside. When Major Franken was looking for “well-educated” people among the civilians to represent the Bosnians to meet the Serbian forces. Eventually, Aida successfully convinced Major Franken to send her husband to the meeting, in exchange that he and also her sons were allowed to enter the base. This went on to be such a baffling scene to watch, while the meeting was happening, another load of Serbian forces came to approach the base, demanded themselves to be let into the base under the reasoning of wanting to check whether there were military personnel inside or someone in possession of any weapons. Serbs were not supposed to enter, with fear that they might harm the civilians. But the UN, as if they have no power at all upon their own ground, eventually let the Serbs inside. It was Colonel Karremans that gave them permission, though Major Franken was extremely doubtful with the decision. Looking at his reaction, he was very scared of it as well.

While communication is also part of the lack of coordination, the beginning of the film showed the demand to Colonel Karremans for the ultimatum to be released upon the Serbs, as well as on further scenes, Colonel Karremans was shown to be making phone calls to demand for the airstrikes. But it was never shown in the film and it never happened in real life as well, no actual intervention came during that time of crisis. While the peacekeeper forces realized that they were extremely helpless, insufficient in fighting off the Serbs and were pleading for help, the UN headquarters perceived it as “not an outright aggression”, eventually looking like they had just abandoned the refugees to go on with their end.²⁹

With numerous limitations and challenges in conducting peace operations, the Srebrenica genocide became the focal point of Zbanic's film, highlighting the powerlessness and despair experienced by Aida and Major Frank as UN representatives struggling to keep the safety of Bosnian refugees. As Aida watched her 2 sons and husband get taken away by the Serbs and Major Frank watched his hard work, protecting the Bosnians, eventually went to waste. The film portrays Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina negotiating the transfer of refugees from Srebrenica to a “safer place” using transportation provided by Serbia. Aida and Major Frank know that Serbia will eventually kill all the refugees. In the major scene nearing the end, those believed to be “evacuated” by the Serbs are gathered in a room, gunshots are heard in the background, and the scene cuts, revealing empty streets with a few children playing, slowly zooming out before it cuts to another scene.³⁰

Conclusion

Therefore, it can be concluded that the hypothesis presented in the background by the author is correct because, in handling the Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia conflict, the UN, which was relatively new to such situations, was not entirely hands-off. The UN still took several useful steps to alleviate the conflict, such as land distribution plans, the establishment of safe areas guarded by UNPROFOR, and the provision of humanitarian aid. However, with the conflict dragging on, these measures did not last

²⁹ Fred Grünfeld, Fred and Wessel Vermeulen, "Failures to Prevent Genocide in Rwanda (1994), Srebrenica (1995), and Darfur (since 2003)," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*: Vol. 4: Iss. 2: Article 13. (2009)

³⁰ "Quo Vadis, Aida?," dir. Jasmila Žbanić (2020; Deblokada Film, Digital Cube), Amazon Prime.

and ultimately led to the genocide in Srebrenica. In reality, the areas considered safe by the UN were guarded by troops, but their numbers were inadequate to ensure the safety of volunteers distributing aid and the overall Bosnian population. Various unforeseen situations, such as weather conditions or the opposing side gaining an upper hand, further hindered operational missions. As previously mentioned, the UN, being relatively new to ethnic conflict resolution, lacked a clear strategic concept, impacting the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions due to miscommunication, distrust, and a lack of leadership.

This case was also the UN's first attempt to combine humanitarian and military interests in practice. The research aimed to study why the UN was considered to have failed in handling the conflict, through the humanitarian intervention theory. It can be said that the UN had implemented its theory appropriately; however, additional resources and experience were needed. Hence, this wartime conflict became a historical moment prompting the UN to enhance its capabilities to address similar issues in the future, including adopting the R2P (Responsibility to Protect) later on in 2005. Films like "Quo Vadis, Aida?" provide a perspective from the UN itself, depicting them as powerless in raising awareness about a dark past and the need to prevent similar incidents in the future.

The research faced limitations as it could be approached from other perspectives, such as examining it from the viewpoint of major powers like the United States that did not contribute to the operations, and with very minimal 'established documents' as it was set when the UN was beyond sufficient. However, the author believes that the focus of this research is on the UN's failure, avoiding making the discussion too broad. With contemporary issues resembling this conflict, the hope is that the UN learns from the past and implements the lessons gained from their failure in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

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