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THE BOSNIAN WAR AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER Failure and success of international intervention

Filippo Andreatta

INSTITUTE FOR SECURITY STUDIES - WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION
INSTITUT D'ETUDES DE SECURITE - UNION DE L'EUROPE OCCIDENTALE

43 AVENUE DU PRESIDENT WILSON, 75775 PARIS CEDEX 16

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Failure and Success of International Intervention

Filippo Andreatta⁽¹⁾

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⁽¹⁾ Adjunct Professor of Advanced Theory of International Relations, University of Bologna. This article was written while I was visiting research fellow at the Institute for Security Studies of the Western European Union in Paris in the Summer of 1996. The views expressed are my own and in no way reflect the opinion of the WEU or of the Institute. I wish to express my gratitude to Guido Lenzi for invaluable comments and support and to Pierre Hassner, Alessandro Politi, Sophia Clément and Monika Wohlfeld for useful advice and encouragement.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The war in Bosnia has witnessed a broad swing in the moods of the "international community" and of European nations particularly. In the wake of the end of the Cold War and of the victory in the Gulf War, expectations run high at the outbreak that collective security would have been able to deal with regional disturbances. Three years later, the "international community" had accumulated many frustrations and the IFOR operation which put an end to the fighting was regarded as a highly specific one which was unlikely to be repeated in other contingencies. This paper argues that both the initial and the final attitudes toward the Bosnian War have been excessive and, somehow, related. The initial optimism rested on uncertain foundations and was very likely to fail. The delusion, in turn, produced a cynical mood in which the initial mistakes were reversed and substituted with a pessimistic assessment of the prospects for long term stability. A more balanced attitude would not have produced such extremes and would have maintained a consensus in the "international community" for a wise and moderate engagement in regional stability.

The initial enthusiasm brought about an unrealistic strategy which did not adequately balance ends and means. The Vance-Owen Peace Plan, despite the fact that it was bitterly criticized at the time for rewarding aggression, required a Bosnian Serb retreat from 27% of Bosnian territory to a total 43%, while the various cantons assigned to the three communities were displayed in a patchwork and would have therefore required post-war cooperation. With hindsight, these objectives were overly ambitious for an "international community" which did not have the willingness to upgrade its military presence and which was therefore limited to a peacekeeping mission. In these circumstances, UNPROFOR's presence was not geared to reverse aggression and to stabilise the area, but only to avert the worst humanitarian disasters. Three years later, the "international community" finally applied sufficient force to stop the violence and impose a settlement. However, the objectives had in the meantime been scaled down dramatically, as the Republika Sprska retained control of 49% of the territory and enjoyed territorial continuity, which is a fundamental prerequisite for partition.

The point is that the chosen objectives and the available resources must be compatible in order for the international intervention to be credible and effective. The gap between UNPROFOR's limited capabilities and the ambitious objectives of the "international community" was further exacerbated by the institutional framework which has been selected for the negotiations. The fact that the first negotiators, Cyrus Vance and (after Lord Carrington) Lord Owen, represented international organizations rather than sovereign states fuelled the divorce between diplomacy and the use of military force as the mediators had a mandate only regarding the first. Furthermore, the fact that prime diplomatic responsibility was endowed to the international organization without the control of military options stimulated a process of adverse substitution which was responsible for the underproduction of security in the Balkans. In the presence of the EU-UN initiatives, many national governments felt no direct incentive to take the lead in the diplomatic and military efforts. It is no coincidence that the governments which most criticized the international mediators also contributed least to the military operations for the first three years. Eventually, these problems were overcome with the creation of the Contact Group, which

attributed primary responsibility back to national governments and with the direct involvement of NATO countries with Operation Deliberate Force.

In the year of the Inter-Governmental Conference, it is necessary to analyse these processes in order to avoid the mistakes of the past. In particular, the danger is that European institutions will be given too much responsibility without the necessary means for implementation. In such a crucial area for democratic public opinions and national sovereignty as foreign policy, the scope for gradualism is more limited than in other issue areas because institutions must be weighed against developments which depend on other actors as well. If European foreign policy is to be more than the mere sum of the policies of individual states, it is therefore essential that some executive powers be given to the European policy makers. If on the contrary the time is not yet ripe for a true European identity and European institutions are to be merely restricted to a spokesperson's role, then it is better that expectations for the emergence of a new European role are kept under control. The danger is otherwise that the ensuing delusion would erode the consensus also for those common policy which could be effective.

INTRODUCTION

The war in Bosnia, and in particular the failure of the "international community" to put an end to it for three long years, has represented a tough anticlimax for the post-Cold War euphoria envisaging a smooth and peaceful transition towards a functioning collective security system. Expectations in this direction run high after the fall of the Berlin Wall and after the Gulf War as the "international community" was no longer divided by fundamental conflict and -it seemed- could now unite its forces in protection of international peace and stability. At the July 1991 London G-7 Summit, shortly after the triumph over Saddam Hussein, the final communique proclaimed:

"We believe the conditions now exist for the United Nations to fulfill completely the promise and vision of its founders. A revitalized UN will have a central role in strengthening the international order. We commit ourselves to making the UN stronger, more efficient and more effective in order to protect human rights, to maintain peace and security for all and to deter aggression. We will make preventive diplomacy a top priority to help avert future conflicts by making clear to potential aggressors the consequences of their actions. The UN's role in peacekeeping should be reinforced and we are prepared to do this strongly".⁽²⁾

The war in Yugoslavia shattered this voluntaristic dream, as repeated rounds of UN resolutions and an escalation in military measures did not manage to halt the war and its brutal consequences despite the fact that none of the combatants posed an insuperable military challenge. The delusion was rapidly internalized. Three years after the London communique, the United States -led by an administration which had pledged to make "assertive multilateralism" the cornerstone of its foreign actions- issued a review of its peacekeeping policy which bore no reference to the idealism of 1991. Washington publicly admitted that "there have been many problems with UN peacekeeping" and that "peacekeeping is not at the center of our foreign and defense policy. Our armed forces' primary mission is not to conduct peace operations but to win wars. [...] We will never compromise military readiness to support peacekeeping".⁽³⁾

The problem with collective security is that it presupposes that all states perceive any threat to stability as vital. Unfortunately, when international tension is high, as during the Cold War, states cannot afford to divert resources from their individual security while when tension is low, as after the collapse of the Soviet threat, states will perceive little incentive to do so. This does not mean that collective security is impossible or useless, but that it is not automatic and cannot ultimately be relied upon as a sole and exclusive security system. However, since by definition collective security requires states to intervene in disputes which they do not perceive as affecting their vital interests, it is likely that the role accorded to the multilateral mechanism is a minor one if the costs are high.

⁽²⁾ Quoted in Richard N. Gardner: *Collective Security and the New World Order: What Role for the United Nations?*, Working Paper, September 1991. For a characteristically more cynical view, cfr. Christopher Coker: *Britain and the New World Order: The Special Relationship in the 1990's*, International Affairs, V. 68, N. 3, July 1992, pp. 407-21.

⁽³⁾ Anthony Lake: *Yes to an American Role in Peacekeeping, but with Conditions*, International Herald Tribune, February 7th, 1994.

The Bosnian war in particular has proven a difficult ground for collective security as the lack of compelling interests has spurred an ambiguous strategy on the part of the "international community" and the West especially.⁽⁴⁾

On the one hand, optimistic assessment of international politics after the Cold War fueled very high standards for the objectives in the crisis, as the "international community" wanted both a just and a stable peace. On the other hand, the modest military and diplomatic efforts devoted to the effort ensured the failure of such ambitious targets as the scarcity of resources imposed in practice a choice between peace and justice. In international politics, resources for collective endeavours are scarce because -in the absence of a world government capable of centrally allocating them- they depend on the spontaneous willingness of states which is likely to undersupply them. This means that, even if means should be dependent on ends, as a corollary ends should bear some relations to the available means.

In Bosnia, the gap between ends and means was so wide that it undermined the possibility of a successful intervention.⁽⁵⁾

In other words, the "international community" failed to grasp Clausewitz's advice about the intrinsic interaction between ends and means: "As war is no act of blind passion, but is dominated by the political object, therefore the value of that object determines the measure of the sacrifices by which it is to be purchased. That, however, does not imply that the political object is a tyrant. It must adapt itself to its chosen means, a process that can radically change it".⁽⁶⁾

Only when, after three years, the gap was narrowed, did outside pressure bring positive results forcing the parties to sign the Dayton peace. This essay will look at the peculiar characteristics of the Bosnian war and the challenges they posed for outside intervention. Secondly, the causes and consequences of the ambiguous response from the "international community" will be analyzed. Lastly, the process of adjustment from an ambitious and unrealistic strategy to a more rational one gauging ends and means will be sketched in detail.

The main lesson from Bosnia is neither that the Balkans are an exception to the rest of the world nor that the end of the Cold War has brought about a post-modern age of inevitable and chaotic conflict, but rather that stability and peace are precious and fragile commodities which require a prudent and wise maintenance. International intervention may facilitate the resolution of conflicts and may at times even be necessary, but the family of nations should realize that the attainment of this end requires the allocation of sufficient capabilities and sacrifices in terms of other goals. An excessively ambitious strategy based on unrealistic expectations and the devolution of insufficient physical and moral resources can turn even the best of intentions into counterproductive factors for the solution of regional conflicts. In this

⁽⁴⁾ . On this point and on the war in general, see the excellent collection of essays edited by Ulman, Richard H. Ulman, ed.: *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars*, New York, Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1996.

⁽⁵⁾ Cfr. Christopher Hill: *The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe's International Role*, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, V. 31, 1993, pp. 305-328.

⁽⁶⁾ Carl Von Clausewitz: *On War*, [1832], London, Penguin, 1968, p. 125.

situation, collective security becomes abused and it is likely that the consensus for it will be eroded even when it will be useful or necessary.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOSNIAN WAR AND OF INTERNATIONAL FAILURE

If collective security can only be applied selectively, when conditions are ripe, Bosnia did not qualify from the beginning as an easy test. The Balkans represented in fact a bad enough crisis to deter intervention in terms of potential costs but not bad enough to justify a large intervention on the grounds that the national interest was affected. On the one hand, the tragic history, the ethnic mosaic and the fragmented terrain which composed the former Yugoslav republic represented a political and logistical nightmare as outside troops would neither have an easy front line to defend nor a clear target for their operations. The deep psychological belief evoked by the crisis in Western capitals and elsewhere was that it was a typical Balkan problem as intractable as all other Balkan problems. For example, EC mediator Lord Owen begins his account of the war with a cautionary note designed to depict its exceptional nature:

"Never before in over thirty years of public life have I had to operate in such a climate of dishonour, propaganda and dissembling. Many of the people with whom I have had to deal in the former Yugoslavia were literally strangers to the truth [...] Within a week of taking my position of Co-Chairman I had to come to realize that there were no innocents among the political and military leaders in all three parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina".⁽⁷⁾

The peculiar difficulties of the Bosnian theatre have been recurrently invoked by reluctant governments as an excuse for inaction. However, it is no use relegating Yugoslavia to the field of exceptions because it is precisely against these exceptions that the efficacy of new security systems must be weighed. All conflicts have a degree of peculiarity which distinguishes them from all others. As Clausewitz remarked: "no prescriptive formulation universal enough to deserve the name of law can be applied to the constant change and diversity of the phenomena of war".⁽⁸⁾

However, all conflicts ultimately imply the same fundamental question for outside governments: does the "international community" have the interest, the willingness and the capability to induce the end of the fighting?

On the other hand, the war did not affect international economic and political equilibria which would have justified a more traditional intervention. This is not only because, as some cynical critic put it, in Bosnia -unlike in Kuwait- there is no oil. Although the economic factor was important in the Gulf War, there was more at stake in 1990. In particular, the Iraqi invasion represented a major violation of international law in a crucial geopolitical area perpetrated by a potentially dangerous menace. By contrast, the Bosnian war was a predominantly civil conflict -less caustic to international law than the violation of an international border- in a peripheral region perpetrated by an entity which did not pose a threat, even if victorious, to international stability. The Kuwaiti crisis, in short, affected international order more directly than

⁽⁷⁾ David Owen: Balkan Odyssey, Victor Gollancz, London, 1995, pp. 1, 45.

⁽⁸⁾ Clausewitz: op. cit., p. 149.

the Yugoslav one. Even the "example effect" connected to the principle of the indivisibility of peace -that is the fact that if aggression was allowed to go unchecked in Bosnia, aggressors elsewhere would have been encouraged to pursue their aggressive designs- was in this case limited by the very peculiar nature of Balkan relations, which did not easily invite analogies with other areas.⁽⁹⁾

A further problem with a classic collective security operation was that the inter-ethnic characteristic of the country increased the difficulties in identifying a culprit against which to focus multilateral sanctions. All three ethnic groups had in fact lived in Bosnia for centuries and it was impossible in this situation to determine an "aggressor". It is true that the Bosnian Serbs, who held the upper hand for most of the conflict, bear most of the responsibility because they were the first to employ an hypernationalist rhetoric and because their methods often violated the most basic humanitarian principles on which international society rests.⁽¹⁰⁾

Yet, also the other parties were not immune to adopting, when they had the chance, unacceptable instruments of war. "The distinction among the factions is more power and opportunity than morality".⁽¹¹⁾

Furthermore, all three sides had reasonable arguments in favour of their stance. Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats did not wish to live in a rump-Yugoslavia dominated by Serbs after the secession of Slovenia and Croatia while Bosnian Serbs did not want to be detached from Serbia proper to live in a state in which they were a minority.

These conflicting claims led to the spiraling logic of the security dilemma which brought war about in the Spring of 1992. As Posen argues, the result was "a worst case analysis. Unless proven otherwise, one group is likely to assume that another group's sense of identity, and the cohesion that it produces, is a danger" and it will therefore respond in kind.⁽¹²⁾

They also constituted one of the major difficulties for the "international community". There is in fact always a motivational gap in a collective security action between the involved parties, which perceive vital interests at stake, and the "international community", which by definition is involved for multilateral and indirect reasons such as international peace. Multilateral sanctions should in theory be sufficient to divert a potential aggressor because they can impose certain costs which are more consistent than the uncertain benefits of conquest. However, states in war are often not rational in this sense once they have taken the decision of using force and they can puzzle the "international community" by their failure to yield to outside pressure. In the Bosnian case, given the perceived stakes of the conflict involving the very existence of the various factions as recognizable entities, the motivational gap was particularly acute.

⁽⁹⁾ Where there were analogies, as in the territories of the former Soviet Union, the "example effect" raised in fact considerable preoccupations.

⁽¹⁰⁾ V.P. Gagnon: *Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia*, International Security, V. 19, N. 3, 1994/5; David Gompert: *How to Defeat Serbia*, Foreign Affairs, July/August 1994.

⁽¹¹⁾ Charles G. Boyd: *Making Peace with the Guilty*, Foreign Affairs, V. 74, N. 5, September 1995, p. 31.

⁽¹²⁾ Barry R. Posen: *The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict*, Survival, V. 35, N. 1, Spring 1993, P. 31.

Within this discouraging structural background, the "international community" failed to devise an effective strategy.⁽¹³⁾

Once a conflict has openly broken out, there is often a trade-off in international politics between peace -which sometimes implies accepting the *fait accompli* on the ground- and justice -which sometimes requires to change the situation as it has developed instead. The "international community", and especially the West, dodged this crucial choice committing itself to justice even at the expense of peace without the capabilities of imposing either. As the status quo is usually the most relevant salience point, justice was in this case represented by the maintenance of a united Bosnia and of its pre-war inter-ethnic quality. This conception has been criticized on the grounds that the real status quo would have been the preservation of a united Yugoslavia which was the original goal of the Serbs. Contrary to many common views, there is in fact no internationally recognized right to secession. Nevertheless, the idea of a sovereign Bosnia was the legitimate opinion of the "international community" as expressed by the appropriate forum, the United Nations. Despite Sarajevo's obvious difficulties in controlling its own territory, once Bosnia had been recognized it was entitled to the same protection as any other member of the family of nations.⁽¹⁴⁾

The problem was rather that the international preference for justice was not accompanied by an equal willingness to enforce it. On the contrary, in international politics, where the lack of a world government forces states to implement their decisions by themselves, the chosen ends should bear some relation to the available means. The outcome was a paradox. A compromise solution was rejected for three years on the ground that it would have rewarded aggression and the various plans proposed by the international mediators were often attacked because they allowed the Serbs to retain some of their war gains. Nevertheless, after three years of war and suffering, the peace which was finally agreed upon in Dayton at the end of 1995 was by the same standards less just than any of the draft agreements proposed earlier. Like the donkey of Buridan, by not choosing decisively between peace and justice, the "international community" failed to achieve either and undermined both.

⁽¹³⁾ Nicole Gnesotto: Lessons of Yugoslavia, Chaillot Paper 14, p. 6.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Rosalyn Higgins: The New United Nations and the Former Yugoslavia, 18th Martin Wight memorial Lecture, University of Sussex, March 1st, 1993.

THE CAUSES OF FAILURE

This peculiar stance was the result of pressures originating in the characteristics of the post-Cold War world and operating at two different level of analysis. At the domestic level, the lack of a catalyzing and compelling international threat induced democratic governments to rely heavily on public opinion. No government wanted to be blamed at elections that it risked the lives of its soldiers in a contingency where no vital interests were involved without ensuring previous and undoubted public support. For example, "the Clinton administration subordinated its collective judgment as to the country's substantial stakes in 'Yugoslavia' and its belief as to the requisite actions for a resolution of a conflict to domestic considerations".⁽¹⁵⁾

However, the complexity and articulation of modern public opinion as well as its sporadic interest in foreign affairs produced contradictory pressures. As Walter Lippman bitterly remarked long ago, public opinion has a tendency to "arrive too late with too little, or with too much for too long, to be too pacifist in peacetime and too bellicose in wartime".⁽¹⁶⁾

Governments were asked not to yield to Serb aggression and occasionally to "do something" to stop the bloodshed, especially when shocking images of bombarded bread or water queues in Sarajevo were televised. However, governments were also asked not to risk blood and treasure in such an uncertain and remote stage. This was true of the financial costs, especially at a time of budget cutting and peace dividends, as well as of the moral costs involved in the risks of losing lives in a complicated battlefield distant from everyday's concerns. When in October 1993, 19 US rangers were killed in the streets of Mogadishu, the public's reaction in the United States made it abundantly clear that even the government of the only remaining superpower did not enjoy an unlimited freedom of manoeuvre, leading to the review of peacekeeping policy referred to above. According to EC mediator Lord David Owen:

"we were by now acutely aware of the reluctance of Defence Ministers in all NATO capitals except Ankara to take on new commitments, and I knew that there was no support for suggestions that our troops should have their mandate extended beyond that of escorting convoys, for example to a role in stopping ethnic cleansing".⁽¹⁷⁾

Democracies wished to concentrate on their domestic problems after the end of the Cold War and were therefore reluctant to throw themselves into a tunnel of uncertain length and to commit the necessary resources for enforcing peace. Paradoxically, this was also the reason why the "international community" rejected a compromise solution and set itself unrealistically high standards for the settlement of the crisis. The "international community" in fact resented the violation of their peace of mind which sneaked through CNN and other TV channels. It therefore wished to put a decisive end to it rather than to sponsor a fragile cease-fire which would have involved a continuing foreign distraction. When the sizeable IFOR was finally sent to

⁽¹⁵⁾ Michael Brenner: The United States Policy in Yugoslavia, Ridgeway Papers 6, p. 16.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Walter Lippmann: The Public Philosophy, Boston, 1955, p. 24.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Owen, op. cit., pp. 55-6.

the theatre in 1995, it had a rigid deadline attached, while even its follow-on -SFOR- has been set up as a temporary operation.

Furthermore, since the "international community" was involved primarily as a matter of principle rather than on the specific merits of the crisis, it could not easily allow itself to negotiate on those principles. Finally, behind the ambition of the objectives also lay a failure to comprehend the events in the Balkans. Public opinion in most Western countries could simply not reconcile itself with the idea that if war had broken out in Europe in the 1990's, partially dashing expectations of a perpetual peace, then it was unrealistic to expect the parties to lay down their arms without active outside pressure, as if that perpetual peace was still holding. If on the other hand the optimistic expectations had been right, even the modest pressure which was actually exercised would have been unnecessary. The resulting paradox was that the initial international intervention was a peacekeeping one even if there was no peace to keep while after the cease-fire, peace was kept by IFOR and SFOR, which had peace enforcement capabilities.

At the international level, the moderate intensity of the crisis inhibited common views among the major powers. During the Cold War, the extent of the Soviet danger was such that it involved equally all states of the Western alliance. By contrast, the Bosnian war did not challenge anyone's fundamental interests and could therefore be seen in a different light from different capitals. Moreover, the multipolar system which emerged after the Cold War is characterized by an increased diffusion of power. As in all multipolar systems, the multiplicity of actors renders alignments less static and more contingent on the particular circumstances of the issue at hand, as actors have to spread their resources and attention across a variety of counterparts and cannot afford to concentrate them on a single dimension.⁽¹⁸⁾

Alliances in a multipolar system are therefore not structurally determined as in a rigidly bipolar one, but are the result of "choice among several options [...and] tend to be unstable and vulnerable to policy disagreements".⁽¹⁹⁾

This does not mean that multipolar systems are inherently more unstable, but that their stability requires a diplomatic finesse to which the major powers, accustomed to the rigid and undynamic structure of bipolarity, had not yet adjusted.

This led to recurrent quarrels between Europe, the United States and Russia which squandered precious resources and rendered the international pressure even less effective. In general terms, the Europeans felt more involved than the others and for this reason sent the bulk of the peacekeeping force in the area and sponsored the earlier negotiations. At the beginning of the Yugoslav crisis, the European Union had only just begun the debate on a future Common Foreign and Security Policy, and was thus not ready to address the crisis properly, as it still did not have the institutional mechanisms for decision-making, nor the appropriate means. However, Europe had not acquired, despite the Maastricht treaty, neither the capabilities nor the willingness to perform a peace enforcement operation alone. The United States had no troops on the

⁽¹⁸⁾ Karl Deutsch and David J. Singer: *Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability*, World Politics, V. 16, N. 3, 1964, p. 396.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Glenn H. Snyder: *The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics*, World Politics, V. 36, 1984, pp. 461-95.

ground and were therefore freer to impose higher and more idealistic standards for a settlement while proposing a strategy of "lift and strike" (allowing the Sarajevo Muslim-dominated government to arm itself while supporting it exclusively with air power), which was resented by the European because it endangered both their attempts to find a diplomatic solution and their troops in the theatre. Finally, when Europe and America did find an agreement and confronted the parties with a credible unified line envisaging active retaliation for the continuation of the hostilities, Russia tried to block them in order to appease the domestic critics suggesting that the Kremlin was in the West's pocket and to acquire influence in the region through its historic Slavic and orthodox connection to Serbs.

Nevertheless, more significant than the high profile quarrels between the powers was their low profile with respect to commitment. Following the spirit and letter of collective action, all powers fell to the temptation of free riding. Each wanted to share the benefits of international stability and the glory of providing peace to the Balkans but none wanted to pay the costs that this entailed and hoped that others would produce the public good. This meant that while diplomatic divisions created proposed settlements which were increasingly ambitious and complicated as they had to satisfy different views, the physical means to enforce these settlements were becoming increasingly inadequate.

International institutions were the main victims of these attitudes as they were used as a scapegoat for the inevitable failure caused by the tension between ambitious tasks and modest resources. Since blaming international organization does not involve a direct confrontation with another state, it is perhaps not so ironic that the most criticized negotiator on the grounds of rewarding Serb aggression has been EU mediator Lord Owen, who drafted the harshest peace proposal on Bosnian Serbs of the ones produced in three years of war. However, international institutions can only amplify and deepen interstate cooperation once this is already in place, but they cannot bring it about if states are unwilling or unable to collaborate. Even their role as an arena for discussion facilitating the emergence of common positions is most effective before, rather than after, the beginning of an operation in a war zone. Those organizations which were to be the main beneficiaries of the end of the Cold War fell instead into the vacuum created by the gap between the objectives and capabilities of states.

The European Union set its policy as if it was already a unified state capable of rationalizing and mobilizing the entire resources of its members, but was then forced to face the reluctance of individual governments to increase their involvement. The contradiction was particularly clear in the hiatus between the EU diplomatic stance, which had some degree of coordination only sporadically interrupted by national policy, and its military policy, which remained solidly in the hands of national capitals. The EU was successful in the Bosnian war because it managed to avoid a direct confrontation between any of its members, despite different stances. For example, according to Delors: "I took part in all the Council of Ministers meetings during the Yugoslav crisis and can attest to the deep divisions, based upon history with the Balkans".⁽²⁰⁾

⁽²⁰⁾ International Herald Tribune, December 5th, 1995.

However, the EU's common foreign policy failed in Bosnia in the sense that European countries still perceived themselves to be distinct actors in the international stage. "The states most closely concerned have considered it more effective to take action outside the framework of the CFSP", through ad hoc arrangements such as the Contact Group and the RRF or acting unilaterally as in the case of the German drive for the recognition of Croatia at the end of 1991.⁽²¹⁾

It is for this reason that Yugoslavia cannot be treated as a test for CFSP. The frustration for the lack of an effective common policy in Bosnia may indeed be perceived as an incentive for further integration in the future.⁽²²⁾

The United Nations and NATO were also entrusted with missions which they were not capable of performing in the absence of a clear commitment from member states. Without a clear political direction and a rational strategy gauging ends and means appropriately, each organization reverted to its basic organizational philosophy - peacekeeping for the UN, war fighting for NATO- provoking a conflict between each other. Such conflict resembled, but not equated, the transatlantic rift referred to above, with the United Nations, which had troops on the ground, cautiously concerned about the safety of its personnel while NATO, which was involved only sporadically, maintained a tougher attitude aimed at peace enforcement.

Institutional involvement in this less than ideal situation even entailed counterproductive consequences, which were mitigated only by the professionalism and wisdom of EU, NATO and UN officials both at the organizations' headquarters and on the ground. Firstly, this spurred a process of *adverse substitution* by which states were even less inclined to assign resources to the crisis since international institutions were already dealing with it. Secondly, the fact that international institutions were involved may have rendered the Bosnian government less ready to negotiate in the hope of outside rescue, thereby lengthening the war. The Bosnian Muslims may indeed have fallen victim to *moral hazard* and to the unrealistic expectation of foreign support which could have diminished the chance for an early settlement. This process may even have been reinforced by the multilateral arms embargo which had been imposed on all parties but penalized Sarajevo most since both Croats and Serbs could count on other sources for armaments. Finally, since international institutions rely on abstract principles and deliberate only by a process of difficult consensus building among their members, the common positions may at times have been too rigid for increasingly complex and rapidly evolving negotiations.

⁽²¹⁾ Jacques Santer: *The EU's Security and Defence Policy. How to Avoid Missing the 1996 rendez-vous*, NATO Review, November 1995, p. 6. Cfr. also Andreas G. Kinitis: The EU's Foreign Policy and the War in Former Yugoslavia, unpublished manuscript, 1996.

⁽²²⁾ Robert J. Art: *Why Western Europe Needs the United States and Nato*, Political Science Quarterly, V. 111, N. 1, pp. 1-39.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF AMBIGUITY

The result was an ambiguous strategy which entailed many risks and drawbacks. The "international community"'s high standards and its failure to fulfill them undermined confidence in the new world order and failed to reach a settlement in Bosnia. The gap between ends and means also undermined its credibility in the area. Most often the West employed a deterrence tactic to induce the Serbs to compromise. However, deterrence -that is the threat of force to inhibit an adversary's unwanted behaviour-works especially before a war has erupted. After a war has started, the logic is different because resistance to military pressure is much higher in those who are already suffering it. In this case, compelling would have been more appropriate, that is the actual use of force to hinder the adversary's capability to perform unwanted behaviour. However, compelling is a much costlier strategy and could not be applied with the tight constraints imposed by member states. It is for this reason that the "international community" squandered most of its credibility by issuing ultimatums which were respected only in letter but not in substance. It is also for this reason that, once a credible and forceful intervention had been agreed upon in 1995, the all-powerful West actually had to carry it out in practice rather than just threatening it, because its credibility had already been eroded.

A similar conceptual misunderstanding even jeopardized the safety of UN personnel in the area as well as the success of their mission.⁽²³⁾

Given the complexity of multilateral decision making and the reluctance of governments to send a conspicuous number of troops, UNPROFOR mandates were compiled in the wishful thinking that peace keeping and peace enforcement lie on the same continuum and that it is possible to move incrementally from one to the other. UNPROFOR was therefore increasingly asked to perform peace enforcement tasks alongside its original peacekeeping mission without abandoning it. On the contrary, the two philosophies are mutually incompatible and separated by a discrete interval. While peacekeeping is based on impartiality and passive use of force, peace enforcement relies on identifying a culprit and using force actively. Once either of these lines is crossed, it is impossible to revert to the impartiality and passivity needed for peacekeeping. Peacekeeping required a scattered and non-threatening deployment which rendered the blue berets vulnerable and hostage in case they were perceived as combatants. It is for this reason, and also because of the insufficient reinforcement, that UNPROFOR troops were helpless even though their mandate was continuously extended to include more ambitious tasks, from escorting humanitarian convoys to protecting safe areas to rolling back Serb aggression.

All UN commanders in Sarajevo -Mackenzie, Morillon, Briquemont, Rose and Smith- have been accused of being pro-Serb and of rewarding aggression. However, it was not their personal opinions, but the structural conditions in which UNPROFOR was operating which determined their behaviour. With insufficient resources to carry out all its missions, UNPROFOR was asked to perform a number of humanitarian

⁽²³⁾ Richard K. Betts: *Delusions of Impartiality*, *Foreign Affairs*, November 1994; Adam Roberts: *The Crisis in UN Peacekeeping*, *Survival*, V. 36, N. 2, 1994; Thomas G. Weiss: *The United Nations and Civil Wars*, *The Washington Quarterly*, V. 17, N. 4, 1994.

functions, including the delivery of supplies to enclaves and other besieged areas. It clearly follows that, since the UN troops did not have the capability to impose its presence throughout Bosnia, it required the consent of all the parties in order to cross the various no man's lands. The impartiality of the force was therefore a fundamental prerequisite which could not be restored after being occasionally and casually broken without undermining the whole operation.⁽²⁴⁾

In the circumstances, the only alternative would have been to switch to a combatant role and to pursue limited enforcement objectives with the limited forces available. However, such a decision would have meant the suspension of all humanitarian tasks in the areas which UNPROFOR was simply unable to control. It was in fact estimated that the enforcement of even a single humanitarian corridor from the Adriatic to Sarajevo, forgetting all other areas, would have entailed five times the number of troops under UNPROFOR's command. Although the frustration of helplessly watching gross violations of human rights is understandable, only the reinforcement of UNPROFOR beyond the willingness of troop-contributing countries could have altered substantially the situation.

UNPROFOR was therefore paradoxically employed not to stop the illegal use of force, but to render it more acceptable by alleviating humanitarian suffering. Although humanitarian concerns are certainly worthwhile, Western actions fell victim to a perverse kind of circularity. Since something had to be done, UNPROFOR was sent. However, since UNPROFOR was hostage to the will of the parties, not enough could be done. It is for this reason that, hiding behind UNPROFOR's humanitarian role, the "international community" abdicated to the parties its strategic role. The Bosnian Serbs -and to some extent the Bosnian Croats- wanted to retain their initial gains long enough to consolidate them and to present the "international community" with a *fait accompli*. It is for this reason that they did not launch a decisive attack on the Muslim enclaves until 1995 and reverted to a mediaeval siege tactic instead. The Bosnian Muslims on the other hand wanted an outside intervention to correct the military imbalance. The "international community" -in a way- helped both to attain their aims instead of pursuing its own objective. By delaying a decisive intervention for three years, it allowed the Serbs to build up their gains. By intervening in 1995, it changed the military balance and -as the government in Sarajevo wanted- it made the outcome contingent upon an outside presence.

⁽²⁴⁾ Adam Roberts: *From San Francisco to Sarajevo: The UN and the Use of Force*, Survival, V. 37, N. 4, pp. 21-2.

THE CAUSES OF PEACE

Only when the "international community" learned from these various mistakes and gradually approached a rational strategy balancing ends and available means did the intervention become effective and peace within reach. Firstly, governments increasingly took responsibilities on their own shoulder rather than buck passing them to international organizations. In 1994, the Contact Group was established between the five major powers involved -the United States, Russia, Germany, France and the United Kingdom- reducing the cumbersome decision making process within the EU, then within NATO, then within the UN. As an effect, the United States -and Russia to a lesser extent- became entangled in peace making and could no longer sit back and criticize the European proposals weakening them in the process as had been the case with the Vance-Owen plan and the EU Action Plan. Eventually, this process culminated in American direct commitment with operation Deliberate Force first and with IFOR-SFOR after the peace was signed. At the same time, Russia's concerns were to some extent internalized in the decision-making process and allowed for defusion of East-West tension. As a byproduct of a more responsible and united stance, sufficient pressure was exercised on Muslims and Croats by their most important sponsors -America and Germany respectively- to abandon conflict between each other and to form the Muslim-Croat confederation which simplified the war and made its resolution more viable. Similarly, international relations with Belgrade improved as its main sponsor -Russia- moved increasingly closer to the West.

Secondly, the goals became more realistic. The commitment to a united and multiethnic Bosnia was maintained, but sufficient guarantees were increasingly given to the independence of the various communities. From the Vance-Owen Peace Plan - which envisaged 10 cantons not allowing territorial continuity for the three parties- the "international community" passed to the Invincible Plan and the EU Action Plan - which allowed for territorial continuity and required the Bosnian Serbs to withdraw from less territory than in the Vance-Owen plan- and finally to the Dayton agreement - which recognized the Serb entity as a distinct unit and endorsed the ethnic cleansing which had taken place in Eastern Bosnia as late as in the Summer of 1995. As pointed out earlier, the irony was that while the "international community" refused to implement the Vance-Owen plan on the grounds that it was too unjust as it allowed the Bosnian Serbs to retain some of their war gains, it was forced in the end to implement -after two more years of sufferings- an even less just peace as the portion allocated to Serbs had increased from 43% in 1993 to 49% in 1995.

Thirdly, more pressure was put on the Bosnian Serbs. On the one hand, Pale was increasingly isolated both from Belgrade, which was becoming increasingly reluctant to face an uncertain war which was wrecking its economy because of international sanctions, and from the Croatian Serb republic in Knin, which was attacked and destroyed by Croatian troops in 1995 without tangible international condemnation. On the other hand, multinational troops became increasingly more assertive against the recalcitrant Serbs. Initially, force was threatened to obtain specific tactical objectives, such as the lifting of the siege on a particular town. Then, tactical retaliation ensued not only on the Serb forces involved in the particular issue at hand but also on other units as well. Finally, a strategic air campaign was launched in 1995 which effectively crippled the Bosnian Serbs' capacity to continue the war.

These three processes -increased coordination, less ambitious objectives and more assertive means- managed to close the gap between capabilities and expectations and therefore represent the causes of peace in Bosnia. Despite the war-weariness of three years of war, the parties could not in fact find a spontaneous agreement and only the application of superior force -both on the ground where the Croat army was crucial for a successful offensive in Central and Northern Bosnia and on the air where NATO planes destroyed the Bosnian Serbs' command, control and communications network- was capable of achieving peace. However, these processes did not emerge unequivocally nor suddenly and it is therefore possible to divide the history of intervention in Bosnia in three stages: from the beginning of the war in 1992 to the Vance-Owen Peace Plan and its failure in the Spring of 1993; the period of the three compromise proposals: the Invincible package, the EU Action Plan and the Contact Group proposal; and the phase leading to the end of the war and to the Dayton peace accords in 1995.

PHASE I: FROM THE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES TO THE VOPP

The Bosnian war was an accident waiting to happen ever since Yugoslavia had started to break up in December 1990, when Slovenia had decided to seek its independence. As commentators warned, the complex multiethnic composition of the republic -44% Muslim, 33% Serb and 17% Croat- was bound to create problems if Yugoslavia was going to be reorganized along ethnic entities. When the fighting broke out in Slovenia in June 1991 and in Croatia in August 1991, the "international community" became immediately involved and was therefore already present on the scene when the Bosnian war erupted in April 1992. Furthermore, a rapid process of institutional selection had already place by which NATO was excluded from the start because of American reluctance to be drawn into what it defined as a "European" problem and the CSCE, which was the first organization involved, soon abdicated its role because its consensual rules gave to Serb-controlled Yugoslavia a veto power which was used to bloc multilateral procedures. The Slovenian cease-fire agreement at Brioni was therefore brokered by the European Community while the Croatian truce signed in January 1992 needed UN sponsorship as it involved the deployment of peacekeepers in the disputed so-called pink-zones or UN Protected Areas temporarily occupied by the Croatian Serbs. The joint EC-UN management of the crisis -which was then used as a reference model for at least the first two years of the war- was therefore already established before the fighting begun.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is thus legitimate to ask why the "international community" did not resort to preventive deployments in Bosnia in order to deter an outbreak of ethnic fighting. The reason is simply the unavailability of resources since the UN was already in dire straits in finding the troops necessary to protect the pink-zones.⁽²⁵⁾

A more serious charge concerns the reason why the EC decided to extend recognition to Bosnia after it had decided -under German pressure- to grant it to Slovenia and Croatia.⁽²⁶⁾

At the Maastricht summit, the EC had in fact invited applications for recognition of former republics in December 1991, and the Bosnian government had applied calling a referendum on independence in the Spring. Given the fact that the Muslims and Croats did not wish to live in a rump-Yugoslavia dominated by Serbs and that the Serbs did not want to stay in a Bosnian republic in which they were a minority, the referendum could be seen as a detonator. Nevertheless, the process of deconstruction of Yugoslavia was already under way and the recognition issue must therefore be seen

⁽²⁵⁾ Owen, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁽²⁶⁾ "The EC mediation for Slovenia therefore opened the door to actual ethnic conflict. It set up the end of the state by declaring the actions of the army aggressive and requiring its return to barracks without discussing implications for Croatia or the rest of the country". Susan Woodward: *Redrawing Borders in a Period of Systemic Transition*, in Milton J Esman and Shibley Telhami, eds.: *International Organizations and Ethnic Conflict*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1995, p. 210. Cfr. also Susan L. Woodward: *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, Washington, Brookings, 1995 and Warren Zimmermann: *The Last Ambassador*, *Foreign Affairs*, V. 74, N. 2, March 1995, p. 16

as a way of supporting one or the other of the factions rather than as a cause of conflict itself. Withholding recognition would not have averted conflict, but it would merely have helped the Serbs who were dominating the collapsing Belgrade Federal government and army. Both if one believes that the Yugoslav conflict is the result of the defrosting of ancient ethnic hatreds or if one attributes responsibilities to the former communist elites in Belgrade for attempting to regain legitimacy through Serb hypernationalism, by the time the first shots were fired in the Summer of 1991, it was already too late to stop the degenerative process.⁽²⁷⁾

In this light, the real initial mistake of the "international community" is not to have acknowledged the principle of secession, as some have argued, because this was done only after full scale violence had already erupted. Rather, the mistake is to have taken as an invariable reference point the old republican demarcation lines, despite the fact that these were merely administrative borders not designed to lead to viable independent entities. The resulting contradiction was that the "international community" allowed for the recognition of republics based on the principle of nationality while ignoring the claims of the national minorities within those republics, as for example Serbs in the Krajina and Eastern Bosnia, or as Albanian Muslims in Kosovo. In Lord Owen's words: "It is true that there could have been a total accommodation of Serb demands, but to rule out any discussion or opportunity for compromise in order to head off war was an extraordinary decision. My view has always been that to have stuck unyieldingly to the internal boundaries of the six republics [...] was a folly greater than that of recognition itself".⁽²⁸⁾

In other words, this meant setting very high standards indeed for international intervention since recognition granted to various entities the right to be protected, while the principle of immutable internal frontiers rendered that protection extremely difficult because it carved out republics of dubious viability given the presence of sizeable minorities hostile to independence. An early attempt to moderate this dangerous process, carried out by EC mediator Lord Carrington, involving a proposed constitution for Bosnia constructed around three ethnic cantons, was rejected by the Sarajevo government.

The referendum on Bosnian independence was therefore carried out at the end of February, the Muslim-Croat majority voting in favour and the Serb minority boycotting the polls. After the vote, the EC recognized Bosnia as an independent state on April 7th. The Bosnian Serbs, who had founded the self-styled Republika Sprska in January, responded with full-scale violence. They were favoured by the initial military balance also because the Belgrade-led Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) - which had agreed with UN envoy Cyrus Vance to retreat from Croatia and Bosnia - left 50000 men, most of its heavy equipment and its command structure behind to fight alongside the Bosnian Serbs. The offensive was remarkably successful and soon 70% of Bosnian territory was in Serbian hands, while the siege of Sarajevo begun. In the Summer, the war assumed a particularly brutal character as the Bosnian Serbs, in order to promote the security of the areas they had occupied and to acquire a stronger hand at the negotiating table, begun a deliberate policy of terrorizing the Muslims and Croats under their control with concentration camps, mass rapes and summary

⁽²⁷⁾ An example of the first argument is Owen, *op. cit.*, while an example of the second is V.P. Gagnon: *Historical Roots of the Yugoslav Conflict*, in Esman and Talhami, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

⁽²⁸⁾ Owen, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

executions. The idea was to produce a *fait accompli* and to obtain an ethnically pure region which could then secede from Bosnia and join a greater Serbia.

The "international community" responded to the escalation in a variety of ways. In May, sanctions were imposed on rump Yugoslavia (Former Republic of Yugoslavia or FRY) because of the JNA's role in the Bosnian Serb offensive. In July, 1100 troops of the United Nations Protection Force in Former Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) were dispatched to protect Sarajevo airport and ensure that air supplies broke the Serbian siege. Soon, because of the impending risk of famine, these troops were also asked to support humanitarian operations coordinated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). At the end of August, the London Conference on the Former Yugoslavia established a series of principles to act as the basis for a settlement which was not to reward aggression and ethnic cleansing safeguarding Bosnia's pre-war multiethnic character. In October, the UN Security Council barred military flights over Bosnia.

Although these measures would probably have had an impact as preventive steps -and in fact they proved effective in influencing Belgrade, which was not an active combatant- they proved to be wholly inadequate in the violent situation which was unfolding, especially given the patent lack of military capabilities. In particular, the sanctions and the no-fly zone (NFZ) were systematically broken given the lack of enforcement capabilities. This sent the wrong signal to the combatants, namely that the "international community" was not ready to risk blood and treasure to impose a settlement. Furthermore, the enlargement of UNPROFOR's mandate from the defense of Sarajevo airport to the support of UNHCR activities fundamentally affected its philosophy as humanitarian convoys had to pass through the lines of all combatants and therefore required their consent, undermining their ability to deter. Furthermore, UNPROFOR involvement with UNHCR meant that at times the blue berets had to "endorse" ethnic cleansing by facilitating the flow of refugees. However, the alternative would have been a humanitarian disaster.

Apart from assigning multilateral troops to hopelessly difficult tasks given their scarce resources, the "international community" also devolved responsibilities from governments to set up an aseptic multilateral forum, the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) under the joint chairmanship of Cyrus Vance for the UN and David Owen for the EC. Unlike governments, the ICFY could not couple its diplomatic mission with military clout to implement eventual agreements. In this light, the ICFY was an interesting experiment in institutional engineering, but it allowed states to dodge fundamental decisions in the crucial initial phase of the war.

The co-chairmen diligently presented the Vance-Owen Peace Plan (VOPP) in January 1993, which respected the principle of the London Conference by preserving Bosnia as a truly unified state. The plan established a single entity with international legal personality divided into ten cantons endowed with large autonomy. The cantons were designed to enclose a majority of one of the three ethnic communities, each of which was to control three cantons, with a special status for Sarajevo. The plan was a compromise, but it was also the last attempt to preserve the inter-ethnic quality of pre-war Bosnia as the various cantons were displayed in a patchwork. Above all, the three Serbian cantons were not contiguous and would have therefore required cooperation with the Muslims in a post-war period. On the other hand, the Bosnian Serbs were

allowed to retain some of their war gains but would have had to withdraw from 27% of Bosnian territory, reducing their share to 43%.

Despite the acceptance of the plan by the Bosnian Croats and by Serbia's president Slobodan Milosevic -who, after winning the elections against the pro-Western prime minister Milan Panic, had moved to a more moderate stance in the hope of reducing Serbia's diplomatic and economic isolation- the plan fell victim to the lack of unity on the part of the "international community". In particular, even though the plan required the Bosnian Serbs to withdraw from much of their war gains although they had not been defeated on the ground, the VOPP was inhibited by American criticisms that it rewarded aggression. Since the VOPP required large number of troops for its complex implementation, US skepticism was a very serious blow. Furthermore, Washington proposed for the first time its highly controversial policy of "lift and strike" and encouraged the Sarajevo government to delay acceptance in order to obtain a more favourable map. The "lift and strike" proposal angered the European Union, which wanted to preserve the safety of its personnel on the ground which would have become vulnerable to Serb retaliation and because it undermined the VOPP. Also Russia was extremely alarmed by the idea of lifting the embargo and its pro-Serbian stance dramatically emerged when *The Times* uncovered a flow of arms from Russia to the Bosnian Serbs in March.

A full-blown crisis was barely avoided when America seemed to repudiate its muscular proposal for a very modest Joint Action Programme (JAP) which reiterated the intention of finding a negotiated solution acceptable to all parties, including the Bosnian Serbs. The Europeans reluctantly agreed to the JAP in fear of provoking an open transatlantic rift. A superficial unity was regained when both America and Russia decided to send their envoys -Reginald Bartholemew and Vitalj Churkin- to the ICFY. Nevertheless, the VOPP was effectively dead, closing the first phase of international involvement in the Bosnian war. This phase was characterized by EC leadership in the attempts to manage the crisis with UN assistance, with the US and Russia not always constructively in the background. This phase was also characterized by the widest gap between ends and means. The VOPP was the most ambitious plan amongst the ones proposed in preserving the multi-ethnic character of the republic at the root of the conflict while the physical capabilities employed were hopelessly insufficient to force the parties to accept the sacrifices that the plan required.

PHASE II: INCREMENTAL ADAPTATION

The second phase was one of incremental adaptation and of increasing attempts to narrow the gap between ends and means. However, these attempts proved insufficient to radically alter the character of the war. On the one hand, enforcement became more stringent. In April, NATO was involved for the first time in the crisis in order to undertake operation Deny Flight to enforce the NFZ. The WEU was instead entrusted with enforcing the embargo against the FRY in the Adriatic and on the Danube. Meanwhile, the objectives became more realistic as the principle that some satisfaction should be given to all the three factions in their quest for autonomy was acknowledged. In September 1993, a package was presented to the parties on *H.M.S. Invincible* envisaging a union of three distinct republics endowed with contiguous territory. The Bosnian Serb share was 53% while the Muslims were to receive 30% of territory and access to the Sava river and to the Adriatic Sea. The plan was rejected by Sarajevo because it did not concede enough to the Muslim entity and because the "union" was equivalent to a disguised break up of the country. A further proposal was therefore introduced as the EU Action Plan at the end of the year which increased the Muslim share to 33%. A positive development of the plan was that it was negotiated, for the first time, directly by European foreign ministers who had the full backing of their countries behind them rather than by the ICFY. Despite considerable difficulties, the plan came very close to success as on the night of December 22nd, the parties failed to reach agreement over Bosnian Serb refusal to concede a mere 1% of territory.

On the other hand, UNPROFOR's mandate became again overstretched with the establishment, in June 1993, of six safe areas for Muslim civilians -Sarajevo, Bihac, Tuzla, Srebrenica, Gorazde and Zepa- which had to be defended by the blue helmets with insufficient reinforcements. For example, at one time Gorazde was "defended" by merely four peacekeepers. In August, NATO and the UN clashed when Mount Igman overlooking Sarajevo was occupied by Serb forces which threatened the survival of the capital. Much televised incidents as a shell on a crowd watching a football match and the bombing of a water queue in August had raised general expectations of an air strikes against the Serbs. However, the UN maintained that NATO could not launch punitive air strikes but that its June decision to allow air operations in Bosnia was limited to close support of UNPROFOR troops. In September, an unsatisfactory agreement between the two organizations was concluded establishing a cumbersome dual-key arrangement inhibiting prompt and effective responses. The situation degenerated when the referendum coalition broke down and open conflict erupted between Bosnian Croats, who had proclaimed their own independent entity of Herceg-Bosna the previous October, and the Bosnian government. Some of the most bitter fighting occurred in Southern and Central Bosnia between the armies of these two communities (the Bosnian Croat HVO and the Bosnian Government's BiH), symbolized by the destruction of the historic bridge in Mostar.

At 12,37 PM on February 5th, 1994, a mortar shell hit the market in central Sarajevo killing 69 Muslims and profoundly shaking the confidence of the "international community" as TV reporting of the event symbolized its impotence in front of the two-years-old war. Although the responsibility for the bomb is still unclear, the event

can retrospectively be considered as an important turning point because it mobilized international reaction.⁽²⁹⁾

Both of the diplomatic processes which had been in the making in the preceding few months -toward greater involvement of national governments and toward greater unity in their stance- were catalyzed in April with the creation of the five-nations *ad hoc* Contact Group. The two main external powers -the US and Russia- were finally and irrevocably locked into the negotiating process. On the military side, international action through NATO became more assertive. In the immediate aftermath of the bombing, an ultimatum was issued by Boutros-Boutros Ghali demanding that all heavy-weapons be eliminated or withdrawn from an exclusion zone of 20 kilometres around Sarajevo within 10 days. Western retaliation was only narrowly avoided by a Russian *coup*, when Churkin managed to convince the Bosnian Serbs to yield in exchange for the dispatch of Russian peacekeepers to Pale. On February 28th, NATO could still demonstrate its novel resolve when its planes downed four Bosnian Serb aircraft violating the NFZ. In April, an exclusion zone was imposed around Gorazde, which was also under Serb threat. In August, NATO air attacks were launched for the first time in retaliation for a Bosnian Serb violation of the exclusion zone, which was readily reestablished.

The more unified international position paid its dividends also in terms of diplomatic alignments in the region. Firstly, thanks to the American-German rapprochement and to intense pressure from Washington, the Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Croats signed first a cease-fire on February 23rd and then an agreement for a Federation in Washington on March 13th which ended the bitter conflict erupted a year earlier. Both parties could thus concentrate their forces on their common enemy. Secondly, the precarious relationship between Pale and Belgrade further deteriorated. Milosevic had pressed Karadzic to accept the Vance Owen Peace Plan, the Invincible Package and the European Union Action Plan, which had all failed inhibiting the withdrawal of Western sanctions on the FRY, costing approximately US\$ 25 billion overall and reducing Belgrade's GNP by 27% in 1992 and by 30% in 1993. After the isolation following the February Market Massacre, Belgrade further distanced itself from the Bosnian Serbs. In the Summer, diplomatic relations were broken and an embargo was imposed on all supplies except humanitarian ones flowing from Serbia into the Republika Sprska. In an unprecedented step, the FRY even allowed 100 international monitors on its borders to make sure that the sanctions were effective.

The Contact Group proceeded to draft its own plan, which was presented to the parties on July 5th. The map divided Bosnia between the Croat-Muslim Federation, which was to hold 51%, and the Bosnian Serbs, who would retain the remaining 49%. However, the plan still rested on the assumption that the parties could find an agreement between themselves even without actual enforcement from the outside. The Bosnian Serbs therefore did not face any direct retaliation when they rejected the plan on July 20th and then referred it to a referendum in August which overwhelmingly voted against it. Pale's counterproposals involved a larger corridor connecting Eastern and Central Bosnia, the division of Sarajevo in two parts and an

⁽²⁹⁾ Mario Zucconi: *The Former Yugoslavia: Lessons of War and Diplomacy*, SIPRI Yearbook 1995: Armaments Disarmament and International Security, p. 215.

exchange of territories in which the enclaves of Gorazde, Srebrenica and Zepa would be absorbed by the Republika Sprska.

The rejection of the Contact Group plan, like others before it, was followed by a deterioration of the situation. In September, the BiH 5th Army in Bihac begun a large scale offensive after having defeated Fikret Abdic's renegade forces, which had defected to the Bosnian Serbs. Although the Bosnian Serbs managed to turn back the attack and launched an effective counterattack which was stopped only thanks to two large NATO air strikes in November, it was increasingly clear that their military position was becoming more precarious. For the first time, Serb forces were forced to take UN hostages to protect themselves from NATO attacks. In November President Clinton announced, under intense domestic pressure, that the US would unilaterally allow arms to flow to Sarajevo soon in the future. In response to the American proposal, the Europeans threatened the withdrawal of UNPROFOR. Russia was even more caustic as President Yeltsin warned the West in December that there was the possibility, if it went too far, of a "Cold Peace" between East and West. Meanwhile, NATO and the United Nations clashed again as the double-key arrangement was becoming clearly inadequate.⁽³⁰⁾

For three times, twice in March near Bihac and once in May around Sarajevo, local UNPROFOR commanders requested NATO air support which was then blocked - while planes were already flying to their targets- by UN civilian authorities concerned about possible Serb retaliation.⁽³¹⁾

Against this confused background, the best result which could be obtained was a four-months truce signed at the end of the December under the good offices of former US President Jimmy Carter. This second low point, after the one which followed the collapse of the VOPP, represents the end of the second phase and the failure of the incremental attempts to close the gap between ends and means. Once Western credibility had been eroded in the first phase, incrementalism was no longer sufficient. By now however, some crucial developments pointed to a decisive resolution of the crisis. National governments were directly involved and were thus feeling all the pressure of public opinion's discontent for the impotence of the "international community". Their credibility and that of the most consolidated international organization -NATO- were irrevocably at stake. They were therefore perceiving a compelling incentive to elaborate a common position, to present the parties with credible threats and incentives and -in case of rebuke- to carry them through. Unlike the multilateral mediators which had preceded them, national governments also had direct access to military capabilities, which were proving to be -after the rejection of the Contact Group plan- a necessary elements of a final settlement.

⁽³⁰⁾ Zucconi, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-229

⁽³¹⁾ In October, a precarious agreement was reached between the two organizations which spelled out that, although the authorization was to be previously provided by both organizations, the UN left to NATO the tactical control of the operation.

PHASE III: THE END OF THE WAR AND THE DAYTON PEACE

The third and final phase of the war began with a fluid and dynamic military situation. Three months after the cease-fire, BiH forces launched multiple offensives along the confrontation line from Sarajevo, Tuzla and Bihac. As usual, the Bosnian Serbs responded with an intensification of the bombing of Sarajevo and Tuzla. On May 7th, a shell killed eleven in the urban centre of the capital. The UNPROFOR commander in Sarajevo, General Rupert Smith, asked for authorization to launch retaliatory air strikes to the UN authorities which, after an initial reluctance, agreed. On May 24th, a further bombardment prompted General Smith to issue an ultimatum to the Serbs, who did not comply and were accordingly hit twice by NATO aircraft.

The Serb reaction was the taking of UN hostages, 300 by June 1st, which were then chained to potential targets. The international anger that this move provoked and Milosevic's pressures on Pale led to the release of all hostages by June 18th. The Western response to the hostage crisis was to reduce the vulnerabilities of UNPROFOR in preparation for a stand-off with the Serbs. UN troops were strengthened and withdrawn from Serb-controlled territory. The British government sent reinforcements as early as the end of May, whereas NATO decided to increase the UNPROFOR contingent by 12500 troops. This led to the establishment of the Rapid Reaction Force (RRF), composed of British, French and Dutch troops, which was heavily armed with attack helicopters, anti-tank weapons and artillery and which was not painted white like the other UNPROFOR troops, retaining its usual combat green. Contrary to some popular expectations at the time, the RRF was not the prelude to a ground offensive, but was designed to operate as a strategic reserve capable of rescuing UN troops in jeopardy.

On July 7th, in an unprecedentedly bold step to be taken before the retaliatory power of the RRF was deployed, Serb forces attacked the enclave of Srebrenica. It is still unclear whether the Bosnian Serbs launched the offensive, which marked another major turning point in the war, as a deliberate attempt to erase the Muslim pocket in anticipation of a future settlement in which they did not want enemy enclaves within their territory or as a tactical counterattack which simply went out of hand. In any case, Western reaction was limited to two air strikes on the 11th, given the presence of 55 Dutch peacekeepers which were briefly held hostage. After taking the city, the Serbs expelled the 40000 Muslim inhabitants and refugees and allegedly slaughtered 8000 men of fighting age. On July 25th, also the enclave of Zepa was overrun, despite the fact that the local Muslim garrison had unsuccessfully taken the British and Ukrainian UNPROFOR troops in the town hostage in order to press NATO to react.

The outrage of these open violations of humanitarian law without any apparent major military advantage basically made a military confrontation between the West and the Republika Sprska eventually inevitable. On July 21st, NATO decided to threaten retaliation if also the Gorazde enclave was overrun. Operational command was transferred to the theatre commanders: Admiral Leighton Smith for NATO in Naples and General Janvier for UNPROFOR in Zagreb. In order to avoid a repetition of earlier episodes, the blue berets in Gorazde were quietly withdrawn. In the meantime,

a Serbian offensive on Bihac spurred the Croat-Muslim alliance into action. After a meeting in Split on July 22nd between Tudjman and Izetbegovic, Croatian forces attacked the Bosnian Serbs near Bihac relieving the Muslim town and cutting the lines of communication between the Republika Sprska and the Krajna Serbs in Croatia. On August 4th, on the model of a previous successful attack in May on UNPA West, the Croatian Army launched a swift and decisive offensive against the Croatian Serbs, overrunning Knin in two days and driving 150000 Serbs from Croatian territory.

The blow to Serb morale, which had rested until then on a feeling of military superiority was rapidly exploited diplomatically by the United States. The new American negotiator, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke engaged in frantic shuttle diplomacy. The United States seemed resolute to finally put an end to the war and -for the first time- acknowledged the Serb desire that their own Republika Sprska be treated on a par with the Federation and be allowed, after the peace, to engage in strict links with the FRY. In exchange, the Bosnian Serbs agreed that Milosevic should negotiate on their behalf. Washington was also prepared -for the first time- to pressurize the Bosnian Muslims into compromise.

However, diplomacy was again suspended when yet another mortar bomb hit Sarajevo on August 28th. The attack led to a two-weeks massive NATO air campaign involving 3400 sorties, of which 750 were bombing sorties on 56 strategic targets and 350 aiming points. The air strikes were nominally geared to the enforcement of the Sarajevo exclusion zone but were really aimed at drastically reducing the war potential of the Bosnian Serbs. Taking advantage of the damage inflicted by NATO on Serb infrastructures, the Croat and Muslim forces launched a major offensive in North-Western Bosnia which soon threatened Banja Luka, the main Bosnian Serb centre. When the situation on the ground was approaching a sustainable state for both sides, the Croatian troops stopped while Muslim forces were halted by the Serbs even with the use of air force, to which the West acquiesced because it did not wish the situation on the ground to be excessively destabilized. On September 12th, the United States and the other Western nations imposed a final cease-fire.

After two months of tough negotiations between the three sides sponsored by the United States at the USAF base at Dayton, Ohio, peace was finally reached after 44 months of war and more than 200000 dead. Bosnia-Herzegovina was to become a single state with international legal personality composed of two distinct entities with equal rights and endowed with large autonomy: the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Republika Sprska. Links of these two entities with outside states -Croatia for the Federation and the FRY for the Serb republic- were allowed short of secession. The essence of the agreement was the 51/49 division agreed upon as the basis for peace since 1993. Capping a process began after the rejection of the VOPP, the territorial provisions of the agreement were kept as close as possible to the map on the ground at the end of the fighting. Srebrenica and Zepa were to be retained by the Bosnian Serbs while Gorazde was linked to the bulk of Federation territory by a land corridor. The injustice of accepting the results of ethnic cleansing in Eastern Bosnia was balanced with the increased stability that the new arrangement would have in terms of the viability of the two entities. Sarajevo was assigned to the Federation while the other two delicate issues of the Posavina corridor -which either grants Federation access to the Sava or Serb communications between the two main parts of their territory- and of Muslim access to the Adriatic were left to international arbitration.

A series of annexes spelled out the details of the agreement. Military forces were to be disarmed and confined to barracks under the supervision of the 60000-strong NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR), which was also responsible for securing the Inter-Ethnic Boundary Lines (IEBLs) and for monitoring the collection of heavy weapons at appropriate locations. Local, community and nation-wide elections were to reactivate the democratic process under the supervision of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The Dayton accords -recuperating on earlier ambitions- also provided for the restoration of the pre-war interethnic character, pledging the freedom of movement for all citizens across the whole territory of Bosnia and for the return of refugees under the responsibility of UNHCR.⁽³²⁾

War criminals were subject to the jurisdiction of the ad hoc War Crimes Tribunal established in the Hague. Finally, the European Union, in concert with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank, was made responsible for the efforts at civilian reconstruction and economic revitalization.

⁽³²⁾ Tony Barber: *Dayton Deal Holds Seeds of Own Destruction*, The Independent, 23 November 1995.

CONCLUSION AND CAUTIONARY TALES

The war in Bosnia demonstrates the difficulties for outside intervention into a full-blown ethnic conflict, especially when there are no vital interest affected justifying a large scale operation. In these instances, the temptation is high to let expectations rise to very ambitious objectives without having the possibility of deploying the necessary means for their achievement. A classic conflict between peace and justice ensues in which one is partially in contradiction with the other. In the Bosnian case, the "international community" dodged the choice, ending with the worst of both worlds in a situation in which peace was delayed for three years and was finally attained without justice, as defined by the London Conference's commitment to pre-war Bosnia. As this essay attempts to show, only when the gap was closed by more realistic objectives and a relatively more assertive posture, was peace finally reached in Bosnia.

What would have been the alternatives? One possibility was to deploy -from the beginning of the hostilities- the sufficient resources for the attainment of a just peace, with a massive and decisive intervention to disarm the combatants. This would probably have entailed less force than was actually used in 1995, when the credibility of the "international community" had to be rebuilt after a series of humiliations. Nevertheless, a more proactive approach would have been needed to induce the parties to lay down their arms, involving an active use of force which contradicted the passive and impartial principles of traditional peacekeeping. This would probably have constituted more force than that which the "international community" was prepared to allocate when hostilities broke out. Most public opinions do not easily support the risk of soldiers being killed in remote areas where no national interest is involved. An effective preventive strategy was in fact ruled out by the lack of available resources. It is also important to recognize that once the use of force is already involved, even promising and "rational" measures short of war such as economic sanctions may not reach the desired effect. Sanctions in the Yugoslav case were much more effective with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Serbia and Montenegro, who was not an active combatant, than with the Bosnian Serbs, who were fighting for what they perceived as their survival and were therefore prepared to "unreasonable" sacrifices.

An alternative strategy would have been to recognize that since justice was unattainable short of the imposition of superior force -given the fact that the three communities preferred to fight rather than to live together- certain compromises should have been made with the situation on the ground. In practice, this would have meant to abandon, for the time being, the London Conference commitment to a pre-war Bosnia, and concentrating at least on obtaining a cease-fire as soon as possible. Some of the most brutal violations of human rights -like the Srebrenica massacre- occurred at the end of the war and could therefore have been avoided by a rapid cease-fire. After all, once the principle of a united Yugoslavia had been abandoned, there was no intrinsic reason to rigidly maintain the notion of a united Bosnia once the sizeable Serb minority had expressed its radical opposition to the idea. In any event, the goal of a multi-ethnic Bosnia could have been postponed to a more distant future and upheld with long-term instruments like diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions, which would have been most effective when the tension would have cooled

down. Probably, also this strategy would have entailed the active use of force on the part of the "international community", but it would have probably been more circumscribed as it would not have clashed with the fundamental interests of any of the parties and it would have had to be exercised only against the most recalcitrant faction.

Either of these strategies would have been better than the one which was actually employed, because of the wide gap between ends and means that it involved. The EU representative, Carl Bildt, bitterly remarked in 1995 that "there has been a tendency to say things that at the end of the day we are not prepared to do. We should either do what we say or only say what we are prepared to do".⁽³³⁾

Yet, although there were no structural reasons for failure, both the domestic and the international characteristics of the post Cold War world militated against a rational strategy. While democratic public opinions demand swift interventions to terminate regional conflicts, they have also entered a post-heroic age -in Eduard Luttwak's expression- which does not easily allow for large-scale interventions in remote areas.⁽³⁴⁾

At the international level, multipolarity has altered the standard operating procedures of traditional Cold War institutions and -in the absence of a compelling threat- it requires a special effort to avoid competitive free riding. It would therefore have been very difficult that governments employed a different strategy without previous failures justifying a process of soul searching.

The same reasoning was applied to post-IFOR scenarios. The Dayton agreement maintained a certain ambiguity between its military component, which simply involved a cease-fire between distinct entities, and its civilian ones, which ambitiously proclaimed the objective of reestablishing the pre-war multiethnic character of Bosnia. The ambiguity was allowed by the full-scale commitment of the United States at the end of 1995, when Washington perceived its own credibility, as well as that of NATO, to be on the line. If that commitment cannot be taken for granted for the future, the "international community" will still have to choose between the preservation of peace or the imposition of justice at a price which it will likely be unwilling to pay. In this light, the solution was that of a follow-on to IFOR -SFOR- entrusted with the rigid implementation of the cease-fire -including the implementation of disputed and unresolved territorial terms at Neum on the Adriatic and on Brcko- but which does not seek to substitute the willingness to compromise of the parties involved, by imposing a certain frame of mind from the outside. If this equates to a disguised and unofficial partition, it will still be preferable to a resumption of the hostilities in a region in which not only Bosnian Serbs, but also Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats may no longer be willing to live under the same roof after three years of war.⁽³⁵⁾

⁽³³⁾ The Guardian, 19 July 1995.

⁽³⁴⁾ Eduard Luttwak: *A Post Heroic Military Policy*, Foreign Affairs, V. 75, N. 4, 1996; idem: *Where Are the Great Powers?* Foreign Affairs, V. 73, N. 4, 1994.

⁽³⁵⁾ For example, an official report states that: "this difficult situation casts doubts on the likelihood of economic activity being resumed and of the refugees returning and civilians being allowed complete freedom of movement-all key elements of the peace agreements". Report on The Peace Process in the Balkans-Implementation of the Dayton Accords to the 41st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the

On the other hand, spectacular but sporadic gestures in the direction of imposing a unified state from the outside would be useless or even counterproductive if not supported by a massive and indefinite commitment.⁽³⁶⁾

It is for this reason that both the pursuit of war-criminals and the implementation of the most ambitious provisos regarding the return of refugees have not been a top priority.

The same sober and realistic line has prevailed in the debate over the follow-on to IFOR -the Stabilization Force or SFOR- and the future in general of the international presence in Bosnia, showing that some of the lessons have been learnt.⁽³⁷⁾ In particular, calls from the International Tribunal in the Hague and, more recently, from the State Department in Washington for a tougher stance on the war criminals and return of refugees issues have not involved proposals for the active use of military force for the pursuit of these goals.⁽³⁸⁾ The instruments suggested are in fact appropriately restricted to economic and diplomatic pressure, also because of the resistance of defence ministries on both sides of the Atlantic which are concerned about the safety of their troops in a dangerous zone which is increasingly losing its appeal and salience with public opinion. Once the hot war has turned into a cold peace, the effectiveness of these non-military measures should increase, given the desire of the populations of switching back to "normal" life.

Similarly, the need for keeping transatlantic unity has also been reaffirmed. The initial American decision to attach a rigid deadline to its participation in IFOR and SFOR had raised the possibility that post-IFOR-SFOR intervention would be implemented solely by the Europeans, perhaps in a WEU framework. However, general and specific circumstances have decreased the prospects for such a contingency and point to a continuation of the NATO effort instead. On the one hand, the introduction of the Combined Joint Task Forces concept at the Berlin Summit last year provides the intellectual framework for NATO flexibility and -by creating a wide range of possible options- has defused the choice between a US-led NATO and a European-only intervention. On the other hand, European unwillingness to shoulder, again, the main bulk of the burden of the West's military presence in the region has led the Clinton administration to soften IFOR's and SFOR's deadlines.⁽³⁹⁾

The lesson of the Bosnian war is that peace can be preserved in the post-Cold War world only if governments agree on a rational strategy gauging the ends with the available means. If governments cannot mobilize support for outside intervention, they should at least be skillful enough to explain to public opinion the limits of their

Western European Union, submitted on behalf of the Political Committee by Mr Roseta, Doc. 1526, 14 May 1996, p. 5. Cfr. also Leonard J. Cohen: *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Fragile Peace in a Segmented State*, Current History, March 1996, p. 112; and Editorial: *Victoire peu glorieuse en Bosnie*, Le Monde, 21-22 July 1996.

⁽³⁶⁾ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen Van Evera: *Partition is the Inevitable Solution for Bosnia*, International Herald Tribune, September 25th, 1996. For a more optimistic but still preoccupied assessment, cfr. Christopher Civic: *Running Late: But Is Dayton still on Track?*, The World Today, June 1996.

⁽³⁷⁾ *A Sarajevo, l'apartheid ou la guerre*, Le Monde, May 7th, 1997.

⁽³⁸⁾ *Albright Sets in Motion a New US Policy for Bosnia*, International Herald Tribune, May 22nd, 1997.

⁽³⁹⁾ *US Renews Goals in Bosnia*, International Herald Tribune, May 30th, 1997.

power so that expectations do not run wild. Otherwise, the ensuing delusion could even undermine the consensus for the principle of multilateral cooperation itself. It is therefore important to understand the role of international institutions in the post-Cold War world. Institutions are especially useful in a multipolar world in which there are few reference points. However, institutions cannot substitute for the lack of strategy on the part of their member states. As the Bosnian episode shows, they still depend on the capacity of governments to commit resources and on finding an agreement on how to use them. Without either of these factors, institutions will become not only a scapegoat for failure but also a recipe for it, as they can even fuel counterproductive processes. In this light, it is essential that public opinions understand that more international institutionalization is a necessary element but, given that only governments still have the democratic legitimacy to decide upon matters involving the use of force, not yet a sufficient one for peace.