sionmakers also brought a wide variety of backgrounds and foreign policy ideologies to the table. Every American president in office in the last three decades of the twentieth century—Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton—made decisions related to the prevention and suppression of genocide. Yet notwithstanding all the variety among cases and within U.S. administrations, the U.S. policy responses to genocide were astonishingly similar across time, geography, ideology, and geopolitical balance.

In order to understand U.S. responses to genocide, I interviewed more than 300 Americans who had a hand in shaping or influencing U.S. policy.* Most were officials of varying ranks at the White House, State Department, Pentagon, and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Some were lawmakers and staff members on Capitol Hill. Others were journalists who covered the carnage or nongovernmental advocates who attempted to ameliorate it. A grant from the Open Society Institute enabled me to travel to Bosnia, Cambodia, Kosovo, and Rwanda, where I spoke with victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. I also visited the international war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia at The Hague in the Netherlands, as well the UN court for Rwanda, located in Arusha, Tanzania. Thanks to the National Security Archive, a nonprofit organization that uses the Freedom of Information Act to secure the release of classified U.S. documents, I was able to draw on hundreds of pages of newly available government records. This material provides a clearer picture than was previously discernible of the interplay among people, motives, and genocidal events.

People have explained U.S. failures to respond to specific genocides by claiming that the United States didn't know what was happening, that it knew but didn't care, or that regardless of what it knew, there was nothing useful to be done. I have found that in fact U.S. policymakers knew a great deal about the crimes being perpetrated. Some Americans cared and fought for action, making considerable personal and professional sacrifices. And the United States did have countless opportunities to mitigate and prevent slaughter. But time and again, decent men and women chose to look away. We have all been bystanders to genocide. The crucial question is why.

*Quotes that are not sourced in the notes are taken from these exclusive interviews, conducted between July 1993 and November 2001. I have introduced these quotations using the present tense (e.g., "Senator McGovern recalls . . . ").

The answers seemed to lie in the critical decisions—and decisions not to decide—made before, during, and after the various genocides. In exploring a century of U.S. reactions to genocide, I asked: Were there early warnings that mass killing was set to commence? How seriously were the warnings taken? By whom? Was there any reason to believe the violence expected would be qualitatively or quantitatively different from the "run-of-the-mill" killings that were sadly typical of local warfare? Once the violence began, what classified or open intelligence was available? What constraints operated to impede diagnosis? How and when did U.S. officials recognize that genocide was under way? Who inside or outside the U.S. government wanted to do what? What were the risks or costs? Who opposed them? Who prevailed? How did public opinion and elite opinion diverge? And finally, how were the U.S. responses, the genocides, and the Americans who urged intervention remembered later? In reconstructing a narrative of events, I have divided most of the cases into warning, recognition, response, and aftermath sections.

Contrary to any assumption I may have harbored while I traveled around the former Yugoslavia, the Bush and Clinton administrations' responses to atrocities in Bosnia were consistent with prior American responses to genocide. Early warnings of massive bloodshed proliferated. The spewing of inflammatory propaganda escalated. The massacres and deportations started. U.S. policymakers struggled to wrap their minds around the horrors. Refugee stories and press reports of atrocities became too numerous to deny. Few Americans at home pressed for intervention. A hopeful but passive and ultimately deadly American waiting game commenced. And genocide proceeded unimpeded by U.S. action and often emboldened by U.S. inaction.

The book's major findings can be summarized as follows:

- Despite graphic media coverage, American policymakers, journalists, and citizens are extremely slow to muster the imagination needed to reckon with evil. Ahead of the killings, they assume rational actors will not inflict seemingly gratuitous violence. They trust in good-faith negotiations and traditional diplomacy. Once the killings start, they assume that civilians who keep their heads down will be left alone. They urge cease-fires and donate humanitarian aid.

- It is in the realm of domestic politics that the battle to stop genocide is lost. American political leaders interpret society-wide silence as an indicator of public indifference. They reason that they will incur no costs if the United States remains uninvolved but will face steep risks if they engage. Potential sources of influence—lawmakers on Capitol Hill, editorial boards, nongovernmental groups, and ordinary constituents—do not generate political pressure sufficient to change the calculus of America's leaders.
- The U.S. government not only abstains from sending its troops, but it takes very few steps along a continuum of intervention to deter genocide.
- U.S. officials spin themselves (as well as the American public) about the nature of the violence in question and the likely impact of an American intervention. They render the bloodshed two-sided and inevitable, not genocidal. They insist that any proposed U.S. response will be futile. Indeed, it may even do more harm than good, bringing perverse consequences to the victims and jeopardizing other precious American moral or strategic interests.* They brand as "emotional" those U.S. officials who urge intervention and who make moral arguments in a system that speaks principally in the cold language of interests. They avoid use of the word "genocide." Thus, they can in good conscience favor stopping genocide in the abstract, while simultaneously opposing American involvement in the moment.

The sharpest challenge to the world of bystanders is posed by those who have refused to remain silent in the age of genocide. In each case a few Americans stood out by standing up. They did not lose sight of right and wrong, even as they were repeatedly steered to a "context" that others said precluded action. They refused to accept either that they could not influence U.S. policy or that the United States could not influence the killers. These individuals were not alone in their struggles, but they were not in crowded company either. By seeing what they tried to get done, we see what America could have done. We also see what we might ourselves have attempted. By seeing how and why they failed, we see what we as a nation let happen.

*I borrow the categories of justification—futility, perversity, and jeopardy—from Albert O. Hirschman's *Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, Jeopardy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1991). Hirschman shows how those who oppose action tend to take issue not with the goals of the proposed measure but with its likely "unintended consequences."

In 1915 Henry Morgenthau Sr., the U.S. ambassador in Constantinople, responded to Turkey's deportation and slaughter of its Armenian minority by urging Washington to condemn Turkey and pressure its wartime ally Germany. Morgenthau also defied diplomatic convention by personally protesting the atrocities, denouncing the regime, and raising money for humanitarian relief. He was joined by former president Theodore Roosevelt, who went a step further, calling on the administration of Woodrow Wilson to enter World War I and forcibly stop the slaughter. But the United States clung to its neutrality and insisted that Turkey's internal affairs were not its business. An estimated 1 million Armenians were murdered or died of disease and starvation during the genocide.

Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jew and international lawyer, warned about Hitler's designs in the 1930s but was scoffed at. After finding refuge in the United States in 1941, he failed to win support for any measure to protect imperiled Jews. The Allies resisted denouncing Hitler's atrocities, granting refuge to Europe's Jewry, and bombing the railroad tracks to the Nazi concentration camps. Undaunted, Lemkin invented the word "genocide" and secured the passage of the first-ever United Nations human rights treaty, which was devoted to banning the new crime. Sadly, he lived to see the genocide convention rebuffed by the U.S. Senate. William Proxmire, the quixotic U.S. senator from Wisconsin, picked up where Lemkin left off and delivered 3,211 speeches on the Senate floor urging ratification of the UN treaty. After nineteen years of daily soliloquies, Proxmire did manage to get the Senate to accept the genocide convention, but the U.S. ratification was so laden with caveats that it carried next to no force.

A handful of U.S. diplomats and journalists in Cambodia warned of the depravity of a sinister band of Communist rebels known as the Khmer Rouge. They were derided by the American left for falling for anti-Communist propaganda, and they failed to influence a U.S. policy that could not contemplate engagement of any kind in Southeast Asia after Vietnam. Pol Pot's four-year reign left some 2 million Cambodians dead, but the massacres elicited barely a whimper from Washington, which maintained diplomatic recognition of the genocidal regime even after it had been overthrown.

Peter Galbraith, a staff member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, drafted punishing legislation for his boss, Senator Claiborne

Pell, that would have cut off U.S. agricultural and manufacturing credits to Saddam Hussein in retaliation for his 1987–1988 attempt to wipe out Iraq's rural Kurds. The sanctions package was defeated by a determined White House, State Department, and U.S. farm lobby, which were eager to maintain friendly ties and sell rice and wheat to Iraq. And so Hussein's regime received generous American financial support while it gassed and executed some 100,000 Kurds.

Romeo Dallaire, a Canadian major general who commanded UN peacekeeping forces in Rwanda in 1994, appealed for permission to disarm militias and to prevent the extermination of Rwanda's Tutsi three months before the genocide began. Denied this by his political masters at the United Nations, he watched corpses pile up around him as Washington led a successful effort to remove most of the peacekeepers under his command and then aggressively worked to block authorization of UN reinforcements. The United States refused to use its technology to jam radio broadcasts that were a crucial instrument in the coordination and perpetuation of the genocide. And even as, on average, 8,000 Rwandans were being butchered each day, the issue never became a priority for senior U.S. officials. Some 800,000 Rwandans were killed in 100 days.

A few diplomats at the State Department and several lawmakers on Capitol Hill relentlessly tried to convince an intransigent bureaucracy to bomb Serb ethnic cleansers in Bosnia. These men watched the sanitization of cables, the repackaging of the conflict as "intractable" and "ancient," and the maintenance of an arms embargo against Bosnia's outgunned Muslims. Several foreign service officers who quit the department in disgust then watched, from a no less frustrating perch outside the U.S. government, the fall of the Srebrenica safe area and the largest massacre in Europe in fifty years. Between 1992 and 1995, while the nightly news broadcast the Serb onslaught, some 200,000 Bosnians were killed. Only when U.S. military intervention came to feel unavoidable and Bob Dole, the Kansas Republican and Senate majority leader, had persuaded Congress to lift the arms embargo did U.S. policy change. By bringing the war in Bosnia home, Dole helped spur President Clinton to begin NATO bombing. By then, however, Bosnia's genocide had been largely completed, and a multiethnic state had been destroyed.

This book deliberately spotlights the response of *American* policymakers and citizens for several reasons. First, the United States' decisions to act or not to act have had a greater impact on the victims' fortunes than those of any other major power. Second, since World War II, the United States has

had a tremendous capacity to curb genocide. It could have used its vast resources to do so without undermining U.S. security. Third, the United States has made an unusually pronounced commitment to Holocaust commemoration and education. The Holocaust Memorial Museum, which stands baldly on the Mall alongside the Lincoln Monument and the Jefferson Memorial and just yards from the Vietnam Wall Memorial, draws 5,500 visitors a day, or 2 million per year, almost double the number of visitors tallied annually by the White House. Fourth, in recent years American leaders, steeped in a new culture of Holocaust awareness, have repeatedly committed themselves to preventing the recurrence of genocide. In 1979 President Jimmy Carter declared that out of the memory of the Holocaust, "we must forge an unshakable oath with all civilized people that never again will the world stand silent, never again will the world fail to act in time to prevent this terrible crime of genocide."[3] Five years later, President Ronald Reagan, too, declared. "Like you, I say in a forthright voice, 'Never again!'"[4] President George Bush Sr. joined the chorus in 1991. Speaking "as a World War II veteran, as an American, and now as President of the United States," Bush said his visit to Auschwitz had left him with "the determination, not just to remember, but also to act."[5] Before becoming president, candidate Clinton chided Bush over Bosnia. "If the horrors of the Holocaust taught us anything," Clinton said, "it is the high cost of remaining silent and paralyzed in the face of genocide."[6] Once in office, at the opening of the Holocaust Museum, Clinton faulted America's inaction during World War II. "Even as our fragmentary awareness of crimes grew into indisputable facts, far too little was done," he said. "We must not permit that to happen again."[7] But the forward-looking, consoling refrain of "never again," a testament to America's can-do spirit, never grappled with the fact that the country had done nothing, practically or politically, to prepare itself to respond to genocide. The commitment proved hollow in the face of actual slaughter.

Before I began exploring America's relationship with genocide, I used to refer to U.S. policy toward Bosnia as a "failure." I have changed my mind. It is daunting to acknowledge, but this country's consistent policy of nonintervention in the face of genocide offers sad testimony not to a broken American political system but to one that is ruthlessly effective. The system, as it stands now, *is working*.[8] No U.S. president has ever made genocide prevention a priority, and no U.S. president has ever suffered politically for his indifference to its occurrence. It is thus no coincidence that genocide rages on.

saw opportunity and alternative where others felt trapped by inevitability and "reality," a reality they did not probe and therefore ultimately would not alter. They knew that it was individuals who would have to make a difference, which was not the same as believing that they would. They were usually branded "emotional," "irrational," "soft," or "naive." Many of them saw their careers destroyed by the stands they took. Some crumbled. A few, like Dallaire, may never recover.

Because of the way the stories turned out, and indeed because of the way genocide *keeps* turning out, it is easy to view these individuals as overly credulous or politically obtuse. But how many of us who look back at the genocides of the twentieth century, including the Holocaust, do not believe that these people were right? How many of us do not believe that the presidents, senators, bureaucrats, journalists, and ordinary citizens who did nothing, choosing to look away rather than to face hard choices and wrenching moral dilemmas, were wrong? And how can something so clear in retrospect become so muddled at the time by rationalizations, institutional constraints, and a lack of imagination? How can it be that those who fight on behalf of these principles are the ones deemed unreasonable?

George Bernard Shaw once wrote, "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world. The unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man." After a century of doing so little to prevent, suppress, and punish genocide, Americans must join and thereby legitimate the ranks of the unreasonable.

Notes

Preface

1. "Statement by President Clinton Regarding Proposals to Deal with Situation in Bosnia," Federal News Service, February 9, 1994.
2. Warren Christopher on *Face the Nation*, CBS, March 28, 1993.
3. "President's Commission on the Holocaust: Remarks on Receiving the Final Report of the Commission," September 27, 1979, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1979* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1979), p. 1773.
4. "Remarks at the International Convention of B'nai B'rith," September 6, 1984, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1987* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1987), p. 1244.
5. "Remarks of President George Bush at the Simon Wiesenthal Dinner, Century Plaza Hotel, Los Angeles, California," Federal News Service, June 16, 1991.
6. Clifford Krauss, "U.S. Backs Away from Charge of Atrocities in Bosnia Camps," *New York Times*, August 5, 1992, p. A12.
7. "Remarks at the Dedication of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum," April 22, 1993, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: William J. Clinton, 1993* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1994), p. 479.
8. See Leslie Gelb and Richard Betts, *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1979).

Chapter 1, "Race Murder"

1. Edward Alexander, *A Crime of Vengeance: An Armenian Struggle for Justice* (New York: Free Press, 1991), p. 10; Jacques Derogy, *Resistance and Revenge: The Armenian Assassination of the Turkish Leaders Responsible for the 1915 Massacres and Deportations*, trans. A. M. Berrett (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1990), pp. xix–xxi.
2. Estimates of the number of Armenians who died in 1915–1916 vary widely. Some Turkish historians claim just 200,000 Armenians were killed, mainly in the legitimate suppression of rebellion. See, for example, Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 315–316. Armenian sources often place the figure at more than 1.5 million; see Ronald Grigar Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 114; Robert F. Melson, *Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 147. British historian Martin Gilbert estimates that some 600,000 Armenians were killed in massacres committed in Anatolia and an additional 400,000 died as a result of the brutalities and starvation inflicted upon them during the forced deportations from