The recent events in Bosnia-Hercegovina have again brought out simplistic questions from the media. Should the U.S. intervene militarily to “save” Bosnian Muslims? How do we “stop” the Serbs? Supporters of the Muslim cause are automatically assumed to be supporters of U.S. intervention. Yet I both support the Muslims and oppose U.S. military action.

As a Hungarian-American Jew, I feel very comfortable supporting a Muslim people. The Ottoman Turkish occupation was considered a golden age for European Jewry. When the Turks left, Christian pogroms (a forerunner to “ethnic cleansing”) were directed at Jews and Muslims alike. Modern Bosnian cities, such as Sarajevo, Travnik, and Tuzla, have been islands of diversity, where Bosnian Muslims and Jews lived side-by-side with Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs. These cities are being shelled by militias driven by a hatred not only for ethnic diversity, but by a Khmer Rouge-like hatred of urban people and values.

Yet I support Bosnian Muslims, I feel very uncomfortable with the parallels made to the Holocaust, and with the calls for U.S. military intervention. Both do a disservice to history and to the present.

U.S. military action could easily result in disaster for everyone in the Balkans, including Muslims. The closest parallel is Lebanon, where the U.S. not only got involved in a messy civil war, but took sides with the Christian government by bombing and shelling Muslim forces. Once the U.S. took sides, the Muslim bombing of the Marine barracks was inevitable. Do we really want a conflict with the Serbs, who are historically Europe’s foremost anti-Indian? The Serbs and Croats (like Israeli nationalists) use the atrocities of World War II to justify modern repression, and lay claim to their “historic” lands (such as Kosovo) even though they are now populated by other peoples.

NATO bombing of Serb forces would also give the green light to Albania, Bulgaria, and Hungary (all wanting a foreign diversion from domestic economic problems) to annex the pieces of Serbia where their ethnic group is in the majority. The war could draw in Greece and the Balkans, which is on the western side. To spill Western European blood in Bosnia would create a precedent for intervention in the former USSR, and would imply that Muslims are welcome to join the new united Europe, just at a time that Muslim immigrants are being attacked throughout Europe.

The only countries that will probably be allowed into the European Community are Poland, the Baltic states, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, and the ex-Yugoslav states of Slovenia and Croatia. The Christian Orthodox and Muslim countries to the east would become sources of cheap labor and resources for the new European superpower, leading to future decades of resentment and reaction in countries like Turkey, Serbia, and Russia.

One can almost predict upcoming conflicts by looking at religious minorities who are smack on the wrong side of the wall. They include not only the Orthodox populations on the western side (Serbs in Croatia, and Muslims in the Baltic states and Kنانаводград enclave), but Catholic and Protestants on the eastern side (Catholics in Bosnia, Hungarians in Ukraine and Romanian Transylvania, Poles in Ukraine and Belarus, Uniate Catholics in western Ukraine, and Karaites in Russia). In a sense, the war in Yugoslavia was inevitable, not only because of the downfall of Communism in Eastern Europe, but because of the lure of unification in Western Europe.

The other unresolved question is whether the U.S. has the moral authority to intervene in Bosnia-Hercegovina. The U.S. has its own history of “ethnic cleansing,” including the Cherokee Trail of Tears and the forced removal of many other Native nations. U.S. foreign policy has actively backed (not opposed) “ethnic cleansing” in Guatemala, East Timor, Western Sahara, Sri Lanka, Turkey, the Philippines, Kuwait, Angola, Israel, Liberia, and other countries.

The Balkans is one of the only uneasy areas of the world where the U.S. has not been directly involved in making it messier. Let’s keep it that way.

Zeitik Grossman is a cartoonist and peace activist in Wisconsin. A somewhat different version of this article appeared elsewhere earlier this year.