

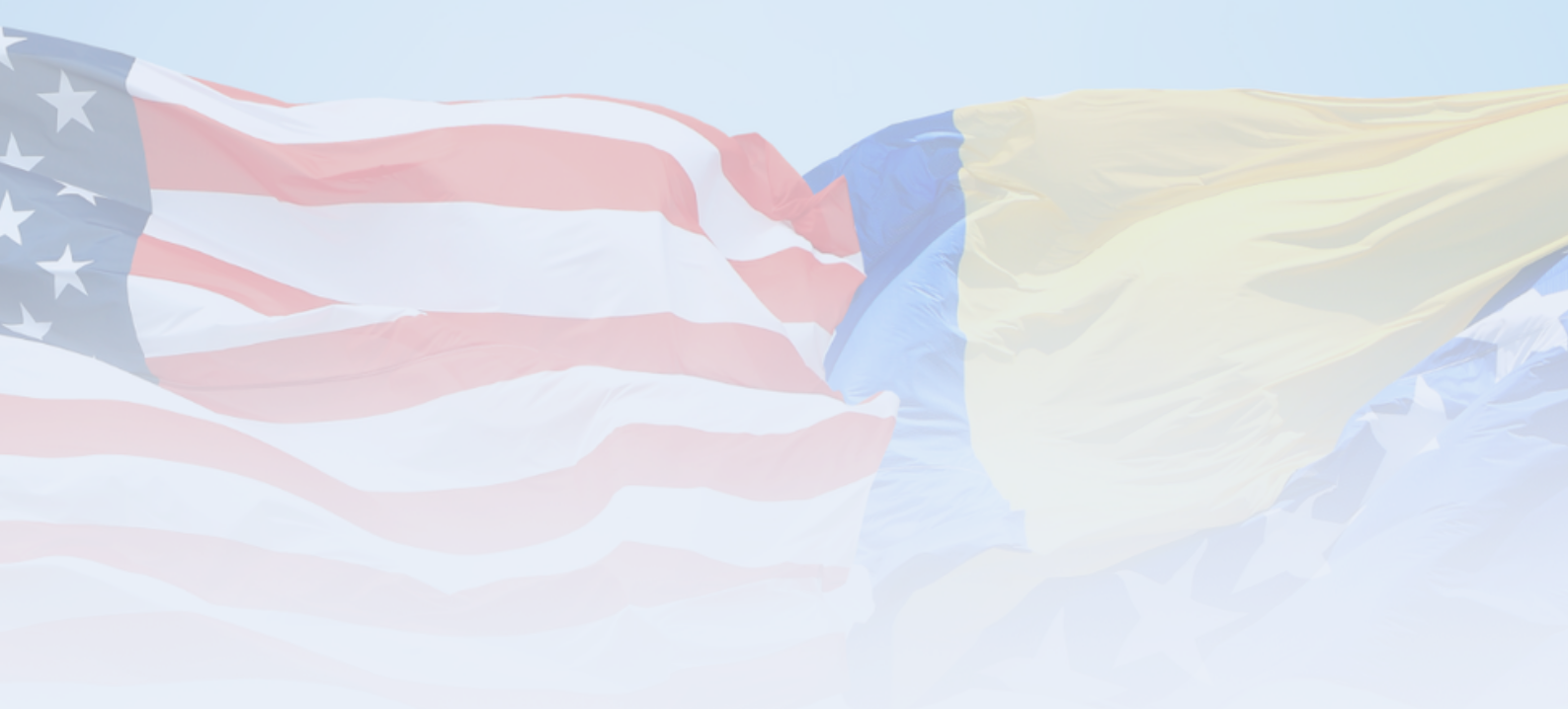
UNITED STRATEGIC ALLIANCE FOR BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Strengthening the **American - Bosnian** Alliance

BRIEFING BOOK

2023 - 2024





Discover more about ...

 A Brief History of the
American - Bosnian Relationship

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The American - Bosnian Relationship



The United States of America & Bosnia and Herzegovina

A Brief History

The United States (the U.S.) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia or BiH, for short) have a unique relationship that spans three decades. The relationship began with the U.S. recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992 as a state independent from Yugoslavia, and continued with the U.S.-led effort to stem the genocidal war of aggression against the country. Thus, **the U.S. played a critical role in brokering the Dayton Accords** in December 1995 (**Annex IV of which still serves as BiH's constitution**).

Since then, continued U.S. diplomatic engagement has proven critical to BiH's security and stability. However, over the past thirty years, circumstances have changed but U.S. perspectives on BiH seem to be anchored in outdated perceptions and strategies.

This threatens United States' interests in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bipartisan Congressional advocacy during the war of aggression in the 1990s proved **instrumental in ending the war and genocide** in BiH. Led by then-Senators Bob Dole and Joe Biden, senior members of Congress such as senators Lieberman, Moynihan, DeConcini, and others (known collectively as the "Bosnian Hawks") pushed for the United States to provide concrete material and political support to the Bosnian government.

In 2005, the United States was the **first country to adopt resolutions recognizing the genocide in Srebrenica in both houses of Congress** (S. Res. 134 and H.Res.199). In order to ensure regional stability and prosperity, a spirit of **continued bipartisan Congressional support** through the introduction and passage of appropriate resolutions and bills on key issues related to Bosnia and Herzegovina is imperative.

December 1997

President Bill Clinton aboard Air Force One en route to Bosnia with Secretary of State Madeline Albright and senators Bob Dole, Joe Biden, Joe Lieberman, and other members of Congress.



SOURCE: AP PHOTO/THE WHITE HOUSE

Some 300,000 Bosnian-Americans call the United States their home.

The **United States is home to a vibrant Bosnian American community** of some **300,000 potential voters**. Notably, St. Louis, Missouri, boasts the largest population of Bosnians in any single city outside of Bosnia. Bosnian Americans actively participate and **contribute to every facet of American life**, from entrepreneurship to civic engagement, helping their communities to thrive across the country. The vast majority of Bosnian Americans advocate for U.S. policies that promote democracy, stability, and economic cooperation between the U.S. and BiH. As entrepreneurs and employers in the United States, they have a vested economic interest in the **bilateral trade** of goods and services, **investment in Bosnia's economic potential**, and above all, **the country's peace and security**.

The ongoing war in Ukraine has amplified the urgency to counter Russian and other malign influences throughout Eastern Europe. **Successive governments in neighboring countries have often kowtowed to Russia and are unreliable partners in advancing U.S. national interests in the Western Balkans.**

Major population centers* of the Bosnian American diaspora



Other states with significant Bosnian American populations:

VT | NH | CT | MA | NJ | **PA** | MD | VA | **NC** | TN | KY | OH | IA | TX | ID | WA | OR | CA

** 2024 election swing states w/ populations above 5,000*

About USABIH

Strengthening and expanding the U.S.-BiH Alliance

Who We Are

USABIH is dedicated to **strengthening the partnership** between the United States and Bosnia and Herzegovina and **advocating for mutually advantageous policies and legislation** that protect the security, stability, and prosperity of both countries. Our vision is to become the leading source of information and guidance for decision-makers in Washington, D.C. concerned with BiH and the Western Balkans.

What We Do

We urge policymakers to support good politics and the right policies in favor of a free, sovereign, democratic, and secular Bosnia and Herzegovina for the benefit of both countries' vital regional interests.

Educating decision-makers

We educate decision-makers, thought leaders, and media influencers on critical issues for the mutual interest of both the U.S. and BiH through briefings, presentations, events, regular publications and social media channels.

Providing timely analyses and policy recommendations

We provide timely and transparent analyses and policy recommendations related to the Western Balkans to help guide targeted, specific, and actionable policy initiatives that will foster a mutually beneficial relationship between the U.S. and BiH.

Advocating for greater economic cooperation

We support the Bosnian diaspora in furthering their role as job creators and entrepreneurs in the U.S. by advocating for policies that expand economic cooperation between the two countries and investment in BiH's growing economy.

Visit us at
[USABIH.org](https://www.usabih.org)

Why We Do It

In the past three decades, the relationship between the United States and Bosnia and Herzegovina focused on a shared dedication to **fostering democratic governance** and **promoting peace** in the Western Balkans.

As Americans, we uphold and advocate for principles of individual freedoms, equality and justice in Bosnia and Herzegovina because we know it is the best guarantee for long-term and sustainable prosperity, as the historic development of the United States has shown.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is the strategic center for the Western Balkans and must be the critical partner in advancing U.S. interests in the region and stemming the influence of foreign powers that threaten regional peace.

The core of our strategic partnership is a commitment to fostering **BiH's capacities for political, economic and military self-reliance** so that BiH may become a valuable member of NATO and the European Union.

USABIH is in process for 501c(4) status meaning that it can advocate for causes and propositions and endorse specific candidates related to favorable political action to advance the interests of the organization. Donations to USABIH are not tax-deductible.



Our Five-Point Policy Agenda



Ushering NATO accession



Supporting military cooperation and modernization



Stemming the influence of malign powers



Expanding economic cooperation



Preserving the memory of the Bosnian Genocide

1

Ushering NATO Accession

NATO accession is the most important strategic foreign policy goal for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

NATO membership represents ironclad guarantees for BiH's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of persistent threats by malign foreign powers.

Further, NATO's Article 5 provides the bedrock security needed to reform the country's complex constitutional regime and to ensure that this process will be peaceful, democratic, and conducted exclusively within BiH's state institutions and by the country's elected officials.

Policymakers in Sarajevo are also keenly aware that every Western Balkan state and every former Eastern Bloc state which has acceded to the EU has first become a member of NATO. As such, for BiH, NATO membership is not only a critical security objective, but also a political stepping stone towards EU membership.

BiH offers a great deal to the Alliance

Over the past two decades, Bosnian forces have completed operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq, having successfully adopted core components of NATO's interoperability doctrine. Bosnian security services have also worked extensively with NATO partner states in joint counter-extremism efforts, while Bosnian intelligence services have provided critical information for the Alliance concerning hostile activities on the territory of the Western Balkans.

How can the U.S. support BiH's NATO accession?

- Accelerate relevant political processes necessary to complete BiH's successful accession to NATO
- Strengthen the interoperability capacities of BiH's Armed Forces (BH AF) and relevant associated security services
- Assist in the modernization of BH AF and all associated state security services

BiH's Path to NATO



2006

BiH becomes a member of the Partnership for Peace & signs security agreement for 2007



2008

BiH joins the Individual Partnership Action Plan & signs the Adriatic Charter



2018

NATO invites BiH to join the Membership Action Plan & to submit first Annual National Program



2019

BiH successfully submits first Annual National Program



2023

Allied Defense Ministers endorse new Defense Capacity Building package for BiH

2

Supporting military cooperation and modernization

In the face of ongoing challenges posed by external interference in Bosnia and Herzegovina's domestic affairs (e.g. in its electoral and decision-making processes), particularly from Serbia and Croatia, the defense and deterrence capabilities of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Armed Forces, as the only legal and legitimate military force in the country, have once again become an urgent question.

In the aftermath of the Bosnian Genocide, the United States played a crucial role in implementing the Dayton Agreement, which established the framework for post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina. Tens of thousands of American troops were part of the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) and later the Stabilization Force (SFOR), contributing to vital peacekeeping and stability operations as the country navigated the tenuous post-war years.

Since the intervention, the United States has maintained active involvement, aiding Bosnia and Herzegovina in revitalizing its defense and security sectors. The U.S. played a crucial role in beginning the process of military modernization and ensuring its capability to respond to the country's security challenges and to contribute to global peace and security.

SOURCE: MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



“Dynamic Response 21” | Joint exercise of U.S. and Bosnian Army forces in May 2021

Bosnian Chief of Joint Staff Senad Masovic meeting with U.S. military in Maryland as part of the Maryland-Bosnia National Guard Partnership.



SOURCE: NATIONALGUARD.MIL

The strategic interests of the United States in the Western Balkans are more secure when Bosnia and Herzegovina is a robust and self-reliant ally able to protect itself, by itself.

USABIH urges American policymakers to:

Continue Equipment Support

The United States should continue the procurement of Foreign Military Sale (FMS) program equipment that is essential for the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH AF), including but not limited to helicopters, high mobility armored vehicles, offensive and defensive counter-air (OCA/DCA) air superiority systems/weapons, anti-armor weapons, night vision devices, etc. in order to enhance Bosnia and Herzegovina's defensive capabilities in a fast-evolving security environment.

Sustain Training Initiatives

The United States should maintain and deepen its commitment to comprehensive training programs aimed at strengthening the capabilities of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina which also includes participation of the members and units of BH AF in joint bilateral and multilateral military exercises in the country and abroad.

Provide Annual Security Assistance

An annual security assistance framework should be instituted to ensure consistent support for Bosnia and Herzegovina's defense. A five-year pilot program, for instance, would allow the Bosnian Armed Forces to rapidly modernize its force posture and equipment.

Support BiH's NATO Membership

The United States should continue actively supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina's NATO membership path by working with NATO allies to prepare the political ground for BiH's accession within the next decade. In the interim, the U.S. should encourage bilateral security agreements between Bosnia and Herzegovina and individual NATO allies and advocate for joint deployments with the BH AF in Peace Support Operations.

3

Stemming the influence of malign powers

Since BiH's independence, the country has experienced persistent and hostile foreign interference in its internal affairs.

In the 1990s, BiH was the target of aggression by both the then-Milosevic regime in Belgrade and the Tudjman regime in Zagreb. Since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995, **BiH's sovereignty has continued to be undermined through endemic influence and interference campaigns by successive generations of Serbian and Croatian leaders.**

Since the early 2010s, **BiH has also become a target for malign foreign influence operations by Russia and Russia-aligned states within the EU such as Hungary.** This is most clearly manifested through their ties with local leaders in the secessionist SNSD (the leading Serbian nationalist party) and their counterparts in the Croat separatist, HDZ BiH.

Moscow has become especially brazen in its support for the Milorad Dodik regime in the Republika Srpska entity and has repeatedly made clear its support for his militant secessionist agenda. **China has also sought to carve out a greater degree of influence** in the country, including BiH's media and energy sectors. **China's closest partners in BiH are also in Dodik's SNSD** and in August 2023, **Dodik himself made clear that BiH ought to abandon its EU aspirations in favor of the Russo-Chinese BRICS pact.**

At USABIH, we aim to crystalize the links between local malign foreign interference campaigns in BiH (e.g. those led by Serbia and Croatia) and those by America's great power competitors in Moscow and Beijing.

Our mission is to illuminate for American decision-makers how insufficient deterrence against local interferences has created fertile ground for greater threats to U.S. interests in the region.

Objectives

- Strengthening the capacities of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Bosnian state
- Deepening BiH's security and military ties with NATO and its member states
- Maintaining a credible international security force and accompanying commitments in BiH until the country has successfully joined NATO

4

Expanding economic cooperation and investment in Bosnia’s growing economy

Bosnia and Herzegovina's pivotal location in Southeast Europe offers the United States a strategic gateway to Balkan and broader markets. This geographical nexus bridges Western Europe and the Middle East, providing substantial opportunities and competitive advantages to American companies aiming for expansion in diverse sectors.

BiH has a well-educated, skilled, and cost-effective workforce, particularly in sectors like information technology, engineering, and manufacturing. It possesses a rich cultural heritage and breathtaking natural beauty, rendering it an appealing destination for tourism.

The Bosnian diaspora residing in the United States serves as a remarkable example of how American citizens can bolster the bilateral ties between two nations. Bosnian Americans have revitalized communities by generating employment opportunities in transportation, manufacturing, hospitality, and various other sectors.

Enhance Trade Relations	Support Skills Development	Invest in Infrastructure
<p>The U.S. should actively explore the establishment of a comprehensive bilateral trade agreement with Bosnia. This agreement would streamline the exchange of goods and services, promoting economic growth in both countries. Moreover, the U.S. government should continue to allocate funding and provide unwavering support to critical initiatives, such as those by the American Chamber of Commerce in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the USAID's Diaspora Invest project.</p>	<p>To fuel innovation and foster knowledge transfer, both countries should prioritize the promotion of student and professional exchange programs. These initiatives would not only enhance the capabilities of individuals but also strengthen the relationship between the United States and Bosnia.</p>	<p>Investing in infrastructure through USG, G7 and PGII funding is critical to the success of mutual business ventures and attraction of global investment. The U.S. should continue to support successful public-private partnerships (PPPs) to advance strategic joint ventures and drive critical, high-quality infrastructure development.</p>
Promote Touristic Potential		
<p>Encouraging American investment in hospitality infrastructure, including hotels and resorts, presents a significant opportunity to stimulate Bosnia and Herzegovina's tourism industry. At the same time, Bosnia and Herzegovina should enact specific policies geared toward meeting the United States' Visa Waiver Program (VWP) requirements. By achieving VWP status, the two nations can further improve their relations through this visa-free program, facilitating easier travel and promoting stronger ties.</p>		

5

Preserving the memory of the Bosnian Genocide

During the 1992-95 war of aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia under the Milošević regime initiated a campaign of genocidal violence that saw its local Bosnian Serb proxies systematically kill, torture, and expel non-Serbs from their ancestral homes. This campaign, collectively forming the Bosnian Genocide, culminated in the mass murder of 8,372 Bosniaks in Srebrenica in July 1995, the largest single war crime in Europe since World War II.

By then it had led to a vast landscape of mass graves and concentration camps, approximately 100,000 deaths (with some 82% of civilian deaths being Bosniak), and 1.2 million refugees, many of whom eventually found a new home in the United States*.

At key junctures, the United States has stood on the side of the victims: a 2005 resolution unambiguously labeling the massacre in Srebrenica an act of genocide and identifying its Serb nationalist perpetrators passed near-unanimously (370-1) in the House and unanimously in the Senate. In this way, the U.S. demonstrated moral leadership in its policy toward BiH and the Western Balkans, even preceding the landmark ruling in *Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro* at the International Court of Justice in 2007.

**Figures from the Research and Documentation Center (RDC) of Sarajevo*



**Potocari - Srebrenica,
Bosnia and Herzegovina**

In July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces, led by General Ratko Mladic, surrounded and attacked civilians in Srebrenica, a U.N. safe haven. Over the course of several days, over 8,000 men, women and children were killed and thrown in mass graves. The youngest victim, Fatima Muhic, was just hours old. The oldest, Saha Izmirlic, was killed at 94-years-old.

Potocari is the final resting place for thousands of those killed in Srebrenica. However, surviving relatives were often forced to bury just a handful of bones of loved ones. Serb forces did not stop at digging singular mass graves, but rather, dug and transferred victims into secondary and tertiary mass graves so that holistic forensic evidence would be harder to find. The result is the bones of a single body strewn all over the region. Thousands more remain to be found.

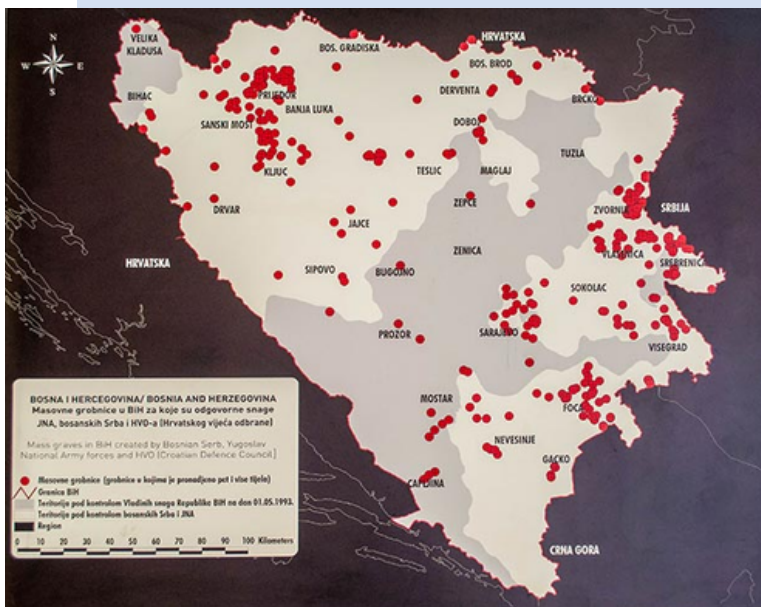
More recently, however, this legacy has come under threat. Partly in a misguided attempt to appease a once-again aggressive Serbia, **U.S. diplomacy today shies away from clearly labeling the parties responsible for the Bosnian Genocide—Republika Srpska and its benefactors in Belgrade—and the Greater Serbian political project motivating their crimes.** Instead, it all-too-often falls back on a politically correct language of “all side-ism”, emphasizing the need for reconciliation while leaving both victims and perpetrators unspecified. Just as it is impossible to speak of the Holocaust without acknowledging the responsibility of Nazi Germany, it is impossible to speak of the Bosnian Genocide without addressing the role of Serbia and Republika Srpska.

USABIH advocates for renewed U.S. leadership related to the Bosnian Genocide, including:

- **Combatting denial**, seeking individual and collective justice for victims, and preserving their memory for future generations
- **Unambiguously labeling, condemning, and confronting** those responsible for the genocide and their political project, including by standing behind a revitalized Bosnian state judiciary that will enforce existing laws against genocide denial and persecute the many perpetrators who remain at large
- **Empowering victims** by increasing targeted support for returnee communities in Republika Srpska and holding local authorities responsible for failures to maintain their security and dignity
- Ensuring that **state authorities** in Sarajevo **have the capacity to prevent the crimes** of the 1990s from ever happening again.

Map of mass graves across Bosnia and Herzegovina from atrocities committed by Serb and Croat forces. Much of the light tan region continues to be under the control of the Republika Srpska entity responsible for these crimes. Dots in the dark tan region represent atrocities committed mostly by Croat forces. There exist only a few isolated incidents of similar atrocities by the Bosnian Army, and most perpetrators from those forces have been processed in legal proceedings. The map proves genocidal intent across the country, not just in Srebrenica.

At just a few months old, Amila Dzaferagic was killed with a bullet to the head in the arms of her mother, Besima. The local Serb police and population also killed her 4-year-old brother, Almir, by firing squad. Her bottle, found by a nearby river bank, led investigators to find the mass grave they were buried in - even in death, Amila remained in her mom's eternal embrace.



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