

# Worlds Apart

BOSNIAN LESSONS *for* GLOBAL SECURITY

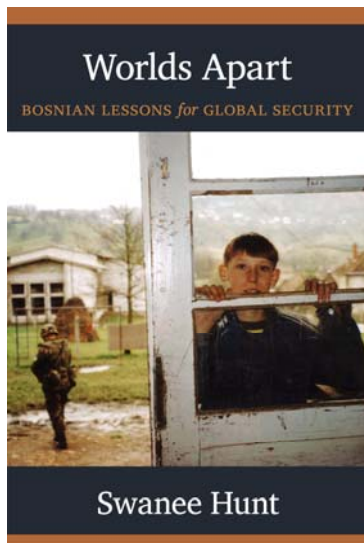


Swanee Hunt

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*Worlds Apart* tells of a well-meaning foreign policy establishment often deaf to the voices of everyday people. Its focus is the Bosnian War, but its implications extend to any situation that prompts the consideration of military intervention on humanitarian grounds. Ambassador Swanee Hunt served in Vienna during the Bosnian War and was intimately involved in American policy toward the Balkans. During her tenure as ambassador and after, she made scores of trips throughout Bosnia and the rest of the former Yugoslavia, attempting to understand the costly delays in foreign military intervention. To that end, she had hundreds of conversations with a wide range of politicians, refugees, journalists, farmers, clergy, aid workers, diplomats, soldiers, and others. In *Worlds Apart*, Hunt's eighty vignettes alternate between those living out the war and "the internationals" deciding whether or how to intervene. From these stories, most of which she witnessed firsthand, she draws lessons applicable to conflicts throughout the world. These lessons cannot be learned from afar,

Hunt says, with insiders and outsiders working apart. Only by bridging those worlds can we build a stronger paradigm of inclusive international security.



**Swanee Hunt** chairs the Washington-based Institute for Inclusive Security. During her tenure as US ambassador to Austria (1993–97), she hosted negotiations and symposia focused on securing the peace in the neighboring Balkan states. She is a member of the US Council on Foreign Relations, the Eleanor Roosevelt Lecturer in Public Policy at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, and the president of Hunt Alternatives Fund. She has appeared on CNN, MSNBC, and NPR, and written for publications including *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Boston Globe*, and the *Huffington Post*. She is the author of *Half-Life of a Zealot* and *This Was Not Our War: Bosnian Women Reclaiming the Peace*, both also published by Duke University Press.

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**DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS**

## About Swanee Hunt



**Swanee Hunt** is Eleanor Roosevelt Lecturer in Public Policy, founder of the Women and Public Policy Program, core faculty at the Center for Public Leadership, and senior advisor to the working group on modern-day slavery at the Carr Center for Human Rights, all at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

An expert on domestic policy and foreign affairs, Hunt is president of Hunt Alternatives Fund, a private foundation working to support leaders of social movements, combat the demand for purchased sex, achieve political parity for women in high-level positions (in the US and globally), strengthen youth arts organizations, and increase philanthropy. She also chairs the Washington-based Institute for Inclusive Security (including the Women Waging Peace Network), which conducts research, training, and advocacy to integrate women into peace processes.

Her seminal work in this area began when, as the US Ambassador to Austria from 1993 to 1997, she hosted negotiations and international symposia focused on stabilizing the neighboring Balkan states and encouraging women leaders throughout Eastern Europe. Building on her extensive work with US non-governmental organizations, she became a specialist in the role of women in post-communist Europe.

Raised in a corporate family in Dallas, Texas, Hunt made her mark as a civic leader and philanthropist in her adopted city of Denver, where for two decades she led community efforts on issues such as public education, affordable housing, homelessness, women's empowerment, and mental health services for two mayors and the governor of Colorado.

Hunt is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations; she has authored articles for *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy Magazine*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Boston Globe*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Huffington Post*, et al. Her first book, *This Was Not Our War: Bosnian Women Reclaiming the Peace*, won the 2005 PEN/New England Award for non-fiction. Her memoir, *Half-Life of a Zealot*, was published in 2006. Her third book with Duke University Press, *Worlds Apart: Bosnian Lessons for Global Security*, was released in September 2011. She is currently writing *Rwandan Women Rising*.

Hunt has had more than a dozen one-woman shows of her photographs in five countries. Her musical composition, "The Witness Cantata," for five soloists and chorus, has had nine performances in six cities. Hunt holds two masters degrees, a doctorate in theology, and three honorary degrees. She was married for 25 years to Charles Ansbacher, international conductor and founder of the Boston Landmarks Orchestra, who passed away in 2010. Her world includes their three children, and a menagerie of cat, parrot, horses, bison, and grandchildren.

### ***Worlds Apart: Bosnian Lessons for Global Security***

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Duke University Press, September 26, 2011

Photo Credit: Claire Cohen



## ***Praise for Swanee Hunt's Previous Books***

### ***Half-Life of a Zealot (2006)***

"[A]n extraordinarily frank account of an unusual life, and one that is only half over. There is much more to come from Swanee Hunt. In fact, you get the impression that while the old man might have been apoplectic at his daughter's philosophical and religious beliefs, he would be favorably impressed by her determination and drive to accomplish all but impossible goals. Lord knows, readers will be." —**Sandra Dallas, *Denver Post***

"[E]ngaging. . . . Her ability to wield power and yet not lose the common touch is what makes Hunt's memoir so intriguing, and, indeed, what has helped her improve the lives of so many." — **Karen Fragala Smith, *Newsweek International***

"*Half-Life of a Zealot*, the compelling memoir by Swanee Hunt, the daughter of oil magnate H. L. Hunt, draws the reader in from the first page and refuses to let go." —**Ruth Dawson, *Philanthropy News Digest***

### ***This Was Not Our War (2004)***

Winner of the 2005 L.L. Winship Award for Non-Fiction, PEN/New England Center

"[Hunt] succeeds in offering a historically detailed account of the war and the women's experiences. Her narrative is heart-rending and filled with revealing pictures of the women's strength, courage and leadership."—**Verna Noel Jones, *Rocky Mountain News***

"[A] compelling case for the inclusion of women at the world's decision-making tables. . . . [A] fluid narrative that provides an intimate, less blustery perspective on the Bosnian conflict. . . . If the 26 women [Hunt] profiles are any indication, the women of Bosnia have the requisite ideas, energy and determination and are particularly well-suited to the sensitive work of leading their country toward recovery."—**Rob Mitchell, *Boston Herald***

"Hunt, who was President Clinton's ambassador to Austria, has put together interviews with 26 Bosnian women. They come from different backgrounds but share an emotional strength and a generosity of spirit, a dignity and humanity, that together make the case for a greater role for women in the politics of their societies-and make the rest of the world's hesitancy to intervene to defend human rights in Bosnia very hard to justify."—***Foreign Affairs***

"The women whose stories are included in the book represent a wide cross-section of Bosnian society. . . . Their bold, painful and sometimes appalling stories are accompanied by strikingly mournful photographs. . . . *This Was Not Our War* is not solely a book about the war. It's also a book about dignity, the human spirit, generosity, courage, and even about love."—**Eetta Prince Gibson, *The Jerusalem Post***

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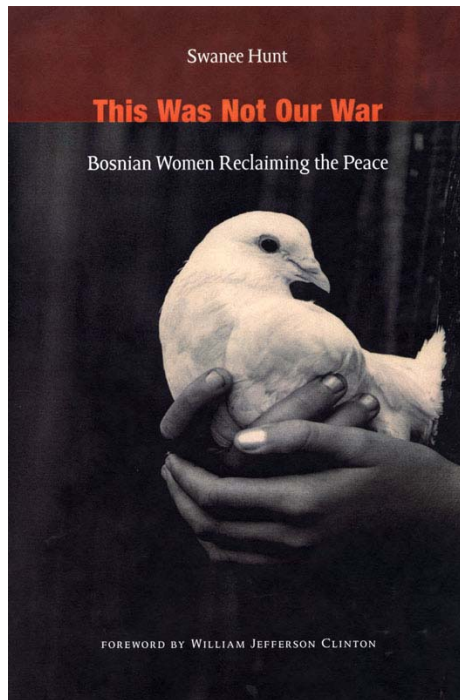
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**Publicity Contact: Laura Sell, Duke University Press, 919-687-3639, [lsell@dukeupress.edu](mailto:lsell@dukeupress.edu)**

**Now Available in Paperback!**

*Winner of the 2005 L.L. Winship Award for Non-Fiction, PEN/New England Center*



**This Was Not Our War**  
**Bosnian Women Reclaiming the Peace**  
by Swanee Hunt

*“Replacing tyranny with justice, healing deep scars, exchanging hatred for hope . . . the women in This Was Not Our War teach us how.”—William Jefferson Clinton*

Originally published in 2004, *This Was Not Our War* shares amazing first-person accounts of twenty-six Bosnian women who are reconstructing their society following years of devastating warfare. We are pleased to announce it is now available in paperback.

A university student working to resettle refugees, a paramedic who founded a veterans’ aid group, a fashion designer running two nonprofit organizations, a government minister and professor who survived

Auschwitz—these women are advocates, politicians, farmers, journalists, students, doctors, businesswomen, engineers, wives, and mothers. They are from all parts of Bosnia and represent the full range of ethnic traditions and mixed heritages. Their ages spread across sixty years, and their wealth ranges from expensive jewels to a few chickens. For all their differences, they have this much in common: all survived the war with enough emotional strength to work toward rebuilding their country. Swanee Hunt met these women through her diplomatic and humanitarian work in the 1990s. Over the course of seven years, she conducted multiple interviews with each one. In presenting those interviews here, Hunt provides a narrative framework that connects the women’s stories, allowing them to speak to one another.

The women describe what it was like living in a vibrant multicultural community that suddenly imploded in an onslaught of violence. They relate the chaos; the atrocities, including the rapes of many neighbors and friends; the hurried decisions whether to stay or flee; the extraordinary efforts to care for children and elderly parents and to find food and clean drinking water. Reflecting on the causes of the war, they vehemently reject the idea that age-old ethnic hatreds made the war inevitable. The women share their reactions to the Dayton Accords, the end of hostilities, and international relief efforts. While they are candid about the difficulties they face, they are committed to rebuilding Bosnia based on ideals of truth, justice, and a common humanity encompassing those of all faiths and ethnicities. Their wisdom is instructive, their courage and fortitude inspirational.

**Duke University Press**

**ISBN 978-0-8223-5214-3**

**34 color illustrations, 344 pages, \$24.95**



**An Interview with Ambassador Swanee Hunt, author of *Worlds Apart: Bosnian Lessons for Global Security* (Duke University Press, September 26, 2011)**

*What is the central message readers of Worlds Apart should take from the book?*

I've learned from my years as a domestic and foreign policy maker that the international community will continue to stumble through conflict interventions unless we build solid connections between on-the-ground realities and our own policy. Outsiders with the luxury of resources must not remain isolated from insiders with the insight to deploy those resources. But the story told about a conflict often ignores internal and external political agendas, so we hold on to assumptions about the causes of the violence and the actors who can instigate or stop it. When we finally decide on a response, individuals and institutional cultures play crucial but nearly invisible roles. As one concrete example, military commanders interpret their mandates on a daily basis. They make choices that most don't see with consequences that everyone feels. My work for more than a decade in the Balkans brought these broad principles into sharp relief.

*What is the relevance of your analysis of the Bosnian war to the conflicts of today, e.g. in the Middle East?*

Working in 40 conflicts since Bosnia, I've found that these lessons apply to every conflict I've seen. Truisms and stereotypes are always part of our thinking, whether we recognize them or not. Ideas like a "clash of civilizations" suck the air out of the room, stifling other narratives and explanations. It's easy to reduce the Middle East to an undifferentiated "Islamic world," but I've no reason to think that religious identity is more important to a hungry person than the corrupt government that keeps him from having a job.

Insiders know more about the dynamics and actors in their own context. So we need to listen to women in Israel and Palestine, young people in Egypt, Iraqi refugees in Syria, tribal leaders in Yemen. . . .

Deciding whether or not to intervene in Libya depended on our having the courage to hold Qaddafi accountable. The back-and-forth in our decision-making was a replay of our struggle during the Bosnian war. Military intervention, which must be in parallel with diplomacy, has enormous downsides. It takes statesmanship to recognize that the cost of caution is greater than the risk to lives and treasure on another continent.

*Does our foreign policy establishment have the resources and resolve to translate these lessons into actions? What are the barriers to this?*

The book lays out a new paradigm of international security, but it's a worldview rooted in individuals and institutions. As ambassador to Austria, I met with a constant stream of people from embassies, NGOs, the CIA, Austria's Foreign Ministry, and the Balkans. Each had a request, and I had to prioritize. It was a personally transformative experience, deciding whom to believe, whom to help, whom to confront.

But it took enormous effort to put aside pressing matters from the 14 US Government departments represented in our embassy. It wasn't as much about resources as it was about expectations I imposed on myself and, frankly, a lack of unified institutional support back in Washington.

There were also policy barriers. Naming aggression and assigning guilt can clash with the fundamental principles of international peacekeeping, but we've seen the disastrous effects of not doing so. A million died in Rwanda; more than 100,000 in Bosnia.

Overall, the biggest barrier is inside ourselves—the same one that stops us from owning “the responsibility to protect.” Although it seems unbearable to face our failings and inconvenient to implement solutions, we do have the money and the infrastructure. Now we need the will.

*You've worked in more than 60 countries. Why did you feel compelled to tell the story of Bosnia?*

This was the war that started it all, for me. Because Sarajevo under siege was considered too dangerous, our embassy in Vienna included the American ambassador who otherwise would have been in Bosnia. Later, I hosted negotiations that led to a federation of two of the three warring sides, a step toward the Dayton talks that ended the war.

But the real turning point was listening to the stories from the thousands of men and women who had fled horrific atrocities, reminiscent of fifty years earlier. Here I was—a powerful policy maker, reading State Department cables about impending massacres as I was driven across Austria to memorial ceremonies that echoed “Never again. Never again.” It was a humbling and morally anguishing experience.

*Why did you choose the medium of 80 vignettes? What's the purpose of alternating between “inside” and “outside”?*

Austria neighbors Bosnia, so our embassy was next door to a crumbling state—Yugoslavia. Bosnia also had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, so Austrians cared hugely about what happened in the Balkans. Those were a few of the factors that pulled me into policymaking discussions on the war. One day I would be engaged in a meeting—NATO, the White House, Pentagon, US military headquarters, UN. . . . The next, I would be strapped into a cargo plane with emergency supplies en route to Bosnia, to talk with people who were building the peace even as they were surviving the war. In a sense, then this book is somewhat auto-biographical, as I write with the insight of first-hand experience.

As for the format, I designed a blend of stories and analyses, because different people respond to each. But the narrative moves back and forth between episodes inside the country and outside among policymakers, since they were obviously but astonishingly concurrent. And I was being whiplashed between both settings.

*How and why did you distill lessons at the end of this book from the complexity of the Bosnian experience?*

After my tenure in Austria, I came to Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, where I taught in the area of international security. In that environment, I reflected with some distance on my high-level meetings and personal encounters stretching over a decade of focus on Balkan stabilization.

In an academic setting, teachers sometimes offer a "take away" from a class. I began to think about what I was taking away from my years in Bosnia. For decades, I've kept detailed journals of my experiences. As I examined what I'd observed, and as I began work in conflict zones worldwide, the six general lessons emerged. I consider my years working on this book as one way I might contribute more systemically to global peace and security, whether the setting is Korea, Congo, or Columbia.

*What would peace talks look like if your six lessons were taken into account during the design? What about a peacekeeping mission or other international intervention?*

As we notice the very first signs of conflict we would engage with others to scrutinizing our broad assumptions: Is this really a religious war? Does our responsibility to protect civilians outweigh the stabilizing principle of sovereignty?

We would stop to examine our working stereotypes: These young rebels will never be able to form a government.

We would look immediately to local actors for insight: Outsiders like ourselves should not decide in a vacuum how a mission will take shape.

As well, to ensure sustainable peace, we would insist on broad inclusion: Recruitment for a new local police force or army should be designed to bring in a cross-section of the population, including women

We would be willing to take sides: We have reached the point we can no longer support this strongman as our ally.

And to confine the tragedy, we would insist on flexing the mandate to realize our full power: Peacekeepers must be able to pursue war criminals and to fire before being fired upon in order to protect the innocent.

*Impartiality has been a key principle in peacekeeping, but you identify the drawbacks. Can you say more about how and when we should reexamine that principle?*

The fundamental principles of peacekeeping missions have been interpreted differently over time. "Impartiality" started out as synonymous with "neutrality." I.e., troops couldn't influence the outcome of the conflict. But in Rwanda and Bosnia, this meant that protection troops stood by as aggressors advanced.

After those disasters, we started to rethink the meaning of impartiality, moving away from *neutrality* and toward *evenhandedness*. Should we be impartial in the way we enforce mandates (e.g., arresting all alleged war criminals) or in the way we treat the warring parties (e.g., arresting equal number of alleged war criminals from each group)?

Lest we lose ourselves in definitions, let's remember that the concept of fairness is bedrock and not neutral. Fairness requires taking sides and insisting on accountability. You can't talk about fairness without talking about justice, and justice after a war must be in service to the victims.

*You're known as a peace advocate, but you argued for military intervention in the former Yugoslavia long before the US took that step. How do you square those ideas?*

I may be known as a peace advocate, but that's not how I describe myself, in part because it's too simplistic if it implies a binary choice: war or peace. Instead, the choice may be between the massacre of innocents and a military intervention. If peace means anti-intervention, then I do not always advocate "peace." If peace implies stability and human security, I am a peace advocate, even if that requires a military rescue.

*You've mentioned a link between what you witnessed during the war and your founding of The Institute for Inclusive Security. Can you expand?*

In 1994, at the signing of the peace agreement we'd brokered in Vienna, I looked out on a sea of grey suits and noticed: of the scores of extraordinary Bosnian women I'd worked with, none had been at the peace table. That experience showed me that it's all too easy to overlook important stakeholders. Bosnian women were well-educated and active in conflict resolution. Why hadn't we drawn on their experience?

I decided to figure out why they were missing and found three causes: warlords' greed, women's low self-confidence, and the organizers' lack of will and awareness. We founded The Institute for Inclusive Security to elevate women leaders and educate policymakers about the value of their full participation.

But I also discovered that nobody had made the case: Were inclusive processes valuable, and did women make a difference? The answers were "Yes" and "Yes." Security isn't sustainable unless it accounts for all stakeholders. Why should a group support a peace agreement that doesn't address their grievances? Inclusion also gives groups a sense of ownership over the process and increases their desire to make it succeed. To the extent possible, stakeholders in the state should be stakeholders in the peace process.

### ***Worlds Apart: Bosnian Lessons for Global Security***

**Swanee Hunt**

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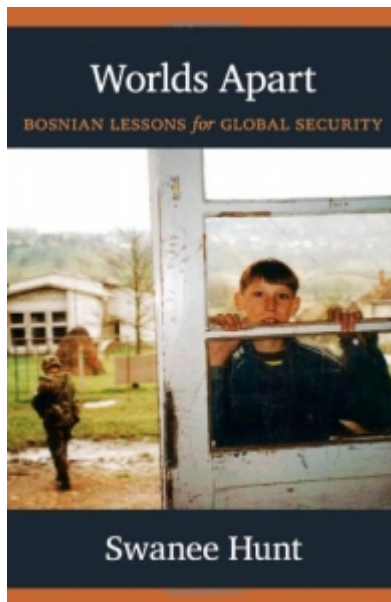


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**Swanee Hunt**

Reviewed by Robert Legvold

November/December 2011



AUTHOR **Swanee Hunt**

PUBLISHER **Duke University Press Books**

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The Bosnian tragedy, like so many international conflicts, demonstrated the harm decision-makers can cause when they have no firsthand knowledge of conditions on the ground. Hunt spent much of her four years as U.S. President Bill Clinton's ambassador to Austria attempting to intercede in the conflict. In hindsight, she writes, "wretched mistakes were made by well-intentioned people who were distracted, lost their nerve, and misjudged actors and events." Part apology, part cri de coeur, her book culminates in a catalog of specific lessons applicable to much more than the Bosnian experience. She advises potential intervenors to "test truisms" and to locate allies and partners within the local community rather than rely on outsiders who reside in the Pentagon or in sanctuaries protected by sandbags and concrete barriers.



## Worlds Apart: Bosnian Lessons for Global Security

17 November 2011

With *Worlds Apart: Bosnian Lessons for Global Security*, the philanthropist, academic and former US ambassador to Austria, Swanee Hunt, has made an interesting and somewhat unusual contribution to a diverse field of literature on the Bosnian conflict of 1992-95. Here, she reflects on her experiences in Bosnia to convey her thesis on "inclusive international security": namely, that interventions in conflicts should be governed by the needs of local populations.

It is a point made forcefully, although at times it tends to disappear from view, overwhelmed by detailed anecdotes from Hunt's diplomatic career. She travelled extensively in Bosnia and brings us into the heart of the broken and dissipated communities she visited, including medical charities, women's groups and refugees. The book is narrated through a set of vignettes that tell of Hunt's wartime encounters with Bosnian people and politicians on the inside of the conflict, and policymakers and powerful international actors on the outside. These compelling accounts alternate between inside and outside in an effort to present opposing experiences of the conflict. In doing so, she offers a rich picture of the complexities and peculiarities of Bosnia in both war and peace, and the book's scope is vast.

Hunt, whose concern for the Bosnian population is genuine and moving, presents us with a tempting vision of intervention. The book closes with six lessons that can be applied to other conflicts, and include advice such as "test truisms", "question stereotypes" and "appreciate domestic dynamics". It is a refreshing view on international intervention, especially as Hunt champions stronger roles for women in the process, but the thesis is not without its shortcomings. "Domestic dynamics" are complicated at best, and local populations - whose views are difficult to solicit in wartime - often have competing concerns. Deciding which to prioritise can be a difficult decision for policymakers.

Throughout, she characterises the international community as rather passive, insensitive and callous, and questions the effectiveness of other diplomats and political leaders. Hunt asks, for instance, how Pamela Harriman, the former US ambassador to France, "for all her personal tenacity, could give up on US intervention in the Bosnian conflict. Did she not connect this situation with Britain's hope that America would enter World War II?" At times, her view of the international community seems oversimplified, and it does not take into account the vast network of complicated actors and policies that govern intervention.

While the book is an absorbing read, at times clichés and caricatures creep in: the "bucolic hills of Bosnia" make an appearance, as does a "smoky cafe"; coffee is served in a "tiny Middle Eastern cup"; and a Sarajevo bakery is a "blend of East and West". The Bosnian War is "barbaric, to an extent almost incomprehensible in sophisticated, modern Europe". Former Bosnian prime minister Haris Silajdžić meets with Hunt after what she speculates is a "clandestine arms transaction"; and he is "more than a moody, sultry ladies' man" with "romantic tendencies". Such anecdotes and language rather confuse the reader - is the book a memoir of Hunt's diplomatic career, or an attempt to make a

serious point about global security? At times it appears to be both, but the former often detracts from the latter, and both analysis and Hunt's broader point tend to disappear.

Nevertheless, general readers, students and activists will find much of value in a book that is more accessible than most academic works on the conflict. Academics and regional experts may not find much new material, but there are enough details and conversations with senior politicians to warrant reading it purely for the insight it offers into diplomatic and political life of the 1990s, such as the detail that former US vice-president Al Gore recommended Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History* as a book that helped to "clarify his thinking".

### **Worlds Apart: Bosnian Lessons for Global Security**

By Swanee Hunt. Duke University Press, 296pp, £22.99. ISBN 9780822349754. Published 10 June 2011

**Reviewer :**

Jelena Obradovic-Wochnik is lecturer in politics, Aston University, and author of *Ethnic Conflict and War Crimes in the Balkans: the Narratives of Denial in Post-Conflict Serbia* (in press).

# Global Post

## Opinion:

### Learning compassion from Srebrenica survivors

**This month marks the 16th anniversary of the massacre at Srebrenica. For most of the world, memories are fading.**

**Swanee Hunt**

July 22, 2011 16:19



Graffiti on the wall of a house shows former Bosnian Serb military chief Ratko Mladic saluting in Belgrade on May 29, 2011. (Attila Kisbenedek/AFP/Getty Images)

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — “I’m cold on my head. Let me put on my cap!” Petulant and disruptive, Ratko Mladic was dismissed from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in early July, on his second day before a judge.

Who would guess that this cocky man faces charges of genocide, extermination, inhuman acts, murder ... 15 counts in all, for atrocities committed 16 years ago in Bosnia.

The implosion of Yugoslavia sparked nearly four years of war in the 1990s, during which politicians hungry for control of the new republics stirred up hate to feed their urge for power.

Bosnia, a new country the size of the state of Maryland, was devastated. Half of the country's 4 million people were displaced. Sixty percent of housing was destroyed and at least 110,000 were dead. The mastermind was Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, who died in 2005 after four years of an incomplete trial.

That opportunity for truth and justice was lost. We gained another when Mladic was captured on May 26, and yet another on July 20, when former Croatian Serb leader [Goran Hadzic](#) was arrested.

It was Mladic, as general of the Bosnian Serb forces, who ordered the targeting of civilians during the 43-month siege of Sarajevo — incredibly, the site of the 1984 Winter Olympics.

He also orchestrated the massacre at the mountain town of Srebrenica, where soldiers slaughtered 8,000 unarmed men and boys over a few days, pushing their bodies into mass graves.

This month marks the 16th anniversary of Srebrenica's horrors, and for most of the world, memories are fading.

Not for Kada Hotic, who remembers being herded with tens of thousands of terrorized villagers. Former neighbors in stolen U.N. uniforms dragged women off to rape them and slit their throats. Kada lost every adult male in her family — husband, brothers, uncles and her 29-year-old son, Samir.

I met Kada in 1998, during the commemoration I'd helped organize. She was a powerhouse, leading an association of survivors and pressing the international community to identify the dead.

Kada was one of scores of Bosnians I spoke with over hundreds of hours, but three lessons she gave me are still fresh: hearing the truth is a survivor's most basic need; justice is not revenge; and we can always choose compassion.

First, the truth. American families of soldiers missing in action in Korea would understand. "It would be much easier if I knew my Samir was dead. It would be over. The kindest thing someone could do is tell me the truth. Everything else is bearable. Only truth will heal." That need for closure is as important a reason as any for the creation of a criminal court.

Second, for Kada truth would lead to justice — but not revenge. "If [the perpetrators] were taken to court, maybe we'd be able to talk about living together." Yes, she watched Mladic directing his soldiers to lead her husband and son to their deaths; and yes, she wanted to see him held accountable. But "I couldn't do anything to hurt him. After I did, I wouldn't be me anymore."

Most remarkably, Kada went even further, transforming the impulse for revenge into compassion. "The soldiers who killed my son — they must have flashbacks all the time — cutting people's throats ... When they come to their senses, it must be so hard for them."

She looked past the killing, into the killers' lives. "Their commanders were awarding medals to whoever committed the worst crime, to the one who killed the most people in the fiercest way, or raped the most women. And the worst part is, that soldier believed he was doing good for his people and for his religion."

Without understanding how mass-perpetrated violence comes about, we'll face it again. But the Kadas of the world won't be the ones perpetuating the cycle of violence. I heard her describe life under siege to an audience in the Serb capital of Belgrade: "I wouldn't want what happened to me to happen to any one of you."

The trial of Ratko Mladic is moving forward. We'll learn about him, his soldiers, his crimes, the starvation of his victims and his threat of a hunger strike. But we could be learning much more.

As we address violent confrontation, if we default to the same faces, Mladic is what we'll get. But if we explore less likely places, we'll find women like Kada, with an astonishing capacity to put an end to conflict.

Truth. Justice, not revenge. Compassion. Kada's words came back to me as I watched Gen. Mladic in court: In a macabre parody of civility, he turned toward the gallery to face the victims' families — and doffed his cap.

*Swanee Hunt served as U.S. ambassador to Austria from 1993 to 1997. Her forthcoming book, "Worlds Apart: Bosnian Lessons for Global Security," will be published in the fall by Duke University Press. Hunt is also an investor in GlobalPost.*

## Opinion

### **Mladic arrest: Has the West now learned not to be impartial on war crimes?**

**In Bosnia, outsiders for too long relied on impartiality to distance themselves from responsibility. Now, with Mladic's arrest, we must send a message that survivors will be at the center of concerns on security.**

By Swanee Hunt / May 27, 2011

Cambridge, Mass.

“I don’t curse anyone,” Kada Hotic told me, “not even those who caused me this pain.” In July 1995, Kada lost every grown male in her family to a massacre in the Bosnian mountain town of Srebrenica. She turned that pain into action, founding a large women’s association advocating for survivors’ rights. Almost 16 years later, she’s seeing partial justice. Yesterday, the man accused of masterminding that atrocity

[Ratko Mladic](#) commanded the army of [Republika Srpska](#) and led the units that surrounded Srebrenica that summer. Famous footage shows him overseeing the separation of tens of thousands of women, children, and elderly from men and boys. The first group was transported to Bosniak-held territory and reassured that the others would only be held for questioning. Within days, 8,000 men and boys had been killed.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia indicted Mladic on charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. International law assures a victim’s right to justice, and Kada was clear on the kind she wanted: The chief perpetrators should be captured and arrested, but their lives spared. She simply wanted to hear them admit their guilt. “We don’t have to love each other, just respect each other’s rights.” But in Bosnia, justice was sacrificed to neutrality by an international community ambivalent – first about intervention to stop the bloodshed, and second about whether to pursue the perpetrators.

My 18 years of involvement in Balkan affairs started during my tenure as US ambassador to Austria, where we housed the US mission to Bosnia until Sarajevo, under siege, was deemed safe enough for an embassy. We hosted negotiations that led to a Bosniak-Croat Federation; conducted hundreds of hours of interviews with politicians, journalists, activists, and a host of other citizens, including refugees; and organized three international symposia of policymakers.

#### **The problem with impartiality**

Throughout, I was struck by the extent to which outsiders were using the principle of impartiality to distance themselves from responsibility.

Impartiality has been a fundamental principle of peacekeeping since the 1950s. Peacekeepers were to show no preference among warring sides – a kind of neutrality. Interpretation evolved from intervention to intervention, and “evenhandedness” was the catch-word when the Dayton Accords ended the war in late 1995.

When the Pentagon charged US commanders to focus on protecting their own troops, the US admiral on the ground insisted that it wasn’t their job to pick up war criminals. He went so far as to say that he’d walk out the back door of a cafe if General Mladic walked in the front. Many internationals, not wanting to get involved in what they saw as an age-old ethnic or religious feud, quibbled about their mandate. “Arrest” or just “detain”? One American general explained to me that it wasn’t “evenhanded” to arrest more Serbs than Bosniaks (Muslims) or Croats, even though human rights groups assessed that Serbs committed 90 percent of atrocities.

### **What about fairness?**

Lost in the fog was how impartiality, neutrality, and evenhandedness are not interchangeable. Absent from the word games was the concept of fairness. But while decisionmakers stumbled over words, they ignored that indecision sends its own signal to the guilty: Expect impunity. Hide long enough, and you’ll remain free.

Fearing the tangle of interventions, many of those with the power to arrest war criminals disregarded the principle that fairness means upholding the rights of victim and perpetrator alike. There are no disinterested parties in the pursuit of justice, and from Egypt to Yemen to Libya, this lesson is finally dawning on us.

### **Sending a message to the world**

In my current work with leaders from 40 conflict areas, the theme of “justice, not revenge” has come up time and again. A refugee of the Bosnian war, who works across the globe, told me that the meaning of Mladic’s arrest is reflected in every other war zone: “Peace without justice is what millions live and breathe. This arrest isn’t about a particular conflict or a particular victim – it’s about sending a message to the rest of the world.”

So far, the world is hearing much about Serbia’s improved chances of EU membership, but that should not be the fundamental message. While Mladic remained at large in peacetime, I witnessed how Bosnians remained psychological hostages to the wartime. And so the message is that survivors must be the center of our thinking on global security. However uncomfortable the implications may be, fairness underlies impartiality; evenhandedness is only fair if it is just. As my friend put it: “Impunity offers temporary political relief, mostly to the outsiders. Genuine stability comes only when justice and accountability meet reconciliation and compassion.” Sixteen years after the day she lost her husband, brothers, and son, Kada Hotic can sleep better tonight.

*Swanee Hunt served as US ambassador to Austria from 1993 to 1997. Her forthcoming book, “Worlds Apart: Bosnian Lessons for Global Security,” will be published in the fall by Duke University Press.*