

**THE WARS OF YUGOSLAV DISSOLUTION  
AND BRITAIN'S ROLE  
IN THE MAKING OF INTERNATIONAL POLICY  
1991-1995**

**The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences  
of  
Bilkent University**

**by**

**EMEL G. OSMANÇAVUŞOĞLU**

**In Partial Fulfilment Of The Requirements For the Degree Of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**in**

**THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
BILKENT UNIVERSITY  
ANKARA**

**January, 1999**

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*tarafından hazırlanmıştır*

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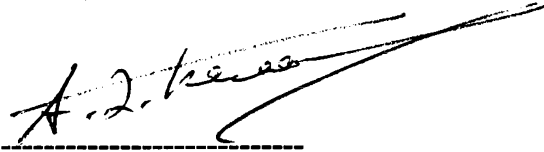
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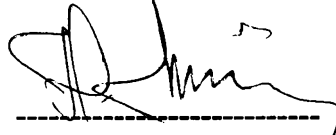
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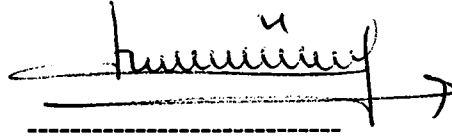
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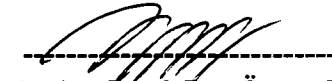
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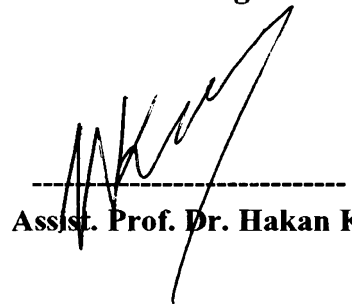
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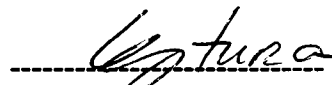
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**Assist. Prof. Dr. Gülgün Tuna**

*To My Parents and Sisters*

## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE WARS OF YUGOSLAV DISSOLUTION AND BRITAIN'S ROLE IN THE MAKING OF INTERNATIONAL POLICY, 1991-1995**

**Emel G. OSMANÇAVUSOĞLU**

**Department of International Relations**

**Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Hasan Ünal**

This study is a chronological examination of British politics and diplomacy concerning the Former Yugoslavia from the explosion of war in 1991 right up to the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement in December 1995. As such, it serves as a case study of British diplomacy during that period. All in all, British policy towards the Yugoslav dissolution wars was evaluated as unsuccessful both in terms of achieving a stable peace in the region and containing the conflict. The major aim of this study is to analyse the basic considerations and main motives behind the British policy in dealing with the wars of Yugoslav dissolution. The study attempts to look at the question whether or not any particular responsibility for the inadequate international response to the Yugoslav crisis can be attributed to Britain. The study argues that Britain's Conservative government, rather than attempting to lead international community to take more robust stance against Serbian genocidal war in Bosnia and Hercegovina, used its diplomatic skills to subdue discussion of using force whenever the issue arose and severely hampered a collective response to the crisis. As a result, it is argued that Major government's unwillingness to go beyond humanitarian intervention, despite pressure from the US, from the media and public and from two main opposition parties, reinforced its image of weakness and incompetence and thus did have important political implications both at home and abroad.

**Key Words: Former Yugoslavia, Dissolution, British Foreign Policy**

## ÖZET

### YUGOSLAVYA'NIN DAĞILMA SAVAŞLARI VE ULUSLARARASI POLİTİKANIN OLUŞTURULMASINDA İNGİLTERE'NİN ROLÜ, 1991-1995

**Emel G. OSMANÇAVUSOĞLU**

**Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü**

**Danışman: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Hasan Ünal**

Bu çalışma, Yugoslavya'da savaşın 1991 yılında patlak vermesinden, Aralık 1995 tarihinde Dayton Anlaşmasının imzalanmasına kadar geçen dönem içerisinde İngiliz Dış Politikasını incelemektedir. Bu dönem zarfında, temel olarak, Yugoslavya'nın dağılma savaşlarına karşı İngiliz politikası, hem bölgede istikrarı sağlama hem de krizi çevreleyebilme açısından, başarısız olarak nitelendirilmektedir. Çalışmanın temel amacı Yugoslavya'nın dağılma savaşları sırasında, özellikle de Bosna-Hersek'teki savaşta, İngiliz politikasının temelindeki düşünce ve faktörleri analiz edebilmektir. Uluslararası camianın bu krizdeki politikasının yetersizliğinde İngiltere'nin herhangi bir rolünün bulunup bulunmadığı, böyle bir rol oynanmış ise bu rolün niteliğini ne olduğu çalışmanın temelini oluşturmaktadır. Adı geçen ülkenin Muhafazakar Hükümeti'nin, savaşta saldırgan taraf olarak nitelenen Sırbistan'a karşı uluslararası alanda çok daha etkili önlemlerin alınmasında öncülük etmekten ziyade, diplomatik yeteneklerini kullanarak Yugoslavya'da adaletli bir barışın oluşturulmasını sağlayacak ortamın oluşmasını engellediği sonucuna varılmıştır. Böyle bir politika hem İngiltere'nin imajını zedelemiş, hem de Bosna-Hersek'in toprak bütünlüğünün korunması açısından son derece olumsuz sonuçlara sebep olmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yugoslavya, İngiliz Dış Politikası



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## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

The conflict in Yugoslavia presented the post-Cold War world, and Europe in particular with a critical challenge. Bloody dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) ran against the spirit of integration and co-operation which prevailed in the international community following the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. When the heads of state or government of the member states of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) met in Paris in November 1990 to mark the end of Cold War, they expressed pride and confidence in the broad array of institutions and agreements designed to keep the peace in Europe and prevent renewal of conflicts that had shattered the continent in two world wars. Yet, the underlying weaknesses of all these institutions and agreements; The European Community (EC-later European Union [EU] in November 1992), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE-later Organisation on Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE] in January 1995), the Western European Union (WEU) and United Nations (UN) had become apparent as none of these institutions or agreements were designed to cope with such a conflict as the one in Former Yugoslavia.

Indeed the main reason of the failure of these institutions in coping with this first post-Cold War crisis in Europe can be given as the overall lack of coherence in the international approaches which was mainly due to the differences of perspective and opinion between the major players. Especially, London's interpretation of the conflict as ethnic and historical put the British leadership totally at odds with Washington

which was reluctant to back British proposals since it considered the war as an act of aggression and looked for more just peace.

Britain played a central role in the international handling of the crisis in Yugoslavia in general and war in Bosnia and Hercegovina in particular. However, that role was severely criticised throughout from different quarters. The officials and academics in the US, Germany, several Muslim countries, and, of course, the Bosnian leadership accused Britain of pursuing pro-Serbian line of policy, and of conducting a policy of appeasement. According to these critics, it was, at best, a policy of indifference. Indeed, as a British MP put it, 'Britain was described as the leader of *'don't let's do anythings'* and there was increasing concern and anger throughout all the Muslim communities in the world at Britain's craven conduct in these matters.<sup>1</sup> As early as December 1992, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic asserted that the British were 'the biggest brake on any progress' towards peace in Bosnia.<sup>2</sup> There was not any consensus on government's policies inside Britain either. The clash between British public and media and the majority of political and military establishment came to a head over Bosnia in 1992 and 1993. On British TV, ex-Tory leader and former Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher accused the British politicians of behaving 'little like accomplices to massacre'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Faulds, MP of Warley. House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 7 February 1994, vol. 237, col. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Jane M. O. Sharp, *Bankrupt in the Balkans: British Policy in Bosnia*, Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) (London, 1993), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Baroness Thacher's views on Bosnia were expressed in a BBC interview with Peter Sissons. The edited version appeared in *The Times*, "Europe Has Been Like an Accomplice to Massacre," 14 April 1993.



Although at every circle British politicians stress that NATO and the transatlantic link remain fundamental to Britain's future security, as is the parallel development of the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) within the WEU,<sup>4</sup> Britain's policy in Yugoslavia put in jeopardy, first, the feasibility of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and second the credibility of NATO and thus future transatlantic partnership. In fact, it was during the Bosnian war that the US-British relations reached the lowest ebb since the Suez crisis of 1956.

Why did a civilised country such as Britain fail to oppose an act of aggression reaching the levels of ethnic cleansing? Why did it prefer to follow a line of policy that would, on the one hand, eventually lead to the destruction of a UN member state and put it at odds both with its own public and allies on the other? Hence, the major aim of this study is to analyse the basic considerations and main motives behind the British policy in dealing with the wars of Yugoslav dissolution. The study attempts to look at the question whether or not any particular responsibility for the inadequate international response to the Yugoslav crisis can be attributed to Britain.

One of the reasons of being so assertive and consistent in challenging the whole world in Yugoslav crisis can be explained by the fact that whatever Britain's theoretically acceptable place in the hierarchy of international actors; in matters of security and the so called high policy of power and prestige, the British political establishment has an instinctive taste for a 'big' foreign policy.<sup>5</sup> This tradition of action might have been

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Chief of the Defence Staff Field Marshall Sir Peter Inge's address to the Conference held at Chatham House, Britain in the World, on 29 March 1995. Conference Proceedings, p. 36.

<sup>5</sup> Laurence Martin and John Garnett, *British Foreign Policy: Challenges and Choices for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (London: Cassell/ Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997), 6.

due to its former imperial role, and a military capability of great competence and high reputation. Although, Douglas Hurd warned several times that 'we can not be everywhere and we can not do everything',<sup>6</sup> with an effectively wide and effective range of foreign policy instruments - its armed forces, its diplomatic experience, its membership in international organisations - his famous metaphor 'punching above its weight' still remains the motto of the Foreign Office. That meant the country playing a prominent role within each of the bodies of which it was a member.

For Britain 'multilateral diplomacy' provides valuable opportunities to exercise disproportionate power and influence. For years now, British has long recognised that 'most of what we want done has to be done in concert with the others and that it pays to harness the multilateral machinery that has been created to that task'.<sup>7</sup> Britain, belonging to some 120 international bodies as diverse as NATO, the EU and the UN, where it has a permanent seat on the Security Council, is well-placed to exploit the potential of the new multilateral diplomacy. It was in the field of international diplomacy, especially in the UN Security Council, that Britain most skilfully exploited its comparative advantage in the post-Cold war era to maintain a leadership position within the international response to the war in former Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, the British government, rather than attempting to lead international community to take more robust stance against Serbian genocidal war in Bosnia, used its diplomatic skills to subdue discussion of using force whenever the issue arose and severely hampered a collective response to the crisis. In the end, Major government's unwillingness to go beyond humanitarian intervention, despite pressure from the US, from the media and

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<sup>6</sup> Douglas Hurd, Address to Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA) at Chatham House, 27 January 1993.

public and from two main opposition parties, reinforced its image of weakness and incompetence and thus did have important political implications both at home and abroad.

## **APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY**

Before turning to provide an account of how this study was conducted, it will be useful to summarise the ways in which British foreign policy has been studied up to now. Broadly speaking there are four ways in which the British foreign policy has been studied so far.

First of them is what can be called 'the historical approach', by which is meant the analysis of British Foreign Policy from a historical perspective, stressing the centrality of providing a narrative that makes sense of events. Such a narrative concentrates on the thoughts of those who made decisions, and avoids any explicit concern with the theory; accordingly the account is judged against rival accounts in terms of the extent of evidence cited and the coherence of the explanations of the decision-makers offered.<sup>8</sup> Above all, this work moves from evidence to an explanation, seeing such explanations as logically entailed by the evidence offered; it does not construct pre-theories or hypotheses to be tested, nor does it start with a theory which is then applied to the specific cases to be explained. This kind of approach is inductive,

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<sup>7</sup> Sir David Hannay. "The Growth of Multilateral Diplomacy," the 1996 FCO Annual Lecture. FCO Historians Occasional Papers No. 13, September 1996, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Particularly good examples of this type of approach can be found in M. Gilbert, *Winston Churchill*, vols. 3-7 (London: Heinemann, 1971-86); W. N. Medlicott, *British Foreign Policy Since Versailles, 1919-1963* (London: Methuen, 1968) and J. W. Young, *Britain, France and Unity of Europe* (Leicester: Leicester, 1984).

constructing explanations from evidence, and using as evidence the explanations of behaviour offered by those who made the decisions.

A second approach is a subset of the first; it, too, is historical, but is written in concert with social science generally and with either international relations theory or foreign policy analysis specifically. Such accounts analyse British foreign policy by examining historical evidence, but do so with an explicit consideration of theories developed within social science. Thus, such accounts will look at the impact of psychological processes, or bureaucratic politics or the domestic inputs to British Foreign policy, and will use these approaches to structure their treatment of the historical evidence. As such, they seek to explain specific historical events as examples of more widely acceptable psychological or political phenomena. For these writers, there is an explicit concern with patterns and regularities, and this is well-illustrated by their citation of, and reliance upon, theories of decision-making and psychology.<sup>9</sup>

A third approach is that which treats British Foreign Policy from an international relations perspective. This is to say it locates explanations of British foreign policy within explanations of international relations. This type of studies stresses the role of British foreign policy as a way of balancing the requirements of the British state and society with the changing nature of international system. These accounts, although focused on explaining the foreign policy of Britain, do so by discussing the ways in which Britain makes foreign policy according to the dual imperatives of domestic and

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<sup>9</sup> Some good examples of these type of approach are given as Zara Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); Christopher Thorne, *The Limits of Foreign Policy* (London: Hamilton, 1971), *Allies of a Kind* (London: Hamilton, 1978); and Paul Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy* (London: Allan & Unwin, 1981).

international constraints and demands.<sup>10</sup> Britain is considered as, above all, a state existing within the international society of states, and this location imposes demands and limitations on British foreign policy that are reflected both in the ways in which foreign policy is made.

Finally, there are those approaches that explain British foreign policy from a domestic institutional perspective. These accounts develop their explanations of British foreign policy by stressing the institutional setting in which it is made. Accordingly, they stress the role of constitutional and political factors within Britain as accounting for the content of, and machinery for, making British foreign policy.<sup>11</sup>

Whereas it was easy in the past to define foreign policy, in the sense that it referred to Britain's diplomatic relations, it is now much more difficult. Foreign policy involves a massively increased range of factors, and these, the sum total of external relations, involves a very different and much wider set of individuals and groups in the making of foreign policy. Given this rather complex and confusing empirical picture, it is not surprising that general and historical account have found it difficult to explain British foreign policy, not that any attempt to develop theory in this area has proven very problematic. This is so because the study of British Foreign Policy has to deal with four sets of changes: the changing nature of the theoretical work on foreign policy; the impact of interdependence and transnationalism on the context of foreign and domestic

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<sup>10</sup> Examples are Joseph Frankel, *British Foreign Policy, 1945-1973* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975); William Wallace, *Britain's Bilateral Links With Western Europe* (London: Routledge/Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1984); Christopher Tugendhat and William Wallace, *Options For British Foreign Policy in the 1990s* (London: Routledge/Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1988)

policy; the changing international and domestic environments that result; and the effects of these factors on the ways in which policy is made and implemented.

### **APPROACH ADOPTED IN THIS STUDY**

The approach adopted in this study, to analyse the British foreign policy towards Yugoslav dissolution wars, does not exactly fit in any of these categories. Although it has some common characteristics, it does not correspond to any one to one. The main concern in this study is to analyse pattern of the British involvement into a 'specific case,' the Yugoslav dissolution wars. It should be kept in mind, however, that the case under examination had not been static; any kind of international involvement altered the course of the conflict and catalysed developments on the ground.

Another prevailing assumption in this study is that, although Britain was in a type of international system during the Yugoslav crisis, it was not directed or constrained by the limitations of the international system. On the contrary, Britain itself manipulated the international environment. Despite the fact that Britain had lost much of its power and does not rank among the first class powers in the world any more, it still has the taste and ability for 'big' foreign policy; as Douglas Hurd pointed out in his famous metaphor; Britain should 'punch above its weight'.<sup>12</sup>

Foreign policy, today, is a hybrid; its empirical content varies from state to state and from issue to issue. This study tries to prove that there are no regular patterns in the

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, A. Shlaim, P. Jones and K. Sainsbury, *British Foreign Secretaries Since 1945* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1977); and Christopher Coker, *Nation in Retreat?* (Oxford:

making of British foreign policy. For example, although Britain is part of an interdependent world economy, the involvement which necessitates the acceptance of a certain loss of autonomy, at the same time Britain always stresses the notions of national interest and sovereignty, which imply that the government has much more control over the events than is the case. This contradictory stance is clearly indicated in the British attitude to the European Union. A similar contradiction occurs in defence policy. British acceptance of the common defence, as reflected in the commitment to NATO, is matched by a perception of a wider defence role (the Gulf and the Falklands). Finally, one can point to the tensions between sovereignty and the fact of interdependence in the British-American relationship, especially resurfaced during the course of the war in Bosnia and Hercegovina.

The location of Britain in the international political system is accepted as another challenge to the thorough analysis of British foreign policy, since Britain appears to be at a crucial intersection in the political, military and economic cleavages in the world. In one light, Britain is very much a part of Europe and therefore offers a paradigmatic example of how a country makes its foreign policy within a complex international setting. Additionally, Britain plays a central role in the international financial and economic system, and this results in evident intersections between government and economic institutions that point up to the inadequacies of simple models of international relations. Yet, Britain also enjoys a 'special relationship' with the US, at the same time it possesses an independent nuclear deterrent. Taken together these pose a formidable agenda for any theory of foreign policy. There is simply no evident

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Pergamon, 1986).

<sup>12</sup> Douglas Hurd, "Making the World A Safer Place," *Daily Telegraph*, 1 January 1992.

classification within which Britain fits; it is not a superpower, nor a middle power; it has aspects of a great power, but is caught up in very complex set of interdependencies; it has to be involved in bargaining within defence and economic alliances and organisations, yet it is not a small power. No other country has quite this profile. Yet, exactly because Britain slips between conceptual categories, it offers a very real challenge to international relations theory.

Britain is actually a particularly interesting state for students of foreign policy as it constitutes a unique case in the international system (a former great power, highly interdependent, especially with the EC, having a special relationship with the US and possessing an independent nuclear deterrent). Therefore, the most important task facing foreign policy analysts, given the lack of cumulative work generally, and virtual absence in the case of Britain, is the use of 'case studies' which would provide some answers to the enduring question of whether or not there are regularities in British foreign policy. Hence, this study attempts to contribute to the understanding of main motives and constraints behind the British foreign policy decision-making by taking the Yugoslav wars of dissolution as a test case.

## **PLAN OF THE STUDY**

To understand the evolution and the outcome of Western and in particular, British involvement in the Yugoslav crisis with which the remainder of this thesis is concerned, it is necessary first to understand the context in which those developments occurred: the internal and external dynamics which precipitated the dissolution of Yugoslavia. This is the concern of **Chapter II**.



The term used either in the form of ‘wars of Yugoslav dissolution’ or ‘Yugoslav dissolution wars’ requires brief explanation for terminological clarification. The term ‘wars’ denotes the armed conflicts in Slovenia, Croatia and finally in Bosnia and Hercegovina. The plural form is considered as appropriate since, although closely intermingled, each of these wars has its own characteristics and distinct outcomes. The term ‘Yugoslav dissolution’ is chosen carefully to describe a bloody and painful process, however, not without external involvement. ‘Dissolution’ is the preferred option when compared to the other terms like ‘secession’, ‘succession’ or ‘civil war’. Slovenia and Croatia never considered themselves as ‘secessionist’ states since their declarations of independence was merely because the Yugoslav federal state structure had ceased effectively to function. Neither were they waging the wars of Yugoslav ‘succession’, since the term implies that the purpose of the war was to establish control over the remnants of the old Yugoslav state in either ideological, political or economic terms. Finally, although the wars in Yugoslavia were for borders, statehood, identity and ideology, they can not be described as a ‘civil’ war. Despite the fact that, particularly in Bosnia and Hercegovina, it was evidently a complex conflict, containing a number of issues and parties, still it has been aimed, planned and directed from Belgrade as a deliberate act of aggression against a UN member country. Moreover, although at the beginning of 1990s, disintegration of Yugoslavia seemed inevitable, that did not necessarily mean war, even if, as in the Yugoslav case, it contained evident characteristics of violent social unrest.

The body of analysis in the subsequent chapter, **Chapter III**, is concerned with the wars in Slovenia and Croatia which surrounded disintegration process; with the

interpretation of initial international involvement in these wars. This chapter covers the growing involvement of the EC (later EU) and the UN, as well as background role of other organisations, during the first year of war and primarily traces the involvement of the EC from the declarations of independence by Slovenia and Croatia to the ending of the armed hostilities in Croatia and the EC decision to recognise the independence of these two republics. It argues that the role of Britain in this initial involvement as head of the EC Presidency determined the nature of future international involvement.

The outbreak of War in Bosnia and Hercegovina was dealt with separately in **Chapter IV**. This chapter argues that, although a framework was established for recognition of Yugoslav republics, this was neither clearly understood, nor clearly implemented and supported. With Serbian attack, the focus shifted to Bosnia and Hercegovina. The inability to understand the real nature of war in this country led the international community into a chaos even standing still and watching the ethnic cleansing of the Bosnian Muslims by the Serbs. There was also increasing friction between the EC and the UN over Bosnia as violence forced the commitment of UN peace-keepers.

**Chapter V** basically deals with the British response to the war in Bosnia and Hercegovina. British perception of the war in Bosnia and Hercegovina were described as the primary factor in determining the British position in the later stages of the war. The debate between the advocates of military intervention and critics of it was extensively analysed in this chapter.

**Chapter VI** is about the Anglo-American rifts which occurred as a result of diverging views considering the use of air power and the US failure to comply with the Vance-

Owen Peace Plan which was presented to the international community as the only viable solution at that time. Consequences of the Vance-Owen plan and the subsequent Croat-Muslim war were also discussed as important factors determining the outcome of the war in Bosnia and Hercegovina. This chapter presents that the outcome of the overall lack of coherence in international approaches, was due to the differences of perspective and opinion between Britain and the US. It concludes that Anglo-American rifts had to be remedied first to provide peace in Bosnia and Hercegovina.

**Chapter VII** focuses on the developments on the ground and British policy towards Bosnia and Hercegovina in 1994. Throughout the year 1994, the big line of confrontation between the US and Britain remained the issue of 'lift and strike'; the US pressure to lift the arms embargo against the Bosnian government and to use NATO air power to pressure the Serbs to the negotiating table. Moreover, the refusal of Clinton Administration to deploy ground troops in Bosnia was the biggest bone of contention as the Alliance relations deteriorated steadily through the war. The chapter analyses the events in 1994 by arguing that British objections to take any action saving Bosnia and Hercegovina grossly affected the outcome of the war in Bosnia and Hercegovina.

**Chapter VIII** deals with the changing phase of the international involvement and initiatives towards the 'Endgame'. The chapter argues that, in the year 1995, especially after the fall of safe areas and consequently UNPROFOR's position becoming untenable, the US position became central to international policy leaving the British and French behind, and that, it was the US efforts which brought the peace

finally to Bosnia and Hercegovina. The US position was clearly assisted by radical changes on the ground which eventually helped to bring the Serbs to the negotiation table.

Finally, the **Chapter IX, Conclusion** provides an assessment of the British policy towards the 'Yugoslavia Dissolution Wars' in general, and, Bosnia and Hercegovina in particular and its implications for Britain, both at home and abroad..

Given the intention to provide a full account of British involvement in the war of Yugoslav dissolution, the attempt is to cover the details of the situation on the ground, international and British diplomatic activity thoroughly. This degree of detail is necessary for an accurate interpretation rather than the more usual approach to the analysis of the Yugoslav conflict, which relies less on analysis of particulars and more on opinion, based on incomplete information and understanding. Thus, this thesis titled "**The Wars of Yugoslav Dissolution and Britain's Role in the Making of International Policy, 1991-1995**" is a chronological examination of British politics and diplomacy concerning the Former Yugoslavia from the explosion of war in 1991 right up to the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement in December 1995. As such, it serves as a case study of British diplomacy during that period. All in all, British policy towards the Yugoslav dissolution wars was evaluated as unsuccessful both in terms of achieving a stable peace in the region and containing the conflict, as the latest events in Kosovo/a have shown.

This study makes extensive use of existing literature on the history and politics of Former Yugoslavia, the House of Commons Debates (Hansard), journals, as well as serious newspapers and news magazines published both in Britain and in the US.

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## CHAPTER II: DISSOLUTION OF YUGOSLAVIA

Although there had been no shortage of warning signals since the late 1980s about the coming turmoil in Yugoslavia and the country's slow motion dissolution was in progress for even a longer time, when the Yugoslav People's Army (*Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija- JNA*) tanks rolled into Slovenia in June 1991, the international community appeared to have been caught napping.<sup>13</sup>

In the 1960s, Yugoslavia was a stable federation, respected by the East and the West alike for its independent foreign policy. Under President Tito's leadership, it had come to play an influential role on the world stage that was out of all proportion to its size and its economic and military power.<sup>14</sup> Within a decade, however, all the cohesive factors holding the country together were gone. Despite the strenuous efforts to keep Tito alive on the most expensive life-supporting systems, charismatic leader and spiritual father of Yugoslavia died in 1980.<sup>15</sup> During the Cold War years, his challenge to Stalinist cult within the Soviet Bloc<sup>16</sup> and his idea of different ways to socialism had

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<sup>13</sup> In November 1990 a report by the CIA leaked to the press, warning that a war in Yugoslavia leading to the country's disintegration, was likely within 18 months. David Binder, "Yugoslavia Seen Breaking Up Soon," *New York Times*, 28 November 1990.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher Cviic, "The Background and Implications of the Domestic Scene in Yugoslavia," in *Problems of Balkan Security: Southeastern Europe in the 1990s*, ed. Paul S. Shoup and George Hoffman (Washington D.C.: 1990), 89.

<sup>15</sup> For some biographies of Tito see, Richard West, *Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1994); Jasper Ridley, *Tito: A Biography* (London: Constable, 1994); Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Tito: A Reassessment* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1993). For older biographies, see Milovan Djilas, *Tito* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, 1981); Phyllis Auty, *Tito: A Biography* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974); and the original biography; Vladimir Dedijer, *Tito Speaks* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953).

<sup>16</sup> For Tito-Stalin split and Tito's expulsion from the Cominform, see Ivo Banac, *With Stalin Against Tito: Splits in Yugoslav Communism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); A. Ross Johnson, *The Transformation of Communist Ideology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1972); Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (Harmondsworth: 1967); G. W. Hoffman and F. W. Neal, *Yugoslavia and the New Communism* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1962); Ernst Halperin, *The Triumphant Heretic: Tito's Struggle Against Stalin* (London: Heinemann, 1958); A. B. Ulam, *Titoism and the*

helped him to act as the credit card for the country, and the western world had extended to Yugoslavia a high degree of preferential treatment in both political and economic matters. He had successfully exploited Yugoslavia's position in the Cold War, playing one side off against the other with various benefits in terms of trade and both financial and military assistance.<sup>17</sup> But his death put an abrupt end to this relationship Yugoslavia had developed for over four decades with the West.<sup>18</sup>

There was also a crucial external dimension in the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The end of the Cold War represented the removal of a corset which had contained many of the straining bulges in the Yugoslav body politic.<sup>19</sup> The fear of falling under Soviet domination which created a strong bond and helped to maintain a sort of national unity among its constituent nations since 1948 had disappeared within a night with the collapse of the Berlin wall. Moreover, the events in Central and Eastern Europe accelerated to some extent the slide into chaos in Yugoslavia. Especially Slovenes and Croats, long used to be in the forefront in liberal modifications to the Communist model, suddenly felt that they had lagged behind. Finally, by the end of the Cold War Yugoslavia lost its strategic importance, reducing international concern for its future.

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*Cominform* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1952); Hamilton Fisher Armstrong, *Tito and Goliath* (New York: Gollancz, 1951).

<sup>17</sup> See Dennison Rusinow, *The Yugoslav Experiment, 1948-1974* (London: Hurst for the RIIA, 1977); Duncan Wilson, *Tito's Yugoslavia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

<sup>18</sup> Although the Yugoslav economy seemed to function successfully during the last two decades, it was through uncontrolled borrowing from the Western bloc. Within a very short period after Tito's death, all the loans dried up and Yugoslavia had to begin repaying national debt. It coincided with the recession in Western Europe stemming from the second oil shock of 1979, while the debt burden was aggravated by high interest rates and exceptionally strong dollar. Living standards began to slide as the government moved to cut imports and inflation took off. Between 1982 and 1989, the standard of living fell nearly 40 per cent and in December 1989 inflation peaked at more than 2000 per cent. Christopher Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course and Consequences* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1995), 67-70.

<sup>19</sup> See James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War* (London: Hurst & Co., 1997), 20. The corset image is mentioned by Christopher Cviic, *Remaking the Balkans*, Chatham House Papers (London: Pinter for the RIIA, 1991), 29.

By the beginning of the 1990s, the country had more or less ceased to exist and a year later a devastating war was being waged among its constituent nations.

It is not easy to comprehend why Yugoslavia, for whose future the West extended so much material aid and political support with the hope that it would eventually evolve into a pluralistic society with a market economy, had stayed much behind the other countries of eastern and central Europe and finally destroyed itself in a bloody way. In fact, there are important structural reasons why Yugoslavia always preferred to follow its own complex and often mutually contradictory sets of priorities rather than the expected agenda in the wake of transformation in all Eastern Europe which started as soon as Soviet Union ceased to exist. Exploring these priorities will enable us to come to an understanding of Yugoslavia's bloody collapse at the beginning of the 1990s.

## **2.1. The National Question in Yugoslavia**

### **2.1.1. First Yugoslavia**

From the very beginning, Yugoslavia was neither a homogeneous state nor a truly multinational country, but the political union of several South Slav or Yugoslav ethnic groups.<sup>20</sup> In 1918, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was proclaimed which was halfway between a nation-state and a multinational community consisting of Slovenia and Dalmatia - former territories of Austria; Croatia and Slavonia - formerly a quasi autonomous province of Hungary; the Vojvodina - formerly an integral portion of Hungary; Bosnia-Herzegovina - formerly an Austro-Hungarian condominium

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<sup>20</sup> Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *The Improbable Survivor: Yugoslavia and Its Problems 1918-1988* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1988), 2.



administered by their joint ministry of finance; and finally Montenegro and Serbia—former independent Kingdoms. In addition, Serbia and Montenegro included portions of Macedonia and the Sanjak of Novi Bazar, which had been Ottoman territories until 1912 (Map 1).<sup>21</sup>

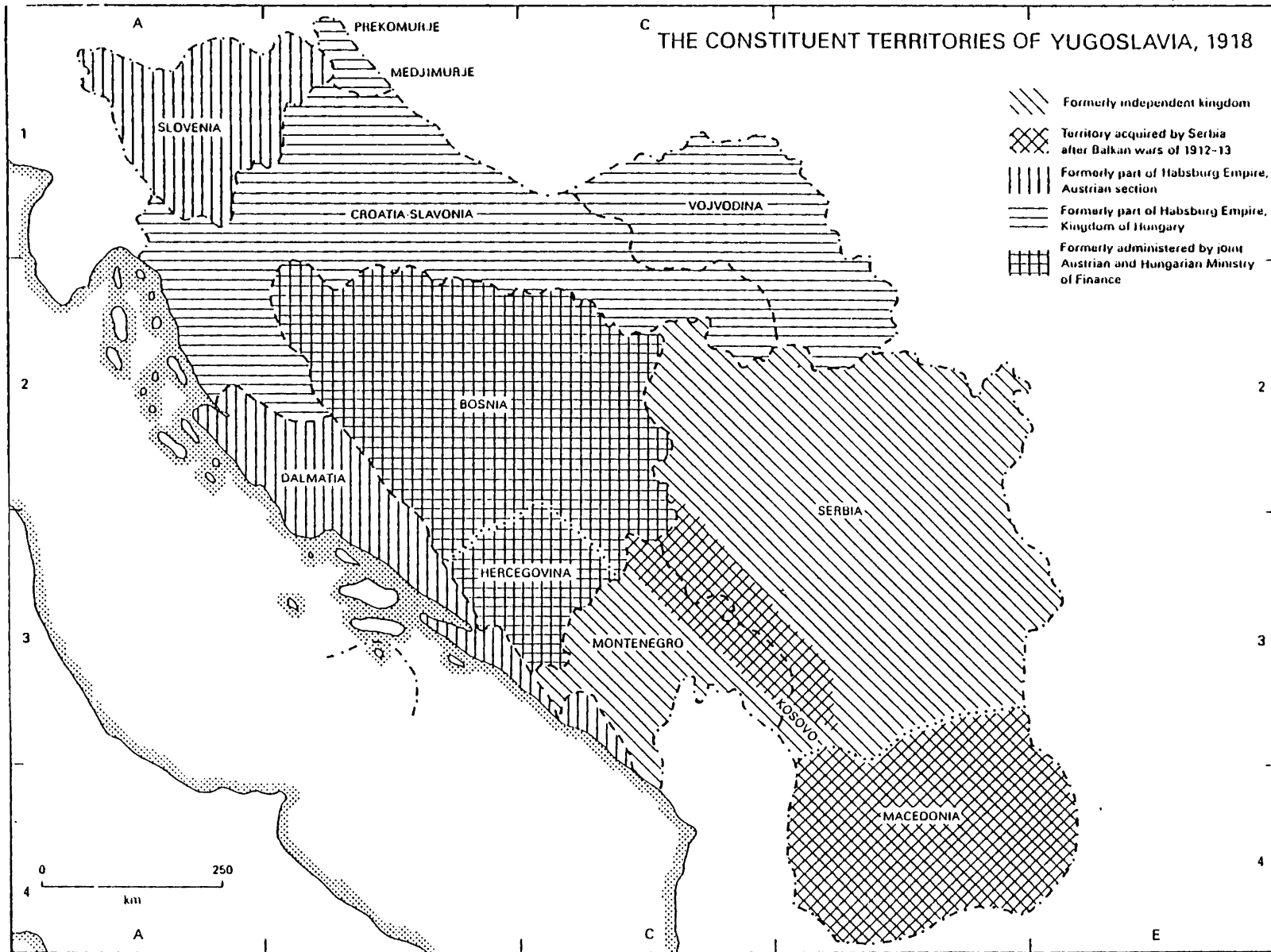
First Yugoslavia was a product of circumstances at the end of the First World War and two ideas developed on either side of the historical divide between the traditions of the Western, Roman Catholic Church on the one side, and the traditions of the Eastern Orthodox Church and Ottoman Islamic belief on the other: Croats and Slovenes were Roman Catholic, Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians were eastern Orthodox, and in areas of Bosnia and Serbia, many Slavs had converted to Islam during the Ottoman period. On the western side of the divide, in the Austro-Hungarian Habsburg Empire, the “Yugoslav idea” emerged, in which a common state could provide the framework for self-determination of all the South Slavs. On the other side “narrow Serbia” (without Kosovo/a and Vojvodina) gained independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1878, and the idea of creating a “Greater Serbia” in which all Serbs would live inside had taken roots. First Yugoslavia was established on the principle of self-determination implemented more or less and expression of the demand to free themselves from foreign domination. It also served the interests of the Entente powers as a block against Germany, and the revolutionary appeal of the Soviet Union.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> L. S. Stavrianos, *History of the Balkans Since 1453* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 616.

<sup>22</sup> On the First World War and formation of Yugoslav state, see Stephen Clissold ed., *A Short History of Yugoslavia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966); Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Yugoslavia* (London: Ernst Benn, 1971); Alex N. Dragnich, *Serbia, Nikola Pasic and Yugoslavia* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers U. P., 1974) and Fred Singleton, *A Short History of the Yugoslav People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

MAP 1



Source: Historical Atlas of East Central Europe  
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992

Unification would have been a difficult process under any other circumstances, but after four year-orgy of carnage known as the First World War, the task proved well beyond the capability of new country's political leaders. Three different approaches to governing the country were tried between the adoption of the country's first constitution in 1921 and the German invasion of 1941. Unfortunately, in the end, the first Yugoslav incarnation failed to win over its many peoples or to develop any framework for a kind of national coexistence.<sup>23</sup>

Given the separate traditions and identities of Yugoslavia's constituent peoples, a highly centralised state was probably the least appropriate form of government.<sup>24</sup> Yet, it was the preferred option as far as most Serb politicians, whether from the Kingdom of Serbia or the Habsburg lands, were concerned. Serbia's pre-war leaders aimed to rebuild their own war-shattered country and to continue to guide the destiny of the new state, while the leaders from the Habsburg lands hoped to integrate themselves into the new ruling elite.<sup>25</sup>

### **2.1.2. Tito's Yugoslavia and the National Question**

The troubled history of the First Yugoslavia ended with German and Italian invasion on 6 April 1941.<sup>26</sup> The Axis Powers broke the country into different parts; making

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<sup>23</sup> Stavrianos, *The Balkans*, 617-43.

<sup>24</sup> For the history and origin of national problems in Yugoslavia, see Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984).

<sup>25</sup> For the Serbs' historical claims to dominance in First Yugoslavia, and this population in Yugoslavia's overall population, see, Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse*, 34.

<sup>26</sup> About Royal Yugoslavia and Axis invasion, see Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974); J. R. Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis, 1938-1941* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963); Paul S. Shoup, *Communism and the*

Serbia a German protectorate, annexing parts of Slovenia and Istria to Italy, and creating a so-called Independent State of Croatia on the territory of Croatia and Bosnia. There followed a many sided war which was in part a civil war, in part a communist revolution, and in part a war of liberation from the Axis occupiers. The main elements were the Germans and Italians; Serbian Chetniks loyal to the Serbian monarch and to Royal Yugoslavia; the Ustasha, a fascist group, nurtured in Mussolini's Italy and installed to run the Independent State of Croatia - they launched a campaign of terror and massacre against the Serbs within their domain; and the Partisans, a communist-led guerrilla movement under Tito's command.<sup>27</sup>

In the end it was Tito's Partisans who won the war. A key factor in the communist victory was the West's assistance during the war. But, their programme of 'brotherhood and unity' also played an important role in bringing the war-torn Yugoslav communities together. The partisans could offer those dissatisfied with the first Yugoslavia the prospect of a second version of the country in which their aspirations would be accommodated by a federation.<sup>28</sup> New Yugoslavia was restored as a multinational state of related nations, thus taking advantage of the monarchy's failure to weld together the separate identities of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes into a

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*Yugoslav National Question* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968); Joseph Roucek, *Balkan Politics: International Relations in No-Man's Land* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1971); Hugh Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution* (London: Methuen, 1950); Hugh Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe Between the Wars: 1918-1941*, 2d.ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946); Joso Tomasevich, *Peasants, Politics and Economic Change in Yugoslavia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955).

<sup>27</sup> For a detailed account of the German and Italian occupation of Yugoslavia and the subsequent war, see Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, Vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 262-73 and Stavrianos, *The Balkans*, 771-84.

<sup>28</sup> For an account of the Yugoslav communists and the national question, see Aleksa Djilas, *The Contested Country: Yugoslav Unity and Communist Revolution, 1919-1953* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

single national consciousness by means of a centralised state structure and an official ideology of 'Yugoslavism'.<sup>29</sup>

In the second Yugoslavia, the new federal entities added to the three original groups. The Macedonians were acknowledged as a distinct national group, and Macedonia was set up as a separate constituent republic. The same status was granted to Montenegro, whose inhabitants were encouraged to identify with the territory's historic identity. Bosnia-Herzegovina was kept undivided. Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia became the six constituent republics of the Communist federation of Yugoslavia. Later, in 1974 two autonomous regions were carved out of Serbia - Vojvodina in the north and Kosovo/a in the south, because of their mixed ethnic composition (Map 2). As Pavlowitch describes:

The Communist Party put into practice a policy which aimed at balancing out the nationalities - to a certain extent against each other. It looked to the peripheral groups to weaken the central ones, particularly the Serbs and the Croats, whom it wanted to equalise. It substituted the ideological integration for ethnic integration, capping federalism with a unitarism of power and ideology. Ethnic pluralism and federal forms were meant as lightning conductors for national emotions until communism had managed to do away with them.<sup>30</sup>

In the overall Yugoslav federal structure, Yugoslavia's peoples were split into nations and national minorities. Initially, nations corresponded to those peoples who had a home republic, that is. Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Macedonians and Montenegrins. In 1971, the status of Muslim Slavs was elevated to that of a constituent nation.

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<sup>29</sup> Pavlowitch, *The Improbable Survivor*, 70.

# Yugoslavia In the 20th century, 1941-1989

MAP 2



- Boundaries of Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro, 1941-43
- - - Boundary proposed by Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference, 1946
- · - · Boundary of Yugoslavia, 1947-
- · · · Boundaries of federative republics
- · · · Boundaries of autonomous regions
- ▨ Free State of Trieste, 1947-54

0 100 miles  
0 100 kilometers  
Scale 1:5 720 000

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Source: Historical Atlas of East Central Europe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993)

Meanwhile, the Hungarians and Albanians, as well as all other peoples living in Yugoslavia, were classified as national minorities. Each republican and provincial constitution listed the nations and national minorities living there and officially both nations and national minorities had the same rights and duties. For example, in Bosnia-Herzegovina Serbs, Croats and Muslims were listed as the republic's constituent nations. In Croatia and Vojvodina Croats and Serbs were listed as constituent nations. Hungarians who lived in both Croatia and Vojvodina were listed as national minorities even though they outnumbered Croats in Vojvodina. Albanians were classified as a national minority in Kosovo/a, even though they formed the majority there and despite the fact that by the 1980s there were more Albanians in Yugoslavia than Montenegrins, Macedonians and Slovenes.<sup>31</sup>

Tito tried to create a balance between federal republics on the one hand, and he was determined against any upsurge of nationalism, on the other. In the early 1960s, a reform movement that demanded greater decentralisation emerged, particularly in Slovenia and Croatia. This movement objected to Belgrade's domination and preponderance in federal bureaucracies. Decentralisation would pacify this and would mean greater realisation of the principle of self-management. Throughout 1960s, power passed increasingly from Belgrade to the republics. However, the dissipation of power was so extensive that, in 1971, Tito intervened to pre-empt what he considered a potentially dangerous upsurge in nationalism and purged Croatia's League of Communists which had demonstrated the most prominent separatist tendencies. This was to be followed by major constitutional amendments made at the time and later

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 71.

confirmed by the introduction of a new constitution in 1974 devolving more authority from the federal to the republican level.

The 1974 constitution, which was Yugoslavia's sixth and the last, created a federation of six republics and two autonomous provinces. Kosovo/a with 80 per cent Albanian majority, and Vojvodina, with a Serb majority but also a considerably large Hungarian and a smaller Croatian minority were granted in the 1974 constitution a status just below that of a full republic, which meant that each had its own courts, police and territorial defence, and even more important, an independent vote in Yugoslavia's collective presidency alongside the other six republics.<sup>32</sup> The 1974 constitution was an intricate series of checks and balances designed to prevent any individual from acquiring as much power as Tito himself had held and to prevent any of Yugoslavia's peoples dominating the federation.

Consequently, the devolution process which began in the early 1950s following the break with Stalin had, by the 1970s, turned Yugoslavia into a de facto confederation.<sup>33</sup> According to the 1974 Constitution, Yugoslavia became a nine-party system; in addition to the eight republican and provincial organisations, the army-party organisation was formally placed on the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY). The Army, having backed Tito and being the only true Yugoslav institution was also given the role of preserving the federation's

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<sup>31</sup> According to the constitutional arrangements, it was impossible for each minority to unite with their co-nationals within the territories of the same state, and national minorities could not have their own republics, the right to form a republic was only given to the peoples recognised as nations.

<sup>32</sup> However, the Constitution's framers bowed to Serbian susceptibilities by allowing Serbia to retain ultimate sovereignty over these two provinces, See James Gow, "Deconstructing Yugoslavia," *Survival* 33, no. 4 (July/August 1991), 294.



territorial integrity.<sup>34</sup> Away from the Central Committee, each of the nine parties acted autonomously. In addition, a 'collective federal presidency' was established. It was composed of representatives from each of the republics as well as the two autonomous regions, Kosovo/a and Vojvodina, the Minister of Defence (who did not have voting rights) and Tito, who was designated 'President for Life'. A constitutional provision addressed the problem of Tito succession by creating a system in which the title of President would pass annually in a pre-set sequence from one member of the collective body to the next.

The mechanisms of the 1974 Constitution appeared to work while Tito was alive, mostly because his personal authority enabled him to intervene and settle disputes. Problems began to emerge, however, after his death in 1980 and Yugoslavia slid gradually into a crisis. The main problem was the absence of a real political authority at the centre. This political crisis was compounded by economic problems, which sharpened internal tensions.<sup>35</sup> The poorer parts of Yugoslavia experienced economic and financial difficulties, which quickly fuelled growing social, political and ethnic tensions. In 1981, for example, demonstrations in Kosovo/a included demands for full republican status, and resulted in the imposition of martial law.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Marko Milivojevic, "Descent Into Chaos: Yugoslavia's Worsening Crisis," *The South Slav Journal* 12, no. 1-2 (43-44) (Spring Summer 1989), 5.

<sup>34</sup> See James Gow, "Legitimacy and the Military: Yugoslav Civil-Military Relations and Some Implications for Defence," in *Yugoslavia's Security Dilemmas: Armed Forces, National Defence and Foreign Policy*, eds. M. Milivojevic et. al. (Oxford: Berg, 1988).

<sup>35</sup> For the Yugoslav self-management experiment in running the economy and its gradual impact on dissolution of Yugoslavia, see Harrold Lydall, *Yugoslavia in Crisis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

<sup>36</sup> See Branka Magas, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracking the Break-Up 1980-92* (London: Verso, 1993).

As the 1980s developed, Yugoslavia was surrounded by social, economic, political and constitutional crisis which could not be resolved, and indeed, aggravated by the division of power in the present administrative system. Although the six republics were in reality integrated through the power of the League of Yugoslav Communists, in practice, the day-to-day operation of the component parts of Yugoslavia was based on local centralism. With the decay of Communist discipline since Tito's death, it had been increasingly left to the individual republics' Communist parties to sort out their own affairs. This approach worked up to the point at which it became clear that the very different approaches adopted to political liberalisation and economic policy by especially Slovenia and Croatia were moving in almost the opposite direction to Serbia.<sup>37</sup> These relatively richer northern republics did not want to be 'exploited' by underdeveloped regions and the federal exchequer, especially when nationalistic feelings were taking over in Serbia.

## **2.2. The Rise of Serbian Nationalism and Its Repercussions**

### **2.2.1. The Serbian 'Memorandum'**

It turned out that 1974 Constitution dissatisfied everyone. It left Serbia with a sense of injury - as was made clear in the 'Memorandum' drafted by the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1986.<sup>38</sup> The document, which was a reinterpretation of Yugoslavia's recent past viewed through a Serb nationalist prism, severely criticised

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<sup>37</sup> Mark Almond. *Blundering in the Balkans: The European Community and the Yugoslav Crisis*. School of European Studies (Oxford, London: 1991), 7-8.

<sup>38</sup> This draft document was not published, although its impact was considerable. A further draft was completed the following year, but was not published, either. Although it was circulated unofficially, it was not openly available until 1988. It was first published in *Nase Teme* 33, nos. 1-2, Zagreb, in 1989.

Tito's Yugoslavia for being inherently and systematically anti-Serb.<sup>39</sup> The Memorandum would have been derided had it not been prepared by a highly respected body and supported by many of the most celebrated intellectuals in Serbia, including such renowned dissidents as Mihailo Markovic and Ljubomir Tadic as well as Dobrica Cosic.<sup>40</sup>

The draft Memorandum deals with a number of issues affecting the whole of Yugoslavia, but its most telling parts are those that concentrate on the position of Serbia and the Serbs within Yugoslavia. It alleged that Tito's communists had imposed an alien, that is, federal model of Yugoslavia onto a reluctant Serb nation and had since then systematically discriminated against the Serbs. These discriminatory policies dated back to the 1930s and stemmed from an alleged anti-Serb bias in the Comintern, based on the mistaken conviction that the Serbs had oppressed other nations in the first Yugoslavia. By 1941 this anti-Serb bias had supposedly become engrained in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia which had accordingly pursued a policy of "strong Yugoslavia, weak Serbia". According to the authors of the Memorandum, Croats, in the person of Josip Broz Tito, and Slovenes, in the person of Edvard Kardelj, had deliberately constructed federal Yugoslavia in such a way as to exploit Serbia economically. Moreover, Tito had ensured that Serbs would remain

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<sup>39</sup> Magas, *The Destruction*, 199-200.

<sup>40</sup> The 'Greater Serbia' agenda for the late 20th century grew out of the thinking and writings of Dobrica Cosic, one of Serbia's most distinguished novelists. Cosic was renowned as a writer of popular, historic epics, mostly set during the wars and overflowing with references to Serb mythology. He had been a Partisan during the Second World War and a friend of Tito's for more than twenty years, yet he could not come to terms with Albanian emancipation and was purged from the LCY for nationalism in 1968. In his frustration, after his fall from grace, Cosic dreamed up a complex and paradoxical theory of Serb national persecution under communism which over two decades evolved into a Greater Serbian programme. Increasingly, Cosic's ideas permeated the Serbian Association of Writers and fuelled an acrimonious dialogue between Serb and Slovene intellectuals within the Yugoslav Association of Writers. As early as 1986, five years before Yugoslavia's bloody war began,

weak and exploited by dividing them between several federal units and, in particular, by carving the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo/a out of Serbia in the 1974 constitution. Serbs faced discrimination throughout Yugoslavia, the Memorandum alleged, while in Kosovo they were being subjected to 'genocide' at the hands of the irredentist and separatist Albanians.<sup>41</sup>

The Serb conviction was that 'Yugoslavia, in its present form, was no longer an adequate solution to the Serbs' nationalist aspirations. The Memorandum argued that the country was disintegrating and that the forty per cent of Serbs had been left languishing beyond the frontiers of the motherland.<sup>42</sup> In a sense, the 'Memorandum' was a modernised version of earlier plans for a 'Greater Serbia'. As an expert puts it;

During the 19th century the *raison d'etre* of the Serbian state had been to unite all Serbs living in the Balkans. In pursuing this aim Serbia had been remarkably successful. By 1918, through wars and great power alliances, the goal of national unity had been achieved, though Serb unity had come largely at the expense of many of the other peoples living in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Royal Yugoslavia satisfied Serb nationalists in a way that Tito's Yugoslavia, which aimed to keep all Yugoslavia's citizens happy, never could. The second Yugoslavia was no Serb tyranny. Indeed, that was precisely what Serb nationalists found most objectionable about Tito's state. For, to twisted nationalist minds, Tito had robbed

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this Association became the first all Yugoslav institution to break up, as its non-Serb members feared that the popularity of Cosic's ideas heralded a return to Serb hegemony in Yugoslavia.

<sup>41</sup> For detailed account of the 'Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences', see Laura Silber and Alan Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia*, Penguin Books (Harmondsworth: 1996), 31-36.

<sup>42</sup> According to 1981 census, carried out a year after Tito's death, Serbs made up about 36 per cent of Yugoslavia's population. Of these, close to 2 million lived outside the republic of Serbia while another 1.3 million lived in Serbia's autonomous provinces, in addition to the 4.9 million Serbs of inner Serbia, see Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse*, p. 80.

Serbs of their Yugoslav Empire and now devolution appeared to be threatening their very national existence.<sup>43</sup>

Despite the obvious absurdity of most of the Memorandum's allegations, it was not an isolated analysis of Yugoslavia's dilemma and recent past. It was the most influential of several blatantly propagandist and nationalist polemics published in Serbia in the mid-1980s. Fringe groups with extreme and often racist views exist in all societies but rarely have any chance of winning power. Had the opinions expressed in the Memorandum remained those of a tiny faction of largely frustrated, though celebrated, intellectuals, they would have done nobody any harm. But, in the hands of a Machiavellian politician they posed a serious threat to the Yugoslav federation, since the Memorandum's xenophobia and simplistic analysis struck a chord among many Serbs at a time of declining living standards and severely diminished expectations.<sup>44</sup>

### **2.2.2. Milosevic's Irresistible Rise and His Stirring-up of Kosovo/a**

As a well known British expert on Yugoslavia put it: "If the Memorandum provided a theoretical basis for Serbian nationalist reassertion in Yugoslavia in the post-Tito period, action was provided by Slobodan Milosevic, who became Serbia's Party leader in 1986."<sup>45</sup> Milosevic, a hardline communist but also a brilliant populist politician found the starting point for his campaign of Serb reassertion among the Serb minority

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 80-1.

<sup>44</sup> Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia's Disintegration and Balkan Politics in Transition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 51-5.

<sup>45</sup> Cviic, *Remaking the Balkans*, 66.

in Kosovo/a.<sup>46</sup> It is argued that despite the Serbs' growing frustration and Albanians' unrest, the stalemate over Kosovo/a might have dragged on had Milosevic not skilfully exploited the allegations about the Albanian terror against the Serbs of Kosovo/a to build a new and aggressive populist movement. Soon after, his election as party president in Serbia, in April 1987 he visited Kosovo/a to address a mass meeting of local Serbs and he promised them that "nobody would ever beat them again".<sup>47</sup> Before Milosevic's speech at Kosovo Polje, no communist politician had overtly appealed to the nationalist sentiments of one of Yugoslavia's peoples. Milosevic became the first politician to drop the Titoist jargon and with it all the commitment to national equality.<sup>48</sup>

In the autumn of the same year, he attacked the previous leadership in Serbia, including Serbia's President and his own mentor Ivan Stambolic for having been too weak on Kosovo/a.<sup>49</sup> Later on, Milosevic carried out a thorough purge in the Serbian Communist Party to consolidate his position. Within a year he became to be seen as the right man to lead what soon came to be known among the Serbs as *treći Srpski ustanak* (the third Serbian uprising).<sup>50</sup>

Milosevic's promise to Serbian people was to make Serbia 'whole' again by repairing damage done by the 1974 Constitution and ending autonomy for the provinces. In 1988-89, he brought Kosovo/a, by the use of the Federal Army tanks, and Vojvodina,

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<sup>46</sup> For the history and current conflict in Kosovo/a, see, Noel Malcolm, *Kosova: A Short History* (London, 1998). See, also, Stevan K. Pavlowitch and Elez Biberaj, "The Albanian Problem in Yugoslavia: Two Views," *Conflict Studies*, No. 137/8, Institute for the Study of Conflict (London: 1982).

<sup>47</sup> Silber and Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia*, 37.

<sup>48</sup> For a detailed account of Milosevic's rise to power, see *Ibid.*, 37-47.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

mostly by political pressure and intimidation, under Belgrade's rule. At a huge rally on 28 June 1989 held in Kosovo Polje, the scene of the 1389 battle whose 600 anniversary was being marked, Milosevic told his fellow Serbs that the province, for long severed from mother Serbia, had been restored.<sup>51</sup> His popularity reached a peak when, in January 1989, Serbia extended its control over the tiny republic of Montenegro by means of a political coup. At the end, Milosevic's manoeuvres for the reassertion of 'Greater Serbia' alarmed Yugoslavia's non-Serb populations, since he gained three more extra seats -those of Kosovo, Montenegro and Vojvodina - in addition to its own on the eight member collective presidency of Yugoslavia.

### **2.3. Slovenian Resentment and Assertion of Political Sovereignty**

Slovenia had initially made some attempts to defend the Albanians in Kosovo/a, partly because, as a tiny republic, Slovenia itself felt threatened. If 2 million ethnic Albanians could be placed under direct Belgrade rule, why not 2 million Slovenes? In fact, Slovenian disillusionment with Yugoslavia had started much earlier. Since the 1970s, the Slovenes wanted to get closer to their two peaceful and highly prosperous neighbours, Austria and Italy.<sup>52</sup> Since Slovenia had more or less achieved a western standard of living and become economically more prosperous than other Republics of Yugoslavia, it wanted to get rid of the heavy burden of supporting underdeveloped

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<sup>50</sup> Cviic, *Remaking the Balkans*, 67.

<sup>51</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (London: Papermac, 1996), 213.

<sup>52</sup> Since 1978, Slovenia (together with Croatia) had been participating in the activities of an informal organisation called Alpen-Adria (Alpe-Jadran in Croat and Slovene) whose purpose was to co-operate in the fields of culture, energy, environment, sport, transport and etc. Through this co-operation the Slovenes and Croats had discovered how much they still had in common with these former regions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Christopher Cviic, "The Background," 95-6.

regions of Yugoslavia financially. The Serbian occupation of Kosovo/a, the huge costs of which were borne by the whole of Yugoslavia but with only Serbia having any say in the handling of Kosovo/a affairs; the growing Serbian obstruction on the economic front from the mid-1980s onwards, including trade boycotts against Slovenia, special tariffs on Slovene goods, and the monetary 'coup' in December 1990, in which a financially desperate Serbian government, using its own National Bank 'helped itself' to 1.7 billion worth of money from the Yugoslav National Bank; and most important, the threat of the imposition of a new strongly Serbian centralist regime under Milosevic that would curtail Kosovo/a's autonomy forced Slovenia to make arrangements to protect itself from the next stages of Milosevic's slow-moving constitutional coup.

In September and October 1989 it drafted and passed a new Slovenian constitution, giving itself legislative sovereignty (its own laws would take precedence over those of the federal state) and explicitly declaring its right to secede.<sup>53</sup> Although the formation of opposition parties began in Slovenia in late 1989, the Communist Party's monopoly on power was not broken until the early 1990. In January 1990, the Slovenian delegation walked out of an emergency congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) when several of their reform projects were rejected. In February, the Slovene party renamed itself the party of Democratic Renewal and arranged for democratic elections to be held at the end of March, thereby breaking the communists grip on power.

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<sup>53</sup> Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962-1991*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Bloomington, Indiana, 1992), 240-2; Magas, *The Destruction*, 224-6; Gow, *Legitimacy and the Military: The Yugoslav Crisis* (London: Pinter, 1992), 78-94.



## 2.4. Croatian Resentment and Revival of Croatian Nationalism

The Croatian nationalist feelings which had been simmering discontentedly ever since the suppression of the 'Croatian Spring' in the early 1970s had been stung into action by the revival of Serbian nationalism in the mid-1980s. Milosevic encouraged the anti-Croat rhetoric and the official Serbian media started commonly referring to the head of the Croatian Communists, Ivica Racan, as an Ustasha.<sup>54</sup> All the old Croatian grievances came to the surface again and the result was an upsurge of Croatian nationalists, such as the former partisan and Yugoslav army general, Franjo Tudjman, who wanted to distinguish the long-standing national aspirations of Croatia for independence of Belgrade. Apart from all the historical debates, there were real fears for the future too, such as those sparked off by Dobrica Cosic in July 1989 when he told an interviewer that large parts of Croatia should be reassigned to another republic.<sup>55</sup>

In March and April of 1990, Slovenia and Croatia held their first multi-party elections in almost fifty years. In Slovenia, Milan Kucan was elected President and forced to work with a government formed by a liberal-nationalist coalition. In Croatia, the 'Croatian Democratic Union' (HDZ), a more overtly nationalist party, and its presidential candidate Franjo Tudjman, won decisive victories.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> As Branka Magas points out, Racan's family had in fact been murdered by the Ustasha during the War, See Magas, *The Destruction*, 241.

<sup>55</sup> Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 244.

<sup>56</sup> For a more detailed account of this period, see James Gow, "Deconstructing Yugoslavia," *Survival* 33, no. 4 (July/August 1991), and James Gow, *Yugoslav Endgames: Civil Strife and Inter-state Conflict*, London Defence Studies, No. 5, (London: Brassey's, 1991); see also Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 79-113.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, an area where the delicate balance between Muslims, Serbs and Croats often led to co-operation, voting followed national lines, but it produced a promising all-party, all-nationality government. Alija Izetbegovic, a Muslim, was chosen as President. In Macedonia, a nationalist government was elected as well. In Serbia and Montenegro, former hard line Communists, managed to win by playing on ultra nationalist themes and making use of their control of the mass media and the state apparatus. Even under the new circumstances, Milosevic and the federal military leadership rejected joint Croatian and Slovenian proposals for a Yugoslav confederation as well as the Bosnian and Macedonian compromise proposals for a looser federation or union of sovereign Yugoslav states. Once again the constitutional discussions revolved around two concepts for the future of Yugoslavia: federalism and confederalism. These reflected the old debate about the Yugoslav idea. A new federation proposed by Serbia which was to continue as a single state run from Belgrade. On the other hand, Slovenia and Croatia wanted Yugoslavia to become a loose association of independent, sovereign states, similar to the European Community. The only firm feature of this proposal was the independence of sovereign states. From this basic point, anything else involving the transfer of measures of sovereignty to confederal bodies was open to negotiation. Montenegro backed the Serbian plan; Bosnia and Macedonia were caught in the middle, although they tended to prefer confederal option.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> For all the discussions about the future of Yugoslavia, see Alan Fogelquist. *Handbook of Facts on: The Break-up of Yugoslavia, International Policy and the War in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Los Angeles: AEIOU, 1993), 5-8.

A final phase of the constitutional talks, began in early 1991, was deadlocked as the divide between Slovenia and Croatia, on the one hand, and Serbia and Montenegro, on the other, was further intensified by the ideological differences of the governments in those republics. In the meantime, Milosevic had changed his strategy. Until the second half of 1990, Milosevic had pursued his first preference, which was to gain control over Yugoslavia through the existing structures of the Communist Party and the federal government. But this option had slipped from his grasp with the disintegration of the Communist Party and the vertical division of the Yugoslav politics into a set of national parties in various republics. That left him with his second option: if Yugoslavia could not be controlled as a single entity, he would carve out of it a new entity, an extended Serbian territory embracing all the Serbs living in Yugoslav territories.<sup>58</sup>

#### **2.4.1. Dissolution in Full Swing: Serbian Minority in Croatia**

The first clear sign of Milosevic's new strategy came about in the Knin region of Croatia - part of the old Military Frontier or "Krajina" zone on Bosnia's north-western border which had a majority population of Serbs.<sup>59</sup> For the Croatian elections in April 1990, these Serbs had organised themselves into a 'Serbian Democratic Party' (SDS); Milosevic had probably taken an interest from the start in this development, but it seems to have been essentially a local initiative expressing fears of the local Serbs driven by the memories of atrocities committed by the Croat Ustasha regime during the

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<sup>58</sup> This was exactly what the advocates of Greater Serbia wanted to achieve; 'extending the territories where a Serb lay buried'. Vojislav Seselj, one such prominent advocate who appeared on the political scene in late 1980s, argued that Serbia's territory covered the territory from the 'sanctuaries of the east to the tombs of west', namely from Kosovo to Croatia. See Mark Almond, *Europe's Backyard War: The War in the Balkans* (London: Heinemann, 1994), 4.

Second World War, and were galvanised by the coming to power of a nationalist party in Croatia.<sup>60</sup> In the summer of 1990, however, the Knin SDS was taken over by an extremist leader who seems to have been in close contact with Milosevic.

A local referendum was held in August on autonomy of the Serbs, in defiance of the Croatian government, which declared it illegal. They formed paramilitary units around police units staffed by Serbs (apparently aided by officers of the federal army garrison whose commander officer was General Ratko Mladic) and effectively cut off predominantly Serb-populated areas of Croatia from the rest of the republic. These areas, in which one of two adjacent villages could be Serb and the other Croat, possessed about one third of the 600,000 Serbs living in Croatia.<sup>61</sup> By January 1991 the local Serb leaders were describing the area as the 'Serb Autonomous Region of the Krajina', and they were busy forming their own parliament. By March 1991, Krajina Serbs had already proclaimed themselves a part of Serbia.<sup>62</sup>

The events in Krajina showed that, neither Croatia, nor Bosnia, where Serbs accounted for about 30 per cent of the inhabitants, could be independent without trouble. During the first half of 1991, the Serb challenge spread. Armed Serbs in other areas, too, such as Slavonia in northern Croatia, created 'no-go-Serb-only' zones. Each time Croatian police were sent in, the Yugoslav Army moved in as well, claiming it was stopping ethnic clashes. Although a conscript army drawn from all the nations and national

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<sup>59</sup> For the history of the 'Krajina' region, see, Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 77.

<sup>60</sup> Lenard Conen, *Broken Bonds*, 126-35.

<sup>61</sup> See, for details, Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse*, 134-5.

<sup>62</sup> See Hugh Poulton, *The Balkans: Minorities and States in Conflict* (London: 1991), 24-27; Magas, *Destruction of Yugoslavia*, 293-313; Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War*, (London: 1992), 13-19, Mark Almond, *Europe's Backyard War*, 215-217, Cviic, *Remaking the Balkans*, 74.

minorities of Yugoslavia, an estimated 70 % of the officers in the Yugoslav Army were Serbs.<sup>63</sup>

## 2.5. The Fast Slide into War

The events of spring 1991 were a watershed. Milosevic secretly met Croatian president Tudjman at Karadjordjevo on 25 March and both leaders had agreed that should Yugoslavia disintegrate, Bosnia and Hercegovina would be divided between their two republics.<sup>64</sup> Where Serb and Croat leaders differed was on the question of which territories would fall to each side. Croatia's war of independence was not about Croatia's right to secede; that had already been acknowledged by Milosevic. It was about which territories Croatia would be allowed to take out of Yugoslavia. Apparently, both presidents played a double game, saying one thing for the public, and especially international consumption, and doing the opposite. Tudjman repeatedly stressed the inviolability of the republican borders, demanding recognition of Croatian sovereignty within its existing frontiers; he secretly conspired throughout to deny the same right to Bosnia-Hercegovina. Milosevic, similarly, argued that his republic sought to defend the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia as a whole; but he was already pursuing a plan to let the Croats and Slovenes go, but to keep Croatia's Serb majority areas inside remaining Yugoslavia by force if necessary. By March 1991, Milosevic was no longer for Yugoslavia; he was for Greater Serbia. But he seems to

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<sup>63</sup> Cviic, *Remaking the Balkans*, 74.

<sup>64</sup> Milan Andrejevich, "Retreating From the Brink of Collapse," *Report on Eastern Europe* (April 12, 1991), 29. See the repercussions of this meeting and the subsequent meetings between Milosevic and Tudjman in Chapter VI.

have entertained a belief that Bosnia, Macedonia and parts of Croatia would remain under his control.<sup>65</sup>

During the discussions of spring and summer of 1991, Milosevic's message was clearer than ever; he did not dispute the right of the Croats and Slovenes to secede. But in line with his aim to unify all Serbs in a single state, he insisted that, in return, the Serbs of Croatia had the same right to secede from Croatia, and that the break-up of Yugoslavia would necessitate a redrawing of borders which had been drawn in 1945. The obvious issue, at this stage, was the reflection of the stark contradiction between two central articles of the Helsinki Final Act; the commitment to self-determination of nations and the principle of the inviolability of borders.

Break-up was the easiest for the Slovenes since they had no Serb population, and Milosevic had already made it plain that Serbia would not fight to keep the Slovenes in Yugoslavia. However, in a speech to the Serbian Assembly on 30 May 1991, Milosevic clearly warned that if Croatia wanted independence, it would be allowed to do so only if it left behind part of its territory inhabited by ethnic Serbs.<sup>66</sup> However, for President Tudjman, the Serbs of Croatia were simply a minority living in a sovereign state and, therefore, would have to cohabit peacefully with the Croatian majority, whether or not Croatia were inside or outside the Yugoslav Federation.

Although Croatian politicians publicly maintained that the 'Croatian Serb' question was an internal issue, the problem had in fact much broader repercussions and was

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<sup>65</sup> Silber and Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia*, 144.

<sup>66</sup> *FBIS-EEU-91-105* (31 May 1991), 22-26.

likely to create enormous pressure about the future of Croatia. It was apparent that unless the Croatian leaders would be able to reach a negotiated accommodation with Milosevic concerning the Krajina Serbs, Croatia would have to fight its way out of the Yugoslav Federation. Tudjman decided that if Slovenia disassociated itself from Yugoslavia, Croatia would immediately take the same course of action, hoping that intervention by the US and the international community would preserve the peace in the region. In April 1990, Slovenia and Croatia had signed a joint defence agreement, promising mutual assistance and the sharing of intelligence.<sup>67</sup> The two sides also agreed to co-ordinate their declarations of independence but it later became apparent that, at that time, Croatia did not have any preparation for the statehood and lost most of the precious time with inter-republican talks.<sup>68</sup>

The Croat and Slovene leaders were finally convinced that there could be no accommodation with the present Serbian leadership, when, on 15 May 1991, the Serbs and Montenegrins, with the bogus representatives of no longer existent Kosovo and Vojvodina, blocked the automatic rotation of the office of the Chairman of Federal Presidency (nominal head of the SFRY) to the Croatian representative, Stipe Mesic.<sup>69</sup> The Serbian bloc did so to create conditions for a 'state of emergency' in which the Army would declare a martial law.<sup>70</sup> From that point on, the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) had ceased *de facto* to function. Slovenia, closely followed by Croatia, started independence preparations. The referendums, in

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<sup>67</sup> See Silber and Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia*, 149-150.

<sup>68</sup> Lenard Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 212-3.

<sup>69</sup> Fogelquist, *Handbook of Facts*, 6-7.

<sup>70</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 20.

December 1990 in Slovenia and May 19, 1991 in Croatia had produced an overwhelming vote for independence.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Krajina Serbs had, meanwhile, boycotted Croatia's referendum. Ninety-three percent of those voting supported Croatia's independence, which guaranteed cultural autonomy for "the Serbs and members of other nationalities in Croatia." To second question in the referendum, asking whether Croatia should remain part of a federal Yugoslavia, 92 per cent voted 'No.' The turn out was 82 per cent. In August 1990, the Krajina Serbs had held their referendum of their own in which more than ninety-nine percent, according to organisers, voted to stay in Yugoslavia. See Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 153.



## CHAPTER III: ERUPTION OF THE WAR AND

### SHAPING OF INTERNATIONAL ATTITUDE

#### 3.1. Slovenian and Croatian Declarations of Independence and War in Yugoslavia

##### 3.1.1. Slovenia's Phoney War

On June 25, both Croatia and Slovenia declared independence by near a unanimous vote of their parliaments. The next day, the *JNA* began the operations which the Slovenes were later to characterise as an invasion and occupation of their newly independent country by a foreign country.

The *JNA* Generals assumed that a show of force would be enough to deter Slovenian independence. When it began operations in Slovenia, the *JNA* was not going to war but was attempting to carry out a limited instruction from the federal government in Belgrade to take control of border posts in conjunction with the units of federal police. The second assumption was that, had Slovenia shown any resistance, the *JNA* would have the possibility to escalate the war waged for the preservation of the integrity of Yugoslavia against the 'secessionists', something which would essentially, be backed by the outside world.<sup>72</sup>

However, both of these assumptions proved to be ill founded. First of all, Slovenia engaged the *JNA* in a series of armed clashes. *JNA* officers did not expect the Slovene

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<sup>72</sup> See James Gow, "One Year of War in Bosnia-Herzegovina," *RFE/RL Research Report* 2, no. 23 (4 June 1993), 1-7.

territorial defence to put up an armed resistance of a serious nature; and they were not sufficiently armed to fight a war against the Slovenes.<sup>73</sup> When the *JNA* found itself engaged in battle, the second possibility -escalation of the conflict- also turned out to be ill-founded, since, on the second day of the conflict, the international community, in the form of the EC's presidential Troika, intervened, offering to mediate. As a result, although the *JNA* began to escalate the conflict, it was confused and put under constraint by international community.<sup>74</sup>

### 3.1.2. Initial International Responses to the Crisis:

From the very beginning of the crisis of Yugoslav dissolution, international response was firm and clear; keeping Yugoslav unity and territorial integrity intact and trying to prevent dissolution lest it serves as a bad example for Soviet Union's restless republics.

As early as November 1990, the CIA warned the Bush Administration: 'The Yugoslav experiment has failed. The country will fall apart. That will probably be accompanied by acts of violence and unrest that could lead to a civil war'.<sup>75</sup> However, not many politicians paid attention. Instead, Bush and Baker relied on what Eagleburger called 'a well-tested working relationship' with Milosevic.<sup>76</sup> The British and Germans thought that the CIA was overreacting: they could not accept that the horrors of the sort going on in other parts of the world could occur in their own backyard.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 154-8.

<sup>74</sup> Gow, "One Year of War," 5.

<sup>75</sup> David Binder, "Yugoslavia Seen Breaking-Up Soon," *New York Times*, 28 November 1990.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Roger Boyes, 'America Gets Tough with Serbs in Policy Switch', *The Times*, 23 April, 1992.

<sup>77</sup> British officials said that they did not agree with the assessment made by the CIA that the international community 'should roll with the punch' and accept that it might soon have to deal with

President Bush wrote in March 1991 to the Yugoslav Prime Minister, Ante Markovic, warning that the US 'would not reward' those who split off from Yugoslavia without the agreement of other parties.<sup>78</sup> It seems that, at this stage, President Bush had a kind of doctrine which can be summed up as 'states may neither be destroyed, nor created.'<sup>79</sup> In line with this doctrine, the public statement, published by the State Department at the end of May 1991, made it clear that the US government supported the 'territorial integrity of Yugoslavia within its present borders'. It opposed changing status of inner borders, i.e. making them international boundaries and declared that 'the US shall not encourage or reward secession'.<sup>80</sup>

At this stage, the West did not seem to know what to do with possibilities of some communist federations breaking up. The belief that the 'continued existence of all states is the great prize of diplomacy' was the essence of Western diplomacy for decades. Both the EC statesmen and the US leaders remained committed in spirit as well as deed to the Helsinki Agreement made with Brezhnev's Soviet Union and its satellites during the Cold War. Signing an agreement, banning territorial changes in 1975, when no-one could envisage the peaceful disappearance of communist systems in the East was considered as a triumph of diplomacy. However, after the bloodless revolutions of 1989, still trying to hold with that agreement was obviously not easy. It

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new sovereign entities in Europe. Reported by Hella Pick, 'Hurd Urges EC Act on Yugoslavia', *The Guardian*, 10 May 1991.

<sup>78</sup> Christopher Cviic, *An Awful Warning: The War in Ex-Yugoslavia*. Centre for Policy Studies, No. 39 (London: 1994).

<sup>79</sup> See Marc Almond, *Blundering in the Balkans: The European Community and the Yugoslav Crisis*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. School of European Studies (Oxford & London: 1991).

<sup>80</sup> In fact, the statement's conclusion was a threatening forecast; 'we believe that the heterogeneousness of most of the Yugoslav republics means that any dismantling of Yugoslavia is likely to aggravate rather than solve ethnic tensions'. However, as Mark Almond points out 'the

put the democratic countries in the West in a position of being the defenders of the old communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia without a democratic legitimacy:<sup>81</sup>

The cult of stability and hostility to boundary changes were not just features of post-Napoleonic Empire. In the late twentieth century, Metternich had his disciples, too. The Holy Alliance which he helped to forge in 1815 as a rock of stability against change of any kind was the model for Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe...Fear of break-up of the Soviet Union was as strong in Washington as Moscow.<sup>82</sup>

In line with these considerations, on June 21, four days before Croatia and Slovenia were to declare their independence, James Baker, passing through Belgrade declared that, in common with the governments of Western Europe, the US policy was that 'the unity and integrity of Yugoslavia should be preserved, and that the US would not recognise any unilateral declarations of independence by Croatia and Slovenia'.<sup>83</sup> During his visit, he warned Slovene President Milan Kucan that the "Helsinki Final Act recognised only peaceful self-determination, and not secession by force". When he met the Serb leadership, he told them that the US would continue to press the Slovenes and Croats not to go ahead with independence, but that, equally, the US would not countenance the use of force to prevent declarations of independence.

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author of the statement, Lawrence Eagleburger, did not elucidate the roots of those escalating tension and as why violence was likely'. Almond, *Europe's Backyard War*, 40.

<sup>81</sup> Almond, *Blundering in the Balkans*, 4.

<sup>82</sup> Almond, *Europe's Backyard War*, 35.

<sup>83</sup> Thomas Friedman, "Appeal for Yugoslav Unity is Unheeded, Baker Says," *International Herald Tribune*, 22-23 June 1991.

These were the same mixed signals that the US ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmermann, had been issuing for months.<sup>84</sup>

The implications of a possible collapse of Yugoslavia for the Soviet Union were clearly on the minds of European and American officials. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, James Dobbin, told the Senate Committee, “an outbreak of conflict in Yugoslavia, or indeed anywhere in the Baltics, would set back our hopes for a new era of peace, stability and co-operation in Europe.”<sup>85</sup> A State Department official told a congressional aide concerned with the human rights situation in Yugoslavia on the eve of the Slovene and Croat declarations of independence not to get too worried about what was happening:

Don't make a big deal about them. The Serbs are trying to hold the country together...Don't break-up Yugoslavia because people in the Soviet Union would use it as a model. The consequences of a Soviet break-up could be 'nuclear'.<sup>86</sup>

At that time, certainly there was consensus on both sides of the Atlantic about the need to preserve Yugoslavia. Influential elements in the Western media also supported the US-EC consensus on the matter. In early May 1991, the *Financial Times* was dismissive of the Croat view that the *JNA* essentially served Serbian interests. It assured its readers that “the army's role, however, is more complicated.” According to Almond's view “the *Financial Times* reflected the tone of post-Thatcher

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<sup>84</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 150-51.

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Paula Franklin Lytle, “US Policy Toward the Demise of Yugoslavia,” *East European Politics and Societies* 6 (Fall 1992), 309-10.

Conservative government opinion, having a chorus of pro-Major commentators on everything from ERM to foreign policy.”<sup>87</sup>

In the EC, the general tone was in favour of the preservation of the Soviet Union with Gorbachev at its head. Earlier opponents of this view such as Mrs. Thatcher and the Danes had been defeated. The feeling that the disappearance of Soviet Union would be a disaster was shared by Mrs. Thatcher’s Chancellor of Exchequer and the imminent successor, John Major. This line of argument was to remain John Major’s main analysis in the years to come. For instance, two years after the conflict erupted into violence, he was telling the House of Commons: ‘the biggest single cause of what happened in Bosnia is the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disappearance of the discipline that that exerted over ancient hatreds in the former Yugoslavia...that collapse was by far the greatest cause of the current tragedy.’<sup>88</sup>

Knowing that the republics of Federal Yugoslavia were very keen on integrating themselves in the Community of European states after declaring their independence; the EC, with the aim of discouraging the ‘secessionists’, issued a declaration on 26 March stating that “according to the views of the Twelve, a united and democratic Yugoslavia has the best chance to harmonically integrate into the new Europe.”<sup>89</sup> To add injury to the insult, Italy’s Gianni de Michelis warned neighbouring Slovenia that ‘it could expect to wait for 50 years before being admitted to the EC’.<sup>90</sup> Obviously, all

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<sup>86</sup> See Patrick Giynn, “Yugoblunder,” *The New Republic*, 24 February 1992, 16.

<sup>87</sup> However, whether the Financial Times’ views influenced or reflected government thinking is immaterial. Mark Almond, *Europe’s Backyard War*, 41.

<sup>88</sup> House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 23 June 1993, col. 324.

<sup>89</sup> John Palmer, “EC to Press for Unity in Belgrade,” *The Guardian*, 14 May 1991.

<sup>90</sup> David Buchan, “EC Takes Cautious Line on Yugoslavia,” *The Financial Times*, 29 May 1991.

these comments were carefully evaluated by the Federal officials in Belgrade before deciding to attack Slovenia.

Unfortunately, the EC, like the US, overlooked an inconvenient reality; unity and democracy were logically incompatible in Yugoslavia by then. Only, Austria's Foreign Minister Alois Mock asserted that, should the Yugoslav republics demand independence, this request must be considered urgently and seriously. Although Austria pledged to continue dealing with the central authorities in Belgrade, Mock also made it clear that the main task was to 'prevent a civil war and the use of force' even if this entailed the recognition of the right to self-determination.<sup>91</sup> Within days, the Greens' group in Austria's legislature presented to the Foreign Relations Committee of the Parliament in Vienna a resolution calling for the full recognition of Slovenia. Most of other West European governments dismissed this attitude as worst dangerous or best irrelevant, a nostalgia for meddling, according to the traditions of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>92</sup>

In Early May 1991, when Tudjman had visited London and appealed to Western governments to drop support for 'the Yugoslav state which is historically ill-conceived',<sup>93</sup> John Major had turned down his request to be received at Downing Street for even an informal discussion.<sup>94</sup> *The Times* of London had asserted in a characteristically booming "No to Balkanisation" leading article, saying that Tudjman was plainly wrong since 'the majority (of the Yugoslav people) would still prefer loose

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<sup>91</sup> See interview with Alois Mock on ORF television network, Vienna, 13 March 1991, in *FBIS-WEU-91-050* (14 March 1991), 2.

<sup>92</sup> A feeling heightened by discussions about a possible 'confederation' between Slovenia and Austria. For details, see, *FBIS-WEU-91-057* (25 March 1991), 5.

<sup>93</sup> Hella Pick, "Hurd Urges EC to Act on Yugoslavia," *The Guardian*, 10 May 1991.

confederation to a total split'.<sup>95</sup> Even after the fighting in Slovenia had started, the Foreign Office Minister with responsibility for the Balkans still saw an active role for the *JNA*. Mark Lennox-Boyd told the House of Commons that though the government "would deplore the use of force... I must add, however, that the Yugoslav federal army might have under the constitution a role in restoring order".<sup>96</sup> Lennox-Boyd added, as the fighter bombers swooped over Ljubljana and attacked a convoy of commercial vehicles including British trucks, "we and our Western partners have a clear preference for the continuation of a single Yugoslav political entity."<sup>97</sup> These carefully chosen words had, of course, the desired effect on the Serbian nationalists led by Milosevic.

Oddly enough, it was the British newspapers and the British analysts who foresaw the approaching crisis. For instance, *The Guardian*, *The Economist* and most of the leading Balkan analysts in Britain took up an opposite view by advocating the acceptance of independence for all Yugoslav republics. For example, one of the prominent British academics, Lawrence Freedman argued that 'by stressing the unrealistic concept of national unity, the international community has made the civil war more likely in Yugoslavia'.<sup>98</sup> A month before Slovenian and Croatian declarations of independence, the leading Yugoslav expert and a fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) Christopher Cviic had pointed out that 'the federation has come to an end and that the West must begin to work with a new

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> "No To Balkanisation," Editorial, *The Times*, 8 May 1991.

<sup>96</sup> House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 27 June 1991, col. 1137.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Lawrence Freedman, "When Hindering a Divorce Hastens Domestic Violence," *The Independent*, 26 June 1991.



Balkans reality'.<sup>99</sup> Clearly putting out the current reasons for the break-up as 'far from being a mindless orgy of rampant ethnicity', but as 'Serbia's attempt to hold on to Yugoslavia with the JNA's help, possibly in the form of Greater Serbia', he warned the West of dangers of 'encouraging the hard liners in Belgrade'.<sup>100</sup> Clearly, from the beginning of the conflict, there was no shortage of sound foreign policy advice for the Foreign Office, considering the incomprehensible situation in Yugoslavia.

Nevertheless, it was Britain's Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, who decided to put the issue of Yugoslavia on the agenda of the 13 May 1991 meeting of the EC ministerial council in Luxembourg. Slightly modified with the recent developments in Yugoslavia, the British proposal was that Yugoslavia's transformation into a 'loose confederation' should be supported, but that outright independence for Croatia and Slovenia was still unacceptable.<sup>101</sup> The weekend before the Luxembourg ministerial meeting appeared to confirm the Foreign Office view that much could still be saved from the old Yugoslavia: a report from the region of Knin suggested that barricades erected by various parties were being removed, and that an agreement negotiated in Belgrade between republican leaders was holding. In the event, the EC decided to continue with the line already adopted, by warning the 'Yugoslavs' that they could not negotiate any association treaty with the EC, should they resort to violence. In order to underline their concern, the EC foreign ministers also decided to send a delegation headed by the Luxembourg prime minister, Jacques Santer, and the president of the European Commission, Jacques Delors. Before the EC meeting began, Austria's Foreign Minister Alois Mock proposed the establishment of a group of experts with

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<sup>99</sup> Christopher Cviic, "Don't Cry for Yugoslavia," *The Independent*, 13 May 1991.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

the explicit task of helping Yugoslav republics to settle their affairs. His Italian counterpart, Gianni de Michelis, who received the Austrian proposal first and considered it as just another attempt to steal the EC's show replied that the EC was 'monitoring events closely'. And, as to Willy Brandt's suggestion for a European peace-keeping force for Yugoslavia, the British view prevailed; such matters were best left to the CSCE.

At their meeting in Dresden on 3 June, the EC foreign ministers, after listening to Commission's president Jacques Delors who spoke of his 'dismay' about Yugoslav politicians who ignored their country's problems because of their 'obsession' with ethnic disputes, issued another stern warning that Yugoslavia would encounter 'serious difficulties' with any foreign financial aid if it broke up'.<sup>102</sup> The British Foreign Secretary summed up the proceedings in Dresden by saying that the EC had struck a balance between its 'desire not to see disintegration... and the inadmissibility of the use of force'.<sup>103</sup> In early June, the presidents of Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia met to discuss the future constitutional settlement for Yugoslavia. In fact, they were assessing each other's positions in a war that all three knew was coming.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, Croatia and Slovenia soon announced that they were continuing their preparations for independence.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Hella Pick, "Hurd Urges EC Act on Yugoslavia," *The Guardian*, 10 May 1991.

<sup>102</sup> *FBIS-EEU-91-107* (4 June 1991), 27.

<sup>103</sup> David Buchan "Yugoslav Aid Tied to Reforms," *The Financial Times*, 4 June 1991.

<sup>104</sup> *FBIS-EEU-91-116* (17 June 1991). For the discussion on Bosnia's future, see Milan Andrejevich, "The Future of Bosnia-Herzegovina: A Sovereign Republic or Cantonization?," *Radio Free Europe, Report on Eastern Europe* (5 July 1991), 28-34.

<sup>105</sup> Ian Traynor, "Slovenia and Croatia on the Brink of Independence," *The Guardian*, 24 June 1991.

By then, most EC governments had realised that appeals for good behaviour, coupled with threat of economic sanctions, were not producing any results. The CSCE had already debated the possibility of establishing a peace-keeping operation in November 1990 in Paris. Nevertheless, it remained hampered by the rule of unanimity, which in the case of Yugoslavia meant that no action could be taken, since its federal government was adamantly opposed to any such measures.

This was the background to the Berlin meeting of CSCE foreign ministers in June 1991, the 'pan-European Congress' as Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd called it. The conference first heard an account of the Yugoslav crisis from Budimir Loncar, the Foreign Minister of the rapidly fading Federal government in Belgrade. All governments were determined to impress upon individual Yugoslav republics with the fact that their possible independence would not be easy. Behind the scenes, however, a compromise had been reached. Most member states wanted to discuss the creation of an emergency procedure which could deal with crises despite the rules of unanimity which governed all CSCE actions. The Soviet Union remained reluctant to contemplate such arrangements but after a private discussion between Secretary of State, Baker, and the Soviet Foreign Minister, Alexander Bessmertnykh, an acceptable formula was found; a group of states could collectively invoke the emergency procedures which envisaged the investigation of a crisis even if the state concerned did not express its clear assent to such a move.

The Soviet Union accepted the compromise precisely because it contained an explicit commitment to the maintenance of united Yugoslavia, something which Moscow thought might serve as a good precedent to handle the Soviet Union's own

secessionist movements. Britain, the US and Germany all hailed the CSCE's new procedures as a major departure, despite the fact that the CSCE stopped short of sending a fact-finding mission to Yugoslavia or proposing a mediation effort. Germany's and Austria's appeals for a recognition of Balkan realities were swept aside. Instead, the organisation adopted a resolution which called for the 'democratic development, unity and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia' and a continued dialogue between all parties. Yugoslavia's foreign minister went back to Belgrade, assured that the CSCE would tolerate no other outcome in Yugoslavia.<sup>106</sup>

Loncar had good reasons for confidence for, in his relatively long meeting with the US Secretary of State in Berlin, the Americans repeated the message that they 'would not grant diplomatic recognition to Slovenia, should it declare independence.'<sup>107</sup> On the basis of this information, Federal Prime Minister Ante Markovic quickly unveiled his government's own programme, promising a 'rejuvenation' of Yugoslavia, and offering a panacea to all ills.<sup>108</sup> The Yugoslav military understood the message; while Baker had been in Belgrade, General Veljko Kadijevic, the Defence Minister of Yugoslavia, told the Slovenes to 'drop the illusion that they can terminate Yugoslavia and break-up her territorial integrity. General Kadijevic's sentiments were shared by almost all Western governments. A day before the independence of Croatia and Slovenia was proclaimed, Abel Matutes, the EC's commissioner in charge of relations with Mediterranean countries, signed a five-year aid agreement promising 807 million ECU in loans for the federation.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *FBIS-EEU-91-120* (21 June 1991), 23.

<sup>107</sup> David Binder, "US to Ignore Yugoslav Secession," *International Herald Tribune*, 27 June 1991.

<sup>108</sup> Markovic's speech to the Yugoslav Assembly is reprinted in *FBIS-EEU-91-121* (24 June 1991), 27-32.

<sup>109</sup> Cviic, *An Awful Warning*, 14.

The declarations of independence by two republics, when they came, were not to budge the western governments, under these circumstances. The first reaction in the West was to try to persuade them to take back their declarations. The Foreign Office in London asserted that both republics were, apparently, ready to continue discussions with other Yugoslavs about a new Yugoslavia.<sup>110</sup> France's Foreign Minister Roland Dumas sounded more conciliatory, claiming to understand the Croat and Slovene aspirations for 'liberty'; nevertheless, he reminded them that they were constrained by 'international order' which clearly rejected 'secessionist movements'.<sup>111</sup> Spokeswoman of the US Department of State, Margaret Tutwiler, announced that Croatia's and Slovenia's 'unilateral steps... will not alter the way the US deals with the two republics as constituent parts of Yugoslavia'.<sup>112</sup>

The British media were still playing the same tune: *The Times* of London opined in an editorial that 'complete independence may be the aim of the ultra-nationalists; but it is impractical'.<sup>113</sup> The day after fighting erupted in Slovenia, John Major, reiterated the view: 'the first prize is to hold the federation together in Yugoslavia'.<sup>114</sup> The EC then issued a second draft statement, calling for the restoration of constitutional order and respect for the territorial integrity of the country. Those were precisely the arguments of the *JNA*, and it had sent its tanks to achieve these objectives.

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<sup>110</sup> Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *FCO Spokesman Notes*, London: 26 June 1991.

<sup>111</sup> David Binder, "US to Ignore Yugoslav Secession Moves," *International Herald Tribune*, 27 June 1991.

<sup>112</sup> US Embassy, London, *European Wireless File*, 27 June 1991.

<sup>113</sup> "Breaking with Belgrade," Editorial, *The Times*, 26 June 1991.

<sup>114</sup> David Gardner, "EC Dashes into Its Own Backyard," *Financial Times*, 1 July 1991.

### 3.1.3. The Evaluation of EC's Enthusiasm

Soon afterwards the US made it clear that it regarded Yugoslavia as a European problem, and the EC, anxious to prove that it was a foreign and security policy actor, happily embarked on a mission of crisis management. The year 1991 was a bright confident year; the twelve countries of the EC were soon to become the European Union. The single European market was due to come into effect the following year and ardent supporters of a united Europe were talking enthusiastically about a common foreign policy. Margaret Thatcher, Former British Prime Minister, the most celebrated opponent of further European integration, had been deposed less than a year earlier.

In fact, Yugoslavia, the first armed conflict of the post-Cold War age, presented the historic challenge that Europe needed to prove its identity.<sup>115</sup> Indeed, according to Jacques Poos, Luxembourg's Foreign Minister, speaking as chair of the EC Foreign Affairs Council of Foreign Ministers, "the hour of Europe has dawned."<sup>116</sup> He stated that 'if one problem can be solved by Europeans, it is the Yugoslav problem. This is a European country and it's not up to the Americans and not up to anybody else'.<sup>117</sup> To this extent Italian Foreign Minister Gianni de Michelis, who was a leading advocate of federalism, declared that Washington and Moscow had been 'informed', not consulted about the mission of the EC troika of Foreign Ministers.

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<sup>115</sup> Catherine Guicherd, "The Hour of Europe: Lessons from the Yugoslav Conflict," *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1993).

<sup>116</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 154-68.

<sup>117</sup> John Palmer and Hella Pick, "EC Troika Sets out to Halt Balkan Collapse," *The Guardian*, 29 June 1991.

News of the outbreak of fighting in Slovenia coincided with one of the twice yearly summits of the EC's heads of governments. The EC immediately dispatched a mediation mission of three foreign ministers to stop the war in Slovenia. The *Troika* was composed of the past, present and coming foreign ministers of the Presidency of the European Council of Ministers. In June 1991, its members were Gianni de Michelis (Italy), Jacques Poos (Luxembourg) and Hans van den Broek (the Netherlands) respectively. When the Troika arrived in Belgrade on June 28, they brought with them a four-point plan and three urgent tactical objectives to stop the fighting; to withdraw the Federal Army to its barracks; and to persuade the two northern republics of Slovenia and Croatia to accept a three-month moratorium on their newly declared independence.<sup>118</sup>

Initially, they managed to broker a deal, however, it was not implemented. More bargaining led to the other; in fact, the *JNA*'s action strengthened Slovenia in its determination to free itself from the rest of Yugoslavia. At the same time, international public opinion was going through a new turn in favour of the breakaway republic. The television pictures were showing Slovenia, little nation, like Czechoslovakia - democratically inclined, westward leaning struggling to liberate itself from Communism, two years after the fall of the Berlin wall.

At the same time, in Belgrade, seeing the direction of international involvement and *JNA*'s initial humiliation in Slovenia, Milosevic decided that the time had come to tie down the *JNA* and put it under his control. On June 30, on the third day of Slovenia's ten days war, Serbia finally withdrew its support for the *JNA*'s attempt to hold federal

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

Yugoslavia together. Since Kadijevic's initial plan (a limited action to recover the border crossings) had failed, he was left with two options; withdrawal and recognition of Slovene secession or full-scale invasion and the crushing of the Slovene rebellion. However, Serbian representative to the Federal Assembly vetoed his plan to escalate the war, and Kadijevic was left with no option but to accept the defeat. Suddenly, Slovenia's war appeared as a Slovene-Serbian pact to facilitate the secession of Slovenia, humiliate the *JNA*, and destroy whatever was left of Markovic's Federal Government.<sup>119</sup>

The *JNA* emerged from the ten day conflict with Slovenia humiliated at home and abroad and went into a period of reassessment about its prospects. Written off Slovenia, the *JNA* realised that it was no longer in a position of preserving the integrity of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Many non-Serbian officers and conscripts had already left the army during the ten days war with Slovenia, and the *JNA* was left with the sole option of fighting for the borders of a 'new Yugoslavia' composed of those peoples who wanted to live together in it. In effect, this meant a state exclusively for Serbs, as, by this stage, the majority of non-Serbs had demonstrated their preference not to continue as part of Yugoslavia they considered to be Serbian-dominated, while in many areas Serbian political activists were making it clear that, in spite of the rhetoric to the contrary, they were not in a mood to accept a continued equal co-existence.<sup>120</sup> Consequently, When the *JNA* went to war with Croatia in the weeks that followed, it was no longer defending Yugoslavia's territorial integrity. The *JNA* had then become the army of Serbia.

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<sup>119</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 50-52.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-33.



The Netherlands assumed the Presidency of the EC on 1 July 1991. At that moment, the Troika was, essentially, trying to bully the Yugoslavia into a ceasefire.<sup>121</sup> Finally, on 7 July, the Troika succeeded in establishing peace in Slovenia. On the island of Brioni, the EC mission got all the parties to the dispute to accept its plan.<sup>122</sup> All parties agreed that a 'new situation' had arisen in Yugoslavia, requiring further negotiations between the parties. Negotiations were to begin no later than 1 August, and were to include all aspects of Yugoslavia's future. On the whole, the cease-fire held because the JNA, in the absence of Serbian backing, conceded Slovenia. On 18 July, federal authorities agreed to withdraw all JNA units from Slovenia within a three months period. Annex II of the Brioni Agreement gave the European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM) a mandate to deploy the EC monitors to patrol the Slovenian borders, but initially, at least, Milosevic would not extend the mandate to Croatia.<sup>123</sup>

Although, the Community seemed to be enjoying its first diplomatic 'triumph' with the 'Brioni Settlement' which promised stopping the war in that republic and was considered as 'the beginning' of a much wider process of bringing peace to the region, the result of the war in Slovenia was a serious blow to the confident policies of Europe. Two weeks after declaring its support for the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, and warning that the use of force would bring no reward, it confirmed

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<sup>121</sup> "EC Troika Works to Salvage Peace Plan," *The Guardian*, 1 July 1991.

<sup>122</sup> "Yugoslav-EC Accord Aims to Halt Slide into Civil War," *Financial Times*, 8 July 1991.

<sup>123</sup> See, James Gow and Lawrence Freedman, "Intervention in a Disintegrating State: The Yugoslav Case," chap. in *To Loose the Bands of Wickedness: International Intervention in Defence of Human Rights*, ed. Nigel Rodley (London:Brassey's for the David Davies Memorial Institute, 1992). Also, see, James Gow and James D. D. Smith, *Peacekeeping, Peacemaking: European Security and the Yugoslav Wars*, Brassey's for the Centre for Defence Studies, No. 11, London: 1992, 15.

Slovenia's secession from Yugoslavia.<sup>124</sup> It is hardly surprising that, under these circumstances, the consensus on the need to preserve Yugoslavia began to dissolve very quickly. German public opinion pressured Chancellor Kohl and Foreign Minister Genscher to moderate their policy. The German press had been filled with criticisms of Genscher's policy of preserving Yugoslavia for months. In early July, for instance, Volker Ruhe, then the chairman of Germany's ruling Christian Democrats, started appealing for international recognition of Croatia and Slovenia.<sup>125</sup> Germany's Chancellor Kohl finally asked that the right of self-determination should be recognised, in the same way as it was recognised for all the Germans the year before.

In fact, behind the scenes a political battle was being waged.<sup>126</sup> French and German politicians pointed out that the EC's involvement in Yugoslavia was the best indication that the community needed a new foreign policy and military dimension. However, the French began to suspect that the Germans might be wavering in their support for Community policy which was still to keep Yugoslavia together. The British, who opposed such arguments, claimed nevertheless that the 'success' of the Community in bringing all the sides to the negotiating table and brokering cease-fire was, in itself, proof that the Community already had the instruments it needed in order to handle regional crises such as those in the Balkans.<sup>127</sup> In public, everything went very well and the EC picked up the mission now officially passed on by the CSCE.

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<sup>124</sup> Ian Traynor and Michael White, "Shuttle Mission Gets Crash Course in Balkan Realities," *The Guardian*, 1 July 1991.

<sup>125</sup> The French quickly retorted that such statements may be the beginning of Germany's assumption of a role as a 'protector' of Croatia and Slovenia. Ian Murray, "Balkan Turmoil Brings France's Fears to Surface," *The Times*, 10 July 1991.

<sup>126</sup> William Dzordiak, "Crisis Cleaves EC," *International Herald Tribune*, 5 July 1991.

<sup>127</sup> Jonathan Eyal, *Europe and Yugoslavia: Lessons from a Failure*, Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies (London: 1993), 28.

At the CSCE meeting in early July, every member state repeated worn-out generalities about the sanctity of frontiers and the need for a 'new basis for unity in Yugoslavia'.<sup>128</sup> The British remained firm expressing far less sympathy for the secessionist republics compared to other EC countries; they had no time for the 'donnish attitude that nationalism must be allowed to have its way in Yugoslavia... to support independence for the republics is to sanction continuous civil war'.<sup>129</sup> The CSCE meeting concluded with nothing more than an appeal for peace in Yugoslavia, and a decision on the need to send observers to the Balkans.<sup>130</sup>

The EC sent its first advance team of observers to Slovenia during the second week of July 1991. It was the highest point in the EC involvement in Yugoslavia. The new Dutch presidency was very eager to be seen to be solving Europe's first security crisis since the end of the Cold War.<sup>131</sup> Everyone believed in the EC efforts: Americans, following the EC, also imposed embargo on weapon sales to Yugoslavia. However, within days, it was apparent that the Brioni agreement was breaking up everywhere. The EC put all its faith on the observers on the ground. At the end, the EC proposals about a 'moratorium' was never accepted by the warring parties and that the 'settlement' the Troika presented proudly was, in fact, never achieved in reality. In the meantime, nobody appeared to notice that the first serious clashes were beginning in Croatia.

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<sup>128</sup> "Help Built a Third Yugoslavia," *International Herald Tribune*, 2 July 1991.

<sup>129</sup> One British official was quoted in "Doing the Splits over Belgrade," *The Guardian*, 3 July 1991.

<sup>130</sup> Robert Mauthner, "CSCE Calls for Urgent Dispatch of Observers," *Financial Times*, 4 July 1991.

<sup>131</sup> John Palmer, "Brussels Matures in Role as Broker," *The Guardian*, 9 July 1991.

### 3.2. The JNA Attack and the War in Croatia

From the beginning of the war in Slovenia, Croatian President Tudjman's calculation was that Croatia was not in a position to take on the JNA militarily. He believed that Croatia could win its independence not through military victory over the JNA but only through international recognition. Throughout the summer 1991, while one municipality after another fell to the territorial defence forces of the Serbs' Krajina Republic, Tudjman did everything to avoid all-out war. On each of these occasions, the JNA stood behind the Serb para-militaries ready to step in and ostensibly 'separate the warring factions'. The JNA began a series of troop movements through Bosnia-Herzegovina in preparation for an assault on those territories which the Serbian leadership in Belgrade considered as belonging to Serbian people.

Coincidental with the Moscow coup attempt of 18-19 August against Mikhail Gorbachev, the JNA intensified the war in Croatia. The low-level conflict since the declaration of independence by Croatia was stepped up in the second half of August, with the siege of Vukovar by JNA artillery units beginning on 19 August 1991.<sup>132</sup> At the end of August 1991, the JNA began to besiege the old Adriatic port, Dubrovnik, from land and sea. Naval vessels moved up the coast, destroying one house after another. This had a clear purpose; to drive out an unwanted, potentially hostile population- to 'cleanse' the territory. Had the aim been to capture the town, the army could do it in one afternoon. By comparison, Vukovar, which was under siege at the same time, was a large town with some defensive capability and thus difficult to capture. However, in both cases, the aim was not to capture, but to drive out the

population to ensure that there would be no potential opposition that might resort to political disruption, terrorism or guerrilla tactics. While the Serbian campaign was not apparent at the time of Dubrovnik and Vukovar campaigns, it later became evident through the continued expulsion of non-Serb populations from the occupied territories in Croatia and during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>133</sup>

By the fall of 1991, the political military elite in Belgrade had abandoned the idea of persuading Croatia to remain within Yugoslav federation. Certainly, the JNA's engagement in the war markedly changed, adopting a new goal of establishment of the borders of a 'mini Yugoslavia', comprising the key strategic infrastructure of the old Yugoslav state and areas with 'reliable' populations, that is, Serbian dominated communities. By September 14, Serb forces, together with the JNA were in control of between a quarter and a third of Croatia's territory. They acquired three disparate blocks of territory, linked to each other only by territory in Bosnia-Herzegovina; the first and most established of these was the territory around Knin; the second was in central Croatia around the town of Glina, from which the Croats had been driven in July and August; and the third was in eastern Slavonia, and Baranja, which shares a frontier with Serbia.<sup>134</sup>

As village to village fighting intensified in Croatia, the cracks on the European unity were becoming more visible. French President Francois Mitterrand, after a meeting with Chancellor Kohl about the co-ordination of policies towards Yugoslavia, uttered

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<sup>132</sup> See, Gow, "One Year of War," 1-7.

<sup>133</sup> For the full account of war in Croatia, see Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 169-189.

<sup>134</sup> James Gow, *Legitimacy and the Military*, 95-102.

that he had convinced Kohl not to push for the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia.<sup>135</sup> However, by the end of July, an estimated 15 Croats were being killed by the federal troops every day and German pressure for recognition resumed.<sup>136</sup> London's *Financial Times* identified the Croat problem as one of inadequate 'de-nazification', an apparently incurable historic disease, which also incidentally, made the supposed German-Croat connection particularly sinister.<sup>137</sup>

Aware that appearances could no longer be maintained and with the aim to silence German demands for recognition, the French proposed military intervention to stop the war. An inter-positional force to be created from several EC countries, with a task of acting as a 'buffer' between the warring parties was to be placed under the control of Western European Union (WEU). WEU had been dormant since its inception in 1948, but had become more important in the late 1980s as a possible defence arms for the EC. France always wanted to create a distinctive European defence organisation out of WEU, whereas the 'Atlanticists', Britain, Holland and Portugal, wanted to keep it as a handy 'European pillar' of the Atlantic Alliance.<sup>138</sup> The battle within the European Community on future defence and foreign policy co-operation was the hot issue of the day. The French who wanted the WEU to become the military wing of a tighter Community saw the Yugoslav war as an opportunity. Realistically, however, the French proposal could never have worked since the WEU did not have any means to provide logistical support and co-ordination that such a force would have required.

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<sup>135</sup> "Kohl Says Time not Ripe for Recognition," *Financial Times*, 24 July 1991.

<sup>136</sup> See *FBIS-EEU-91-145* (29 July 1991), 57-8.

<sup>137</sup> The Editorial, *Financial Times*, 17 July 1991. Franjo Tudjman was the first senior Yugoslav leader received by Chancellor Kohl after the beginning of the war, and this did not go unnoticed by Germany's other EC partners.

<sup>138</sup> Sarah Helm, "Yugoslavia's Divisions Expose Conflict and Confusion within the EC," *The Independent*, 6 August 1991.

Germany's Hans Dietrich Genscher and the Christian Democrat's leader expressed an interest in a WEU involvement but London vehemently opposed any such initiative in the Balkans.

At any rate, Britain, at that time, was ready to block any attempt to send European troops to Yugoslavia while the hostilities continued for fear of becoming embroiled in a Lebanon-type civil war.<sup>139</sup> Without a peace between the parties, the British Government expressed the reluctance to send forces into a situation which a senior official from Whitehall described as 'a situation where they would face pot-shots from both sides'.<sup>140</sup> The condition to participate into a peace-keeping force based on the WEU was described as 'the situation where there is a clear mandate and a clear role for a European force to play'. Immediately, Hurd demanded clarification about the status of its observers, in order to underline the fact that the Community could only send people into the conflict with the agreement of the all warring parties, rather than according to Brussels' whims. The debate for military intervention was going to come out from time to time especially during the bloody war in Bosnia and was going to be a major source of contention among the EC members.

When the suspicions increased about each other's intentions, the vicious circle began in the EC; any proposal trying to tackle with the conflict was first analysed in every Western capital, not according to whether it could actually contribute to the solution of the war in Yugoslavia, but according to its implications for what was still termed

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<sup>139</sup> Philip Johnston, "Britain Rejects Military Role in Yugoslavia," *Daily Telegraph*, 3 August 1991.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

Western Europe's 'architecture'.<sup>141</sup> In fact, in this diplomatic battle, Yugoslavia mattered for little. Two weeks after the Croat war began, unable to do anything but negotiating cease-fires to be breached, Mr. Van den Broek admitted that 'there is nothing more we can do'.<sup>142</sup>

At an emergency meeting in The Hague on 6 August 1991, there were as many opinions about what needed to be done as there were foreign ministers around the table. The British favoured a meeting of CSCE at the ministerial level;<sup>143</sup> the French suggested a UN meeting in order to discuss a possible peace-keeping force; the Dutch suggested further mediation through an enlarged Troika; the smaller states suggested 'military intervention' to which they were not likely to contribute; the Germans suggested recognising Slovenia's and Croatia's independence. The result amounted to nothing, since everyone found some flaws in other's argument. Referral to UN could incur opposition from the Soviet Union and China to any action; unless Yugoslavia agrees to measures against itself, the use of force was premature, and, could not be discussed in the WEU where the Germans considered by the Serbs as impartial were in the chair; and recognition of republics would only fuel a bigger war.<sup>144</sup> Although nothing concrete was achieved to halt the war, the EC was still happy that all least there were still some projects under consideration, and that the world media still

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<sup>141</sup> Eyal, *Europe and Yugoslavia*, 33.

<sup>142</sup> Laura Silber, "Yugoslavia 'Faces Tragedy' After Peace Talks Fail," *Financial Times*, 5 August 1991.

<sup>143</sup> In London, Douglas Hogg, the Minister of State at the Foreign Office said that 'implementing a cease fire. but not imposing peace. remained the priority of the British government. Our purpose is to get the republics within Yugoslavia to agree to a cease fire. Unless they do that we can't carry the matter further forward. We are in the business of maximising the pressure on the republics'. Judy Dempsey, "Yugoslav Cease-fire is Broken As West's Peace Moves Fail," *Financial Times*, 8 August 1991.

<sup>144</sup> Sarah Helm, "Yugoslavia's Divisions Expose Conflict and Confusion within the EC," *The Independent*, 6 August 1991.



believed the Community to be at the centre of events.<sup>145</sup> The fact that the Community decided at The Hague meeting not to recognise any territorial change achieved by use of force was considered highly significant. In a sense, although there was a lot of talk in the EC circles about the dangers of fragmentation in the Balkans, the EC member states' policy suggestions appeared to reflect real fragmentation, if not 'Balkanisation'.

Not surprisingly, therefore, it was just before the meeting in The Hague that the US Administration began taking a more direct interest in the Yugoslav crisis. A small but growing group of officials within the State Department believed that Secretary of State James Baker's tactic of letting the Europeans 'sort out' the crisis in Yugoslavia had gone far enough. It was obvious that, despite all the talk about unity, the Europeans could not get their act together. Meanwhile, all the American Embassies in the region were reporting disturbing developments which simply could not be ignored. Turkey, for instance, informed Washington in August 1991 that it was worried about the fate of Bosnia-Herzegovina; the US Embassy in Athens reported that the Greeks were far too close to the Serbian leadership; a long drawn-out Balkan war could undermine the already fragile security of all post-Communist governments. The Dutch Presidency and the British were quite keen on getting US support, especially if that meant some co-ordination between the efforts undertaken in Brussels and those which could be undertaken at the UN in New York. Yet, the French still considered any US involvement as an explicit slur on Europe's ability to handle its own crisis.

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<sup>145</sup> *Financial Times* argued on 8 August 1991 that 'even UK officials recognise that the Community has in practice started operating a common foreign policy'.

Meanwhile, things on the ground were getting out of hand. For instance, by mid-August, Bosnia's President Alija Izetbegovic announced his decision to hold a referendum on his republic's independence. Yet, the Community persisted in its original policies; next project was to convene an international conference on the 'future of Yugoslavia'.<sup>146</sup> Events in Moscow were influencing the situation in Yugoslavia. On August 19, 1991, with the news of the anti-Gorbachev coup in Moscow, the Serbs, believing that turmoil in Soviet Union could save them from the West's attention had launched an all-out military offensive in Croatia. However, Gorbachev's return to Moscow at the end of the week encouraged the Croats and Slovenes into believing that their recognition was near, since the West had already recognised the independence of the Baltic republics.<sup>147</sup>

### **3.3. The EC Conference: Lord Carrington's Plan**

Realising that it had run out of policy option, the EC decided to act. On 28 August 1991, the EC issued an ultimatum: either republics complied with a demand for a cease-fire and negotiations by 1 September, or the EC would discuss additional measures 'including international action'.<sup>148</sup> The Community still wanted to be impartial; refrained from identifying Serbia as the aggressor, it accused only 'parts of the Serbian irregular forces and parts of the Yugoslav army'. Nevertheless, the threat appeared very explicit; not only would the EC ask the UN Security Council for authority for 'further action', but Germany's Hans Dietrich Genscher also warned

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<sup>146</sup> David Gardner, "Democratic Weapons in Fight for Statehood," *Financial Times*, 15 August 1991.

<sup>147</sup> Judy Dempsey, "Soviet Coup's Collapse Seen As Set Back For Milosevic," *Financial Times*, 23 August 1991.

<sup>148</sup> Marcus Tanner, "EC Ultimatum to Serbia on Peace Talks," *The Independent*, 28 August 1991.

Serbian Foreign Minister Vladislav Jovanovic that Germany would push for the immediate recognition of Croatia and Slovenia if the fighting continued.<sup>149</sup>

The Serbian response was to accept most of the conditions put forward by the EC and, on 2 September 1991, Hans van den Broek, the Dutch President of the Community, signed a new cease-fire in Belgrade, including agreement to begin talks on the future of Yugoslavia, to be held in The Hague.<sup>150</sup> A day later, it was announced that the European Community Conference on Yugoslavia would be convened on 7 September in the Hague, under the chairmanship of Lord Carrington.<sup>151</sup> The British Foreign Office spokesman was quick to see the agreement and the forthcoming conference as a 'window of opportunity'. The British, had indeed, every reason to feel pleased. The appointment of Lord Carrington as the Chairman of the peace conference allowed London to claim that it was in the forefront of diplomatic activity.<sup>152</sup>

At the ceremonial opening of the Conference on Yugoslavia, the EC member states solemnly declared that they would do 'everything in our power' to help in finding a 'peace to all in Yugoslavia'.<sup>153</sup> But, the problem was that it had no powers to do anything in particular. At the very first day, the cease-fire was violated by the Serbs and the heavy fighting resumed in Croatia. Although, initially, an end to hostilities was a prerequisite for the Conference to proceed, Lord Carrington continued his work in

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<sup>149</sup> *International Weekly* (31 August 1991), 1-2.

<sup>150</sup> For the text of the memorandum, see *FBIS-EEU-91-170* (3 September 1991), 33-36.

<sup>151</sup> David Gardner and Laura Silber, "Carrington to Lead Yugoslav Peace Move," *Financial Times*, 4 September 1991.

<sup>152</sup> Eyal, *Europe and Yugoslavia*, 37. Also, see, Jane M. O. Sharp, *Honest Broker or Perfidious Albion?: British Policy in Former Yugoslavia*, Institute for Public Policy Research (London: 1997), 12.

<sup>153</sup> See *FBIS-EEU-91-174* (9 September 1991), 28-35 for the opening proceedings of the conference in the Hague.

spite of the unstoppable violence. And so, the first condition of Carrington's mission was blown away.<sup>154</sup> After the opening session, the conference became closed and Carrington began a series of private meetings with all the Yugoslav leaders and foreign ministers in an attempt to mediate.<sup>155</sup>

On 17 September in Igalo, Montenegro, Carrington managed to get all the parties to sign a cease-fire agreement.<sup>156</sup> However, since the leaders could only pledge that 'everyone within our control and under our political and military influence should cease-fire immediately', there was no guarantee that the fighting would stop. As it proved several times before, the conviction that 'signing a piece of paper was never a problem for the parties to the conflict' and the perception that 'a lasting cease-fire was not a realistic possibility' gained wider recognition. In these circumstances, Carrington had to forget his early statements that there could be no peace talks without a cease-fire and proceed with the conference anyway. His evaluation was that: 'by making progress -if we can make progress- we think that it will be more likely that the cease-fire will hold, and that we can get a solution that is acceptable to all the parties to the dispute.'<sup>157</sup>

At the beginning of October, the EC talked on the possibility of removing recognition from Yugoslavia, putting it into a 'diplomatic quarantine'. Although this did not

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<sup>154</sup> Carrington announced that negotiations would depend on three conditions;

- that a real cease-fire continued throughout Yugoslavia
- that none of the republics be recognised as independent except as part of an overall settlement
- that borders could not be changed without the agreement of all parties.

Lord Carrington, "Turmoil in the Balkans: Developments and Prospects," *RUSI Journal* 137, no. 5, (October 1992), 1-4.

<sup>155</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 53-54.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

necessarily imply recognition of republics, it was a clear signal that things might go that way. A day after this was discussed and after the Serbian-*JNA* forces had received setbacks for the first time, on October 4, Carrington achieved what he considered as a 'breakthrough'. He brought Tudjman and Milosevic together, along with the Federal Defence Minister Kadijevic. They agreed to seek a political solution 'on the basis of independence of those wishing it' and three points of principle were set.<sup>158</sup> These were;

- a loose association or alliance of sovereign or independent republics.
- adequate arrangements for the protection of communities, including human rights guarantees and possibly special status for certain areas.
- no unilateral changes in borders.

It seemed, Milosevic had, at last, under international pressure, agreed that the republics, not the nations, were the legitimate constituent units of federal Yugoslavia.

In Carrington's words:

"This is the first time that Serbia has recognised the right of other republics to self-determination -subject to respect for minority rights. By discussing issues such as the autonomy and special status for minorities we are going to the heart of the political problem. I hope this will speed up the political process for a cease-fire".<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Ronald von de Krol, "Carrington Hopeful of Yugoslav Cease-Fire," *Financial Times*, 27 September 1991.

<sup>158</sup> David Gardner, "Serbia Accepts Croatian Independence," *Financial Times*, 5-6 October 1991.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

Finally, that agreement provided the basis for the negotiators in The Hague and the EC officials to work towards a proposal for a political settlement. However, within two days the fighting intensified. The 90-day moratorium, imposed on the declarations of independence of Croatia and Slovenia at Brioni, was due to expire on 8 October. Croatia's president Franjo Tudjman, after a period of considerable pressure from the opposition, ordered full mobilisation; the *JNA* responded with renewed vigour across Croatia, including bombardment of the historic port of Dubrovnik. Carrington, with a threat of suspending Yugoslavia's all trade agreements and imposition of sanctions, set a new deadline effective from midnight 7 October. With the assistance of EC monitors, both the *JNA* blockade of Croatia's ports and the Croatian National Guard's siege of federal barracks throughout Croatia were lifted. The Dutch presidency quickly sent a senior diplomat to strengthen the peace process, only to find that realities were quite different: the Yugoslav forces were only regrouping for a greater offensive and Belgrade promptly denied any intention of abandoning the fight in that republic.

As clashes grew again, Carrington was under growing criticism for his eagerness to find a common ground with those who had ordered what was plainly going to be the destruction of Vukovar and the siege and bombardment of Dubrovnik. On October 16, Carrington distributed to the republic's leaders a detailed seven-page proposal entitled 'Arrangements for a General Settlement'.<sup>160</sup> The plan guaranteed a wide range of individual, cultural and political rights to the Serbs outside Serbia. In areas of Croatia and Bosnia where they formed a majority, the Serbs were entitled to use their

national emblems and flags of their, the right to a second nationality, and an education system which 'respect the values and needs' of the Serbs. Finally, they were granted the right to their own parliament, their own administrative structure, including a regional police force, and their own judiciary.<sup>161</sup> Serbia was given an ultimatum to accept the EC plan in one week, from 28 October. Otherwise, it would face comprehensive economic sanctions, and, as Hans Van den Broek warned, 'the Community will continue its patient negotiations with the five republics who are willing. This would be in the perspective of their right to independence'.<sup>162</sup> Recognition was now on the agenda. Italian Foreign Minister de Michelis said that the EC's aim was to wind up the peace conference by mid-December by which time the 'treaty will be signed with the individual republics, and will represent official EC recognition of their independence'.<sup>163</sup>

However, Milosevic rejected the EC plan. His chief objection was the proposed position of the Serb communities outside Serbia. Having been classified as part of a 'nation' in the old Yugoslavia, these would now become national minorities.<sup>164</sup> According to the minutes recorded during the negotiations the Serbian position was as follows:

Serbia could not accept the working groups continuing on the basis of the lowest common denominator of identified interests and institutional arrangements. The conference should try to identify genuine common interests which could be defended in a common

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<sup>160</sup> David Osborne, "EC Draws Up Plan For New Yugoslavia," *The Independent*, 18 October 1991.

<sup>161</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 192-3.

<sup>162</sup> Leonard Doyle and Sarah Lambert, "EC Tells Serbs to Stop War or Face Sanctions," *The Independent*, 29 October 1991.

<sup>163</sup> Quoted in *The Guardian*, 1 November 1991.

state. It was essential for all the Serbs to live in one state, not in a number of independent republics bound by little more than interstate relations. If this was not accepted by the other republics, the right course would be to recognise those republics wishing it, after having settled the question of the succession of Yugoslavia and after having agreed on border changes.<sup>165</sup>

In other words, Serbia not only wanted to annex those parts of Croatia (and, by implication, Bosnia-Herzegovina) but also wanted to be considered sole legitimate successor state to the old federal republic. In addition to Serbia's leadership, its partner in the war, the *JNA* also refused the EC plan. Realising that the plan would mean the end of the *JNA*, Defence Secretary Kadijevic argued that the Carrington's plan was in effect 'Germany very openly... attacking Yugoslavia for the third time in this century.'<sup>166</sup>

On October 30, Serbia and Montenegro sent their amendment to The Hague, insisting that a clause be inserted in the Paragraph One, declaring that the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia continued to exist for those who did not wish to secede.<sup>167</sup> Carrington declared that the amendment was 'totally unacceptable'. Milosevic's ambition to carve up a new territorial entity, comprised of Serb-populated areas in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina was obvious. The peace process never got beyond that fundamental stumbling block. On 5 November, Serbia refused to accept

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<sup>164</sup> *Yugofax*, No. 6 (31 October 1991).

<sup>165</sup> Quoted in Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, p. 192.

<sup>166</sup> Ian Traynor and John Palmer, "Serbia and EC Square Up to Fight Over Plans for a Mini-Yugoslavia," *The Guardian*, 23 October 1991.

<sup>167</sup> James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 58-9.



the revised terms of the EC's proposed solution.<sup>168</sup> Gradually, as the bombardments in eastern Slavonia and full-scale assault on the historic port of Dubrovnik continued, international public opinion turned against Serbia. Though Milosevic was not yet widely seen as the instigator of, and guiding hand in, the war, he was now identified as the main obstacle to peace. On 8 November, the EC imposed economic sanctions against Yugoslavia and suspended all trade relations.<sup>169</sup>

By November, international dissatisfaction with Lord Carrington's process had produced a multi-track peace process; Cyrus Vance entered the scene as the UN sponsored peace-maker, appointed by outgoing Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar. Officially, Vance's task was to ascertain on the best deployment and requirements for the UN peace-keeping operations. The UN was careful to point out that the decision to send in a peace-keeping force was to maintain cease-fire, once this was agreed and proven durable.

Croatia had appealed for international troops to be deployed along its borders with Serbia and Bosnia almost from the beginning. And, now they needed the forces as temporary expedient, pending the recognition of their republic and the reorganisation of their armed forces. Serbia, as always, played a double game. In public, Milosevic rejected out of hand the very idea of foreign intervention in what they insisted was an internal Yugoslav matter. In private, they saw that foreign deployment could be turned to their advantage because most of what they desired to occupy in Croatia had

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<sup>168</sup> David Gardner and Laura Silber, "Serbia Rejects EC Peace Proposal," *Financial Times*, 6 November 1991.

<sup>169</sup> Robert Mauthner and Laura Silber, "EC Imposes Sanctions on Yugoslavia," *Financial Times*, 9-10 November 1991.

been accomplished. They, therefore, welcomed Cyrus Vance to Belgrade and the centre of gravity in the international peace process shifted from the EC to the UN.

### **3.4. Recognition of Slovenia and Croatia**

#### **3.4.1. Debates on the Recognition of Slovenia and Croatia**

In the meantime, Germany had been pushing for recognition of Croatian and Slovenian declarations of independence for months. By the end of November, the destruction of Vukovar, the displacement of half a million Croats and 230,000 Serbs from their homes, the occupation of almost a third of the Croatian territory by Serb irregulars and the JNA, and the siege and bombardment of Dubrovnik, pushed the German public opinion over the edge.<sup>170</sup>

By early December, Tudjman visited Bonn and met both Kohl and Germany's Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher. On his way back, Tudjman told Croatian television that Germany 'has no hesitation about its decision to recognise Croatian independence'.<sup>171</sup> Genscher was convinced that the only way to halt Belgrade's military advance through Croatia was immediate recognition, and that Milosevic only seemed like taking part in the peace process to buy time to complete his military task.<sup>172</sup> To Bonn, Lord Carrington's peace efforts began to look like a smoke-screen for inaction. In early December 1991, Germany also obtained the support of the Italians.

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<sup>170</sup> The Bavarian Christian Socialist Union (CSU), the ally of the ruling Christian Democratic Union of Chancellor Helmut Kohl, accused Kohl of supporting the 'Communists from Serbia' through the non-recognition of Slovenia and Croatia. Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 167.

<sup>171</sup> Quoted in Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 198.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 198-9.

But, Britain and the US argued that any recognition before a UN force was deployed in Croatia and before the greater debate over the Maastricht summit was out of the way would be premature and would have harmful consequences for the peace-process.<sup>173</sup> However, forced with German pressure, the Community started discriminating between the various republics. Economic sanctions were lifted in case of Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Bosnia, but remained in force against Serbia and Montenegro.<sup>174</sup> The US, on the other hand, cut off all trade agreements with Yugoslavia in December 1991, refusing to single out only Serbia and Montenegro. The US, taking a firm stance against Chancellor Helmut Kohl, said it was strongly opposed to recognising the secessionist Yugoslav Republics of Croatia and Slovenia.<sup>175</sup>

Despite all the American and British criticism, Germany was resolved to force the issue at the forthcoming EC Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels on December 15-16. Genscher had made it clear that if the EC did not move towards recognition, then Germany would recognise unilaterally. It was a bitter blow to the spirit of Maastricht. Britain vehemently opposed the recognition. Considering 'unbridled nationalism' as having the most destructive force at the end of the twentieth century, Hurd wrote in *The Times*:

"Recognition will not stop the fighting. Nor will the West send troops to fight on Croatia's behalf. If we recognise the republics too

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<sup>173</sup> Ian Traynor, "Croatia and Slovenia Put Case to Bonn," *The Guardian*, 4 December 1991.

<sup>174</sup> Charles Goldsmith, "EC Partially Lifts Yugoslav Sanctions," *International Herald Tribune*, 3 December 1991.

<sup>175</sup> "US Says It Opposes Yugoslav Break-Up," *The International Herald Tribune*, 6 December 1991.

soon, we risk detonating the fragile peace in Macedonia and Bosnia; since they will come under great pressure to seek independence, too. Recognition of a series of small Balkan countries, without a framework allowing for protection of minorities, would not be a recipe for future stability.”<sup>176</sup>

Lord Carrington had also struck a similar pessimistic tone, writing to the President of the Council of Ministers, Hans van den Broek, and saying that premature recognition would damage the peace conference he chaired, then the only mechanism to stop the war:

“As early recognition of Croatia would undoubtedly mean the break-up of the Conference... There is also a real danger, perhaps, even a probability, that Bosnia-Herzegovina would also ask for independence and recognition, which would be wholly unacceptable to the Serbs in that Republic...This might well be the spark that sets Bosnia-Herzegovina alight.”<sup>177</sup>

The UN Secretary General, Javier Perez de Cuellar was also of the same opinion: he wrote to van den Broek, on 10 December, to say that he was deeply worried that any early selective recognition could widen the present conflict and fuel an explosive situation, especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Douglas Hurd, “Averting a Balkan Tragedy,” *The Times*, 3 December 1991.

<sup>177</sup> Carrington’s Letter to the President of the Council of Ministers. John Sweeney, *The Observer*, 3.

<sup>178</sup> *UNDOC S/23280* (11 December 1991).

Contrary to the views of European and international officials, the British and German newspapers had written many volumes on condemning the Serbian attack on Dubrovnik and urging for the recognition of Croatia, arguing that ‘recognition of Croatia might strengthen the Croats in their struggle to regain what they have lost’<sup>179</sup>. It was considered as an error for the EC ‘not to recognise both Slovenia and Croatia after they had declared their independence in the summer.’<sup>180</sup> It was argued in *The Guardian* that “the recognition at that stage obviously might have a deterrent effect on the Serbs that ‘they could not hang on to the fruits of their aggression’.”<sup>181</sup>

However, despite protestations, neither Britain nor the Netherlands was prepared to put the Yugoslav peace process before the EC unity. To oppose Germany would be to destroy the delicate situation that the EC created to build a common security, defence and foreign policy structure. In the end, Britain did not even send its senior Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd to the summit. His deputy, Douglas Hogg, went in his place. It was interpreted as a signal that Britain decided not to put up more than a token fight. There were also allegations that there had been a deal between Germany and Britain. Britain’s sudden U-turn; agreement to recognise Slovenia and Croatia was considered as part of a secret trade off over the opt out of the Social Chapter of the Maastricht.<sup>182</sup> One of the sources quoted in BBC reporter Martin Bell’s book, ‘In Harm’s Way’, says ‘it would require a great deal of naivety not to see linkage between

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<sup>179</sup> “Dubrovnik Under Attack,” Editorial, *Daily Telegraph*, 4 October 1991.

<sup>180</sup> “Last Hopes at the Hague?,” Editorial, *The Independent*, 5 November 1991.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> See John Sweeney’s article “How Bosnia Paid Price of Major’s Maastricht Opt-Out Coup,” in *The Observer*, 17 September 1995, 3 and “Heard in the House,” *The Guardian*, 8 May 1995, 13. See also Jane M. O. Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 13.

the two'.<sup>183</sup> Britain won the right to opt out of the Social Chapter on 10 December 1991. Six days later, Germany won its diplomatic battle for the EC's agreement to recognise Slovenia and Croatia. However, a top official in the European Commission said that 'great pressure was put on Britain by Germany to shift its position on recognising Croatia. Nothing would have been done in the presence of UN officials. It would have all bilateral.'<sup>184</sup>

The EC ministers signed the Maastricht Treaty, creating the European Union on 11 December and within a few days held a special ministerial meeting on European Political Consultation. At the meeting, Germany 'bulldozed' the other eleven members towards recognition. In the end, compromise was reached that swept away what was left of Lord Carrington's peace conference and the carefully laid legalistic plans that the EC had been drawing up to consider applications for independence. From a policy which promised not to recognise 'secessionist' republics, the EC turned full circle and agreed to invite all Yugoslav republics who wanted to apply for recognition to submit their applications by December 24. These would then be considered by a five-member Arbitration Commission, under the chairmanship of a highly respected French constitutional lawyer, Judge Robert Badinter. The Badinter Commission, as it became known, had been appointed in November to draw a set of conditions which each republic would have to satisfy before being granted EC recognition. The Commission was to report its findings on January 15 and the Council of Foreign Ministers would then act in light of Commissions recommendations.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> See Martin Bell, *In Harm's Way: Reflections of a War Zone Thug*, Penguin Books (Harmondsworth: 1996), 35-9.

<sup>184</sup> John Sweeney, "How Bosnia Paid Price of Major's Maastricht Opt-Out Coup," *The Observer*, 17 September 1995.

<sup>185</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 198-201.

### 3.4.2 **Badinter Commission, Sovereignty and Self-Determination: The Case of Yugoslavia**

The Yugoslav Dissolution created many questions about statehood, sovereignty, self-determination and the meaning of 'nation', as well as the identity and future of particular nations. These were the issues at the heart of the Yugoslav conflict, and it was the fall-out from them which provided the greatest repercussions for international security. It was, therefore, the understanding of these issues which defined the international perspective on the war in ex-Yugoslavia.<sup>186</sup>

In the two years leading up to the declaration of independence by Slovenia and Croatia, and in the wake of those declarations, different understandings on the question of right-holders with reference to the rights to sovereignty and self-determination were in conflict. These conflicting conceptions were tried to be clarified by international community during the various meetings and through Commissions set up as advisory bodies to these meetings. In particular, they were considered by Badinter Commission which was a legal advisory and arbitration commission. It was their interpretation of constitutional and international legal matters which provided the framework for the Council of the European Community to act politically to settle these questions.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 67-8.

<sup>187</sup> See, James Gow, "Serbian Nationalism and the Hissssing Ssssnake in the International Order: Whose Sovereignty? Which Nation?," *The Slavonic and East European Review (SEER)* 72, no. 3 (July 1994), 456-76.

In the break-up of Yugoslavia, the two different interpretations of the 'nation' - as all the people living within the territorial boundaries of a given political community in which they have citizenship rights<sup>188</sup> and as all the members of a particular ethno-national group - led to the bloody conflict where the two senses of nation did not coincide. The declarations of independence by Slovenia and Croatia, based on claims to sovereignty and the inalienable right to national self-determination of the republics as state-formations<sup>189</sup> were directly opposed by a Serb claim to sovereignty of the Serbs as an ethno-national people, wherever they were to be found, with the fundamental and inalienable right to national self-determination. Both claims were made on the basis of the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution.

The SFRY Constitution considers that each republic was a 'nation-state' formation endowed with sovereignty.<sup>190</sup> The right to national self-determination, including the right to secession, was granted in the preamble to the SFRY Constitution. The republics were intended to be repositories of national self-determination for each of the Yugoslav peoples (*naroda*), that is state-forming nations. These were contrasted with national minorities (*narodnosti*) which were members of an ethnic group which, in

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<sup>188</sup> In this sense, for example, US Presidents often address 'the Nation', referring to all the (American) people born within the territorial boundaries of a political community (United States of America) in which they have citizenship rights. See Gow, "Serbian Nationalism," 465.

<sup>189</sup> The Basic Constitutional Charter on the Independence and Sovereignty of the Republic of Slovenia and the Declaration of Independence adopted by the Slovenian Assembly of 25 June 1991, 'proceeding from the will of the Slovenian people and the citizens of Slovenia as expressed at the plebiscite on the autonomy and independence of the Republic of Slovenia, held on 23 December 1990', noted that 'under the hitherto effective constitutional order, the Republic of Slovenia had the status of a sovereign state which exercised part of its sovereign rights in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia', but continued that 'considering the SFRY does not function as a legally regulated state... The Republic of Slovenia is an autonomous and independent state and the Constitution of SFRY is no longer in force in the Republic of Slovenia and The Republic of Slovenia takes over all the rights and obligations which under the Constitution of Republic of Slovenia and the Constitution of SFRY were transferred to the agencies of the SFRY'. Footnoted in Gow, "Serbian Nationalism," 465.

<sup>190</sup> 'The Socialist Republic is a state, founded on the sovereignty of the nation...'. SFRY Constitution, Art. 3, p. 23. See, Gow, "Serbian Nationalism," 464.



general, constituted a state-forming nation (mother state) elsewhere- for example, the Albanians in Yugoslavia were a national minority because the place where they were a state-forming nation was Albania. Similarly, Hungarians in Vojvodina were narodnosti, because their mother state was Hungary.

The Yugoslav constitution, by referring to the sovereignty of the republics and peoples, glossed over a complication which came to be important when the state broke-up: within Yugoslavia each of the state-forming nations had its sovereign state to look to, despite the fact that the Serbs outside Serbia were minorities in Croatia and Bosnia, but they were still members of a state-forming people. Thus, the ethnic peoples in Yugoslavia had a constitutional role as 'founders of the member states of the Federation'. So long as Yugoslavia remained a federation, it was possible to ignore the technicality that, if the republics were states founded on a particular ethnic people, then the logic which considered Albanians, for example, to be a national minority in Yugoslavia, rendered Serbs outside Serbia and Croats outside Croatia as national minorities, too.<sup>191</sup>

The opinions of the Badinter Advisory Commission, based on the general understanding received from previous periods, effectively rejected the Serbian claim to sovereignty for the ethno-nation, deeming that sovereignty rested with the republics. However, in response to a Serbian request for clarification on the right of the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to self-determination, the Commission refrained from saying that the Serbs in Croatia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina did not have the right to

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<sup>191</sup> One striking feature of the Serb people in other republics, however, they always disproportionately represented in the administrative and military positions.

self-determination. Self-determination might apply to other national (that is self-defining ethnic, religious, genetic, cultural, linguistic and so forth) groups as an expression of their members' human rights, but this did not include the right to form a state; it did, however, entail the right to levels of autonomy - that is, to political and cultural prerogatives and powers, perhaps, of self-governance, operable within the boundaries of a state.<sup>192</sup>

In addition, in Yugoslav case, Badinter made clear that the principle of *uti posseditis* (i.e. in the absence of peaceful agreement to alter frontiers which were changing status, 'the former boundaries acquire the character of boundaries protected by international law') was applicable. This view was supported by references to a number of non-binding international documents, including the Helsinki Final Act. Most importantly, it was backed by reference to the Article 2 of the UN Charter concerning the territorial integrity and political independence of states.<sup>193</sup>

### **3.4.3. Germany's Early Recognition of Croatia and Slovenia and Britain's Reaction**

Despite all the advises for restraint considering a common action in the Community, Chancellor Helmut Kohl was under fierce domestic pressure to act immediately on

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<sup>192</sup> Gow, "Serbian Nationalism," 467 and 469.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 468. Whereas in theory 'self-determination' is the right granted to 'all peoples' (it might even be applied at the lowest level to individuals), as the UN Charter and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) stated as 'the people were given the right 'freely' to 'determine' their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development', in practice its application is much more limited. In *Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, Boutros Boutros-Ghali warned that unrestricted application of the principle could lead to unending fragmentation if every 'national' group claimed the right to form a state. *UN DOC. S/24111*, 1992. Quoted in Gow, *Ibid.*, 464.

Croatia and Slovenia. Even before Badinter Advisory Commission gave its opinion about the applications, German Government spokesman already pronounced them satisfactory from Bonn's point of view.<sup>194</sup> On 23 December, Bonn announced that the German Cabinet decided to recognise Croatia and Slovenia before Christmas, but implement the decision on 15 January, together with other Community states.<sup>195</sup> This left other Community members without a choice, whatever the outcome of the Badinter Commission's evaluations of applications, Slovenia and Croatia was to be recognised.

Britain and Germany were the main protagonists in the battle for recognition of Croatia and Slovenia and the clash over Yugoslavia was considered as a serious blow for Anglo-German friendship at that time.<sup>196</sup> The Germans believed that Lord Carrington was acting in collusion with Britain, and was using antiquated methods of diplomacy to secure an impossible peace accord. The British countered by accusing Bonn of impatience and of misunderstanding the Carrington peace conference, and of losing touch with the classic British patient diplomacy. In fact, the rift between Britain and Germany over the Yugoslav crisis had actually started in September 1991, when Douglas Hurd effectively killed a German-Italian initiative to deploy a WEU force to separate the Croatian and Yugoslav fighters. Britain, arguing from its experience in Northern Ireland, claimed that WEU intervention would require extensive manpower, was bound to lead to loss of life and would almost certainly become open-ended and long-lasting.<sup>197</sup> Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Genscher, on

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<sup>194</sup> "Germany Sets Fast Pace on Recognition," *International Herald Tribune*, 18 December 1991.

<sup>195</sup> It is argued that this was a *de facto* recognition and *de jure* recognition would not take place before the agreed date of 15 January, 1992.

<sup>196</sup> Hella Pick, "A Ride on a Bulldozer," *The Guardian*, 18 December 1991.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

the other hand, claimed that the West Europeans shirked their responsibility to end the bloodshed in Yugoslavia and had a duty to support the principle of self-determination. They blamed Britain for failing to appreciate the strength of German public opinion. According to Edward Mortimer 'German media coverage of the war had been more extensive than British and no doubt more uncritically pro-Croat'.<sup>198</sup> Linking British gains at Maastricht to the German posture on Yugoslavia, Kohl and Genscher argued that John Major should have given way on Yugoslavia in return for the services rendered by Chancellor Helmut Kohl at Maastricht.<sup>199</sup>

Although, initially, Douglas Hurd told the House of Commons on 19 December 1991, 'there is no prospect of British influence for good in Yugoslavia if it is in rivalry with other EC powers,' later on, Britain and France argued that Germany's premature recognition of Slovenia and Croatia had provoked the war. But, this claim by London does not seem to be borne out by the sequence of events. Basically, the war had already started six months ago, and what left the situation insoluble was the Community's insistence on inflexible policy of preserving Yugoslavia's unity at all costs. Both British and French leaders' comments on Germany's ambitions on the Balkans actually served to poison the relations among the twelve. Finally, among the four republics applied -Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Badinter Commission recommended that only Slovenia and Macedonia be granted recognition. The EC, at the end, ignored the Commission's conclusions. Croatia eventually got the recognition, Macedonia did not. Macedonia's recognition was vetoed by Greece, who objected to the name of the country on the grounds that it

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<sup>198</sup> Edward Mortimer, "A Curious Role Reversal," *Financial Times*, 18 December 1991.

<sup>199</sup> Hella Pick, "A Ride on a Bulldozer," *The Guardian*, 18 December 1991.

implied territorial ambition towards Greece's own northern province of the same name.<sup>200</sup>

It, however, never became clear that, why the other two republics, Bosnia and Macedonia had to be treated in the same bowl when it came to the recognition. Actually, the EC, without any German pressure on recognition of these two republics, could have taken its time to make new and more stable arrangements about the status of these two republics. The most problematic one, however, was the position of Bosnia-Herzegovina, where Badinter Commission decided that a referendum should be carried out to assess the public opinion before considering the matter further. Bosnian Government was in a very big dilemma; its choice was either to join Slovenia and Croatia in seeking independence, and by so doing risk provoking civil war against the Serbs living in its territories, or to stay inside rump Yugoslavia dominated by Serbia and, by so doing accept complete control of Belgrade over itself similar to Kosovo/a, Vojvodina and Montenegro.

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<sup>200</sup> Macedonia's case is explained by James Gow briefly but very effectively. See James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 78. About Greek attitude towards newly established Macedonian state, see Noel Malcolm, "The New Bully of the Balkans," *The Spectator*, 15 August 1992, 8-10.

## **CHAPTER IV: THE OUTBREAK OF WAR IN BOSNIA AND INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT**

### **4.1. Before the Deluge: Preparations for the Carve-up of Bosnia**

#### **4.1.1. Land of Three Peoples: The National Composition and Political Situation in Bosnia and Hercegovina**

As in Yugoslav Federation, from the very beginning, the Serbian and Croatian nationalisms had already created serious danger for the unity of Bosnia and Hercegovina. Although Muslims were granted the status of a separate nation by Tito's 1974 Constitution, they were the only nation (*naroda*) in Yugoslavia which did not have an undisputed claim to a separate republic. Bosnia was the only homeland for the Slav Muslims and they were the republic's largest ethnic group with forty-four percent of the 4.35 million population. Nevertheless, since the Bosnian Constitution made each of its three groups (Muslims, Serbs and Croats) 'constituent nations', the majority could not take any decisions without the consent of the other groups.<sup>201</sup>

After the disintegration of the Communist Party in Bosnia, as in most other republics in early 1990s, a set of ethnic parties emerged along ethnic lines. First the Muslims established their Party of Democratic Action (*Stranka Demokratska Akcije -SDA*) in Sarajevo on May 26, 1990 under the leadership of Alija Izetbegovic, a prominent

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<sup>201</sup> According to the last census which was carried out in April 1991, 43.6 per cent of the 4,354,911 population declared themselves Muslim, 31.3 per cent Serb, 17,3 per cent Croat and 5.2 per cent Yugoslav. Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse*, 180.

Muslim intellectual and lawyer.<sup>202</sup> Nearly two months after the creation of Muslim SDA, the Serbs established the Serbian Democratic Party (*Srpska Demokratska Stranka -SDS*), a branch of the Serbs' nationalist party in Knin. Radovan Karadzic, a psychiatrist, was elected SDA president. Soon after the SDS was launched, the Croats followed suit, forming a Bosnian branch of the Tadjman's Party, Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica -HDZ*).

At the very beginning, despite growing tensions, the three national parties formed a united front against the Communists.<sup>203</sup> Yet, during the December 1990 elections, most of Bosnia's electorate voted according to ethnic lines: the Muslims, comprising forty-four per cent of Bosnia's population, rallied behind the SDA; Serbs with thirty-one per cent of the population, solidly supported the SDS; Croats, at seventeen per cent, voted for the Bosnian branch of the HDZ (Map 3). The SDA won eighty-seven seats out of the 240 in the Assembly, the SDS seventy-one, and the HDZ forty-four. The nationalists had taken nearly ninety percent of the seats in the Assembly. Altogether there were 99 Muslims, 85 Serbs, 49 Croats and seven 'Yugoslavs'. These proportions (41 per cent Muslim, 35 per cent Serb, 20 per cent Croat) roughly matched those of the population as a whole (44, 31 and 17 per cent respectively).<sup>204</sup> A coalition government was formed in which three ethnically based parties were represented and SDA leader, Alija Izetbegovic became president. The government posts were shared out between them.

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<sup>202</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 207-8. The Party of Democratic Action was established as a 'political alliance of Yugoslav citizens belonging to Muslim cultural and historical traditions'. At that time SDA did not include a national attribute since it was forbidden.

<sup>203</sup> *Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB)*, 4 October 1990.

<sup>204</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 222-3. Also see Poulton, *The Balkans*, 44.

Unfortunately, the neighbouring nationalisms of Serbia and Croatia had already disturbed the delicate balance with the ultimate ambitions of Milosevic and Tudjman barely concealed. Serb and Croat nationalists were able to play on the widely-held conviction that Muslims had never been a separate ethnic community, but were simply Serbs or Croats who, in the course of five centuries of Ottoman domination, had converted to Islam.<sup>205</sup> Croatian President Tudjman was on record as saying that most of the Bosnian Muslims were 'incontrovertibly of Croatian origin' and that Bosnia and Croatia formed 'an indivisible geographic and economic entity'. However, at that time, the official policy of Tudjman's party, the HDZ, was against the idea of any alterations to borders; since it knew that if any such idea were admitted, Croatia's own borders would be the first to suffer. Bosnian HDZ followed the same line and allied with the Muslim SDA, against the Bosnian Serb party (SDS).<sup>206</sup>

In the autumn of 1991, repeating the pattern which had occurred earlier in Croatia, groups of agitators and guerrillas began appearing in the Serbian villages in Bosnia. In the meantime, Izetbegovic, hoping to avoid a confrontation with the military, allowed the Federal Army to confiscate weapons from Bosnian Territorial Defence or national guard units. Already, in May 1991, the SDS in Bosnia began demanding the secession of large parts of northern and Western Bosnia, which would then join up with the Croatian 'Krajina' to form a new republic.<sup>207</sup> Three areas of Bosnia with predominantly Serb populations were declared 'Serb Autonomous Regions' by the SDS, following exactly the same method that had been used in the previous summer in

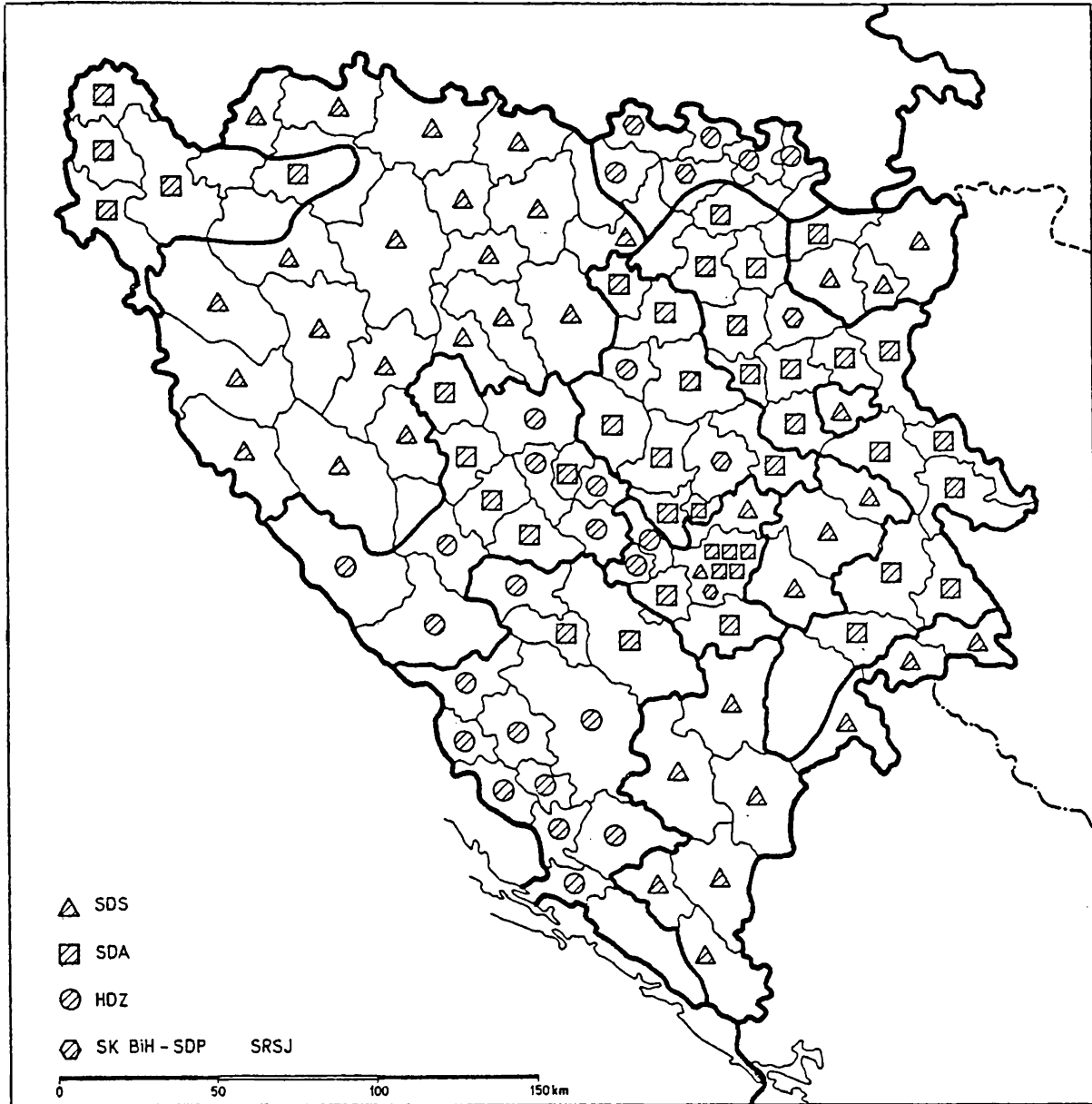
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<sup>205</sup> See , Marc Pinson (ed). *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Their Historic Development From the Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994).

<sup>206</sup> See Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 218 and Z. T. Irwin, "The Fate of Islam in the Balkans: A Comparison of Four State Policies," in *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, ed. Sabrina Petra Ramet, (Durham, North Carolina, 1989), 392.



MAP 3. Elections: winning parties by municipality



Source: *Oslobodjenje*

Croatia. More alarmingly, by July 1991 there was clear evidence that regular secret deliveries of arms to the Bosnian Serbs were being arranged by Milosevic, the Serbian Minister of Interior, Mihalj Kertes, and the Bosnian SDS leader, Radovan Karadzic.<sup>208</sup> There was little doubt that Karadzic's actions were being directed, step by step, by the Serbian President.

The initial phase of the military offensive against Bosnia and Hercegovina took place when the Serbian Autonomous Regions (SAOs) of Hercegovina, Bosnian Krajina, Romanija, and north-eastern Bosnia requested on 4 September and again in mid-September 1991 the JNA to protect Serbian communities. Federal Army troops were immediately moved in both from Serbia and Montenegro and from federal Yugoslav army bases in Bosnia and Hercegovina. By 26 September 1992, the borders of the 'Serb Autonomous Region of Hercegovina' was established on the eastern bank of the Neretva River. It then began its offensive into the southern strip of Croatia, mainly to Dubrovnik, from Montenegro.<sup>209</sup> Answering the questions raised in the Bosnian parliament and by the Bosnian government, the JNA claimed that it was 'defending Yugoslavia' and engaged in 'peacekeeping.' The army's activities in Croatia prior to the declarations of independence and even during the sieges of Vukovar and Dubrovnik had also been designated as such. The JNA later strengthened its position in Bosnia and Hercegovina with the co-operation of Bosnian Internal Affairs Ministry, by having all arms placed under its control, including those of Bosnian Territorial

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<sup>207</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 224.

<sup>208</sup> Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 259. Confirmation of this came in August, when the outgoing federal Prime Minister, Ante Markovic, released a tape recording of a telephone conversation in which Milosevic could be heard informing Karadzic that his next delivery of arms would be supplied to him by General Nikola Uzelac, the Federal Army commander in Banja Luka. See Mark. Mazower, *The War in Bosnia: An Analysis* (London 1992), 4.

<sup>209</sup> Gow, "One Year of War," 7- 8.

Defence Force and some of Serbian paramilitary groups. As a result of these measures, the Serbs had succeeded in prepositioning their forces in Bosnia and Hercegovina as part of their strategy of securing the infrastructure that was to be part of 'mini-Yugoslavia,' carving up the new state in the process: the eastern part was to be attached to Serbia, the southern part to Montenegro, and western part to Serb-populated and occupied regions in Croatia.

With such actions by Bosnian Serbs, the possibility of any political solution to the crisis within Bosnia and Hercegovina was utterly remote. When Izetbegovic had expressed his criticisms about Karadzic's party declaring large parts of the country 'Serb Autonomous Regions' and demanding their secession from Bosnia, the SDS representatives on the republican presidency took their opportunity to declare that they would boycott the presidency meetings from then on.<sup>210</sup>

Indeed, the Bosnian Serbs had rejected Alija Izetbegovic's Presidency from the very beginning. Serbian claim in Croatia was that they were threatened by an Ustasha regime. In Bosnia no such claim seemed plausible; so, a different threat to the Serbs had to be devised. Instead of Ustasha, the Bosnian Serbs were told that they were threatened by 'Islamic fundamentalists'.<sup>211</sup> On a visit to Turkey in July 1991, when the war was nearly over in Slovenia and was about to begin in Croatia, Izetbegovic was asked to join the Organization of Islamic Countries. It was a move that was definitely going to antagonise the Serbs and Croats within Bosnia-Hercegovina, and Radovan Karadzic said that 'even our gloomiest forecasts, which say that Izetbegovic wants

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<sup>210</sup> Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 260.

<sup>211</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 217.

Bosnia-Herzegovina to become an Islamic republic, are being fulfilled'.<sup>212</sup> In fact, the Serbian propagandists were looking for a new opportunity to accuse him, since he had been convicted of counter-revolution and conspiring to create an Islamic state, and sentenced to fourteen years of jail in 1983. His treatise, the *Islamic Declaration*, was republished in Sarajevo in 1990 and had given Karadzic and his supporters perfect means to mobilise Bosnian Serbs against the Bosnian government.<sup>213</sup>

Far from the ideas of establishing a fundamentalist Muslim state, Alija Izetbegovic, with his Macedonian counterpart, Kiro Gligorov, put forward a proposal for the future shape of the Yugoslav federation as Yugoslavia descended into war in the Spring of 1991.<sup>214</sup> On the other side, Milosevic and Tudjman had met in March 1991, in Karadjordjevo to carve up Bosnia and Herzegovina between Serbia and Croatia. As expected, Milosevic was playing double game, and he, in the summer of 1991, tried to strike a deal with the Muslims to remain in a new Yugoslavia -one without the Croats and Slovenes. He publicly announced that his offer was the only way to prevent war in Bosnia, because if the Muslims were to secede from Yugoslavia, the republic would have to be divided. Considering that, Serbs, Muslims and Croats lived cheek by jowl

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<sup>212</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 213. About the 'elements of Muslim nationalism in Bosnia-Herzegovina', see Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 218-22.

<sup>213</sup> See Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 221-2. Malcolm clearly states that 'the talk of a fundamentalist threat was in any case particularly inappropriate' since, first, the Bosnian Muslims were by now among the most secularised Muslim populations in the world and second the absolute majority of two million Muslims did not think of themselves as religious believers and only followed some of the practices of Islam as a matter of culture and tradition. In addition, decades of secular education and Communist political culture had been reinforced, in this respect, by an ever increasing Westernisation of society. The growing urbanisation of Bosnia, though slow at first, had also had an effect; by the late 1980s 30 per cent of marriages in urban districts were mixed marriages. For many rural Muslims and the vast majority of urban ones being a Muslim was reduced to a set of cultural traditions and traditional practices, the origins of which are frequently unknown to those who practise them. No fundamentalist programme could ever have been pursued by a party which had first to gain the votes of these secularised Muslims, and then to function in government as part of an alliance with at least one of the other two national parties, 221-2.

<sup>214</sup> Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse*, 184.

and division of Bosnia into ethnic territories would inevitably be bloody and require massive population transfers, Izetbegovic, at first, indicated that the idea was worth considering.<sup>215</sup> However, Izetbegovic also realised that, even had he accepted the Belgrade proposal, it might postpone the war only for a while and Bosnia and Hercegovina could not have avoided it altogether.

Since the situation was becoming intolerable for the Bosnian government, the Bosnian assembly was now beginning seriously to debate the idea of declaring Bosnian sovereignty. By this it meant not full independence but legislative sovereignty within Yugoslavia, so that it would be able, legally, to pass laws overriding the Federal Army's rights to use its territory against the war in Croatia. On 14 October, Karadzic, before marching his deputies out of the assembly admonished the Muslims to take seriously the will of the Serbian people to remain in Yugoslavia:

“You want to take Bosnia-Hercegovina down the same highway of hell and suffering that Slovenia and Croatia are travelling. Do not think that you will not lead Bosnia-Hercegovina into hell, and do not think that you will not perhaps make the Muslim people disappear, because the Muslims can not defend themselves if there is a war - How will you prevent everyone from being killed in Bosnia-Hercegovina?”<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Of 109 municipalities in Bosnia, thirty-seven had an absolute Muslim majority, thirty-two had absolute Serb majority and thirteen had an absolute Croat majority. With the exception of Croat populated western Herzegovina, even in those municipalities where one nation did form an absolute majority it rarely accounted for more than seventy per cent of the population. Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse*, 180. About Izetbegovic's considerations, see Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 213.

<sup>216</sup> Quoted in Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 215.

Although intended to intimidate Izetbegovic, Karadzic's words convinced the former that Bosnia could not remain in a Yugoslavia dominated by the Serbs. The Bosnian parliament then voted in favour of Bosnian sovereignty. A few days later Karadzic and his party set up what they called a 'Serb National Assembly' in the Federal Army stronghold of Banja Luka, assuming all the trappings of a parliament, a government, and indeed a state.<sup>217</sup> The borders of Bosnian Serb self-styled republic encompassed the autonomous regions and even places where the Serbs were a minority. As Karadzic claimed, if the Serbs wanted to, they could take control in sixty-six per cent of Bosnia. He had already given the ultimatum; 'Bosnia-Hercegovina does not exist any more'.

"More than four months before the war broke out, the creation of the Serb republic effectively destroyed Bosnia-Hercegovina. The steps taken by Karadzic and his party - Autonomous Regions, the arming of the Serb population, minor local incidents, non-stop propaganda, the request for the federal army protection, the Serb parliament - matched exactly what had been done in Croatia. Karadzic's and Milosevic's plan was for a country which would be Yugoslavia in name but 'Greater Serbia' in reality."<sup>218</sup>

#### **4.1.2. Bosnia and Hercegovina In Search of Recognition**

When, in December, the EC offered each of the six republics recognition, (if they pledged to adopt the EC's criteria for new states) Izetbegovic had faced a stark choice; either to seek recognition or remain in Serb dominated Yugoslavia. He hoped to avoid

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<sup>217</sup> Magas, *Destruction of Yugoslavia*, xv.

the issue by putting his faith in the international community and accepting whatever it decided the republic's future should be. He was afraid of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) in the hands of the Serbian nationalists and believed that the US would help to defend Bosnia.<sup>219</sup> With Croatia about to be recognised, transformation of Yugoslav federation obviously was out of the question. Izetbegovic had no choice but to seek independence. The Bosnian Serbs had already said that they would declare their own state if they could not stay in Yugoslavia.

On December 20, the Bosnian Presidency voted to seek the EC recognition. On Sarajevo television, Izetbegovic explained that for Bosnia there were two choices; either independence or being part of Greater Serbia. There was no more Yugoslavia and he expressed little hope for a 'cantonised' Bosnia-Herzegovina, because the demographic distribution would leave huge parts of each national group leaving outside its designated cantons. He also said, except for the Second World War, Bosnia's ethnic communities had lived together peacefully for centuries and equality of the nations should be pursued.<sup>220</sup> As a counter move, on 8 January 1992, the self-proclaimed assembly of Bosnian Serbs adopted a resolution threatening the independence of Serb controlled areas 'when and if the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina is recognised'.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 229.

<sup>219</sup> Washington denied ever giving such guarantees. See Warren Zimmermann, "The Last Ambassador: A Memoir of the Collapse of Yugoslavia," *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 2 (March/April 1995), 16.

<sup>220</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 217.

<sup>221</sup> See *BBC, SWB EE/1275*, C1, 11 January 1992, 1-2.

#### **4.2. Before the Deluge: The Lisbon Conference and Plans for ‘Cantonisation’**

With the EC’s decision to recognise the independence of Slovenia and Croatia, the purpose and work of Lord Carrington -to negotiate an overall settlement of intra-Yugoslav disputes and the framework for future relations between the republics following the dissolution of old federation was obviated. Left with limited resources, he concentrated his efforts on Bosnia and Hercegovina. While visiting Sarajevo on 6 January 1992, Carrington proposed the opening up a set of separate talks on the future of Bosnia within the framework of the EC Conference. With the EC presidency passing from the Netherlands to Portugal, Portugese diplomat Jose Cutilheiro was to take charge of these negotiations.

Cutilheiro held a preliminary meeting in Sarajevo, at the beginning of February with the leaders of the three political parties and then the sub-negotiations were started in Lisbon on 21-22 February. The sub-conference aimed to seek ways in which a constitutional future could be worked out for Bosnia. Cutilheiro made it clear to all parties that there could be no question of transformation of the borders of Bosnia-Hercegovina, nor would there be any viable solution which did not take into account the existence of three communities in Bosnia. Discussions revolved around the idea of ‘cantonisation’- although the actual term was not used in the Conference. The key element was that Bosnia would be divided into units along ethnic lines; various cantons would provide ‘self-government’ for local communities. However, taking the Bosnia’s



ethnic map into consideration that was a recipe for war; but, the EC believed that it lacked any other alternatives.<sup>222</sup>

Actually, when Izetbegovic had called for the referendum for independence to be held on 28 February and 1 March 1992 and after the Portuguese presidency announced that the EC would recognise the republic if the referendum opted for independence, Bosnia's fate was decided. On the one hand, the EC opted to accept a decision for independence arrived at by a simple majority, rather than the agreement of the republic's constituent ethnic groups; an act which disregarded totally the constitutionally determined federal administrative structure of Bosnia-Herzegovina. On the other hand, the idea of 'territorial units' along ethnic lines was proposed. The only way to prevent bloodshed afterwards was the strong EC commitment for the protection of the independent entities after recognition.<sup>223</sup> Unfortunately, with the political direction and backing from the EC and its member governments lacking, the mediators were propelled to entertain discussion on the basis of what was essentially a Serbian idea supported by some Croats.<sup>224</sup>

Indeed, throughout 1990 and 1991, all political parties in Serbia proper, as well as Karadzic's SDS in Bosnia, had been arguing for the 'cantonisation' of Bosnia and

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<sup>222</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 79-81.

<sup>223</sup> Eyal, *Europe and Yugoslavia*, 61-2.

<sup>224</sup> *BBC, SWB EE/1285*, C1, 23 January 1992. For the position of Croats before the referendum, see the proceedings of the discussions at Bosnia's presidency on 31 January 1992, in *BBC SWB/1293*, C1, 1 February 1992, 1. Croatia's Foreign Minister at that time had already indicated that he was ready to accept pieces of Herzegovina, saying in January that concessions over Krajina could not be 'one sided', quoted in *The Guardian*, 17 January 1992. However, at this stage, the leader of the Bosnian branch of HDZ, Stjepan Kljuic, supported Bosnia's integrity; see Milan Andrejevic, "The Future of Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Sovereign Republic or Cantonisation?," *RFE/RL Report on Eastern Europe*, 5 July 1991.

Hercegovina which was still within the Yugoslav federation.<sup>225</sup> In December 1991, the SDS had published a plan and a map in which 'national cantonisation' would cover around seventy percent of Bosnia's territory claimed by Bosnian Serbs.<sup>226</sup> Later on, when Radovan Karadzic met Milosevic and Tudjman in Graz, Austria on 26 February, what they talked about was not 'cantonal federation' but partition of Bosnia-Hercegovina and massive population transfers.<sup>227</sup> Karadzic also mentioned that they needed to have a 'land-corridor across northern Bosnia'.<sup>228</sup> The Serbs and the Croats might have been intent on a programme of ethnic purification in Bosnia and Hercegovina, but the Lisbon Conference, admitting the principle of ethnically determined territorial units was the biggest mistake, since in effect it provided a 'charter for ethnic cleansing'.

On the Bosnian side, although, President Izetbegovic always favoured a unitary state, he was prepared to enter into talks on the basis of EC proposals in the interests of both co-operating with the EC, and, since, in any case, war seemed inevitable; if the war erupted he could put the blame on the EC member states and seek assistance. Stjepan Kljuic, the leader of the Bosnian Croat Party HDZ, also was a firm adherent of Bosnian unity whereas many other Croats were more extreme and favoured the partition of Bosnia between the Serbs and the Croats at the expense of the Muslims.

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<sup>225</sup> Andrejevich, "The Future of Bosnia and Herzegovina," *RFE/RL Report on Eastern Europe*, 5 July 1991, 28-34.

<sup>226</sup> Robert Hayden, "The Partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1990-93," *RFE/RL Research Report 2*, no. 22 (28 May 1993), 4 ff.

<sup>227</sup> Martin Woollacott, "Avoiding a Tragic Finale to the Slav Follies," *The Guardian*, 7 March 1992.

<sup>228</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 220.

When the fierce debates erupted in the party on the 'cantonisation' issue, Kljuic was forced to resign and was replaced by an extremist Mate Boban.<sup>229</sup>

The referendum on the Bosnian independence, held on 28 February and 1 March 1992, asked 'Are you in favour of a sovereign and independent Bosnia-Hercegovina, a state of equal citizens and nations of Muslims, Serbs and Croats and others who live in it?'.<sup>230</sup> Since, at the urging of Radovan Karadzic the Bosnian Serbs boycotted the referendum<sup>231</sup> and SDS erected road blocks to prevent ballot boxes to enter into the areas it controlled,<sup>232</sup> only 64 per cent of the electorate took part in the referendum of which 99.7 per cent voted 'yes'.<sup>233</sup>

Immediately after the referendum tension grew and Serbs in Sarajevo erected barricades on 2 March after a shooting incident at a wedding the day before. The EC diplomacy came up with some recommendations in Lisbon on 7 March; there were some discussions on 'constituent units' but nothing was said about the territorial definition of the units and the discussions came to nothing after Serbian delegation refused to accept the plan.<sup>234</sup> Between 16-18 March, Cutilheiro returning to Sarajevo brought with him a 'Statement of Principles for New Constitutional Arrangements for Bosnia-Hercegovina'. On 18 March, the Serbs, Croats and the Bosnian government signed the document, dividing Bosnia into 'three constituent units, based on national

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<sup>229</sup> Mate Boban was also a close ally of Tudjman. See report by Judy Dempsey, *The Financial Times*, 8 July 1992.

<sup>230</sup> Mazower, *The War in Bosnia*, 7. Also see, Magas, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia*, xviii.

<sup>231</sup> Cviic notes that '...thousands of Serbs in the big cities ignored the call to boycott'. See Cviic, *An Awful Warning*, 32.

<sup>232</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 231.

<sup>233</sup> Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 237. Also see Mark Thompson, *A Paper House: The Ending of Yugoslavia* (London: Vintage, 1992), 318.

<sup>234</sup> John Palmer, *The Guardian*, 10 March 1992.

principles and taking into account economic, geographic and other criteria'. The country was to remain one, with a parliament comprising two chambers, one elected directly and the other formed by an equal number of representatives from each community. While the central government would have responsibility in a number of areas, such as defence and foreign policy, economic and financial policy, basic utilities and infrastructure, each of the communities would be able to veto in the parliament anything it judged to be against its interests. The 'constituent units' would be responsible for all the other matters which concerned them as long as their actions did not disrupt the independence and territorial integrity of Bosnia. The whole structure would also be overseen by a constitutional court, which included foreign lawyers to provide non-partisan arbiters in any potential disputes. The provisions had also included the institution of a working group to 'define the territory of the constituent units'.<sup>235</sup>

However, first the Croat HDZ on 24 March, then, a day later Izetbegovic's party pulled out of the agreement. The plan gave only 17 per cent of the Bosnian territory to Croats and left 59 per cent of the Croat population in non-Croat cantons.<sup>236</sup> It was a plan for the partition of Bosnia along ethnic lines and Izetbegovic and other SDA leaders were adamantly opposed to any such attempt to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 85-6.

<sup>236</sup> Hayden, "The Partition of Bosnia," 7.

<sup>237</sup> Fogelquist, *Handbook of Facts*, 21.

It is argued that, the US ambassador in Belgrade, Warren Zimmermann, advised Izetbegovic that if he really did not like the agreement, he should not sign it.<sup>238</sup> This was interpreted as a sign of partial American return to the scene. Having left the Yugoslav issue to the Europeans and not following the lead by not recognising Slovenia and Croatia in January, the US was seeking ways to compensate. This was partly the result of criticism that it had not been providing leadership for the Western world, partly the result of intensive lobbying in Washington by Bosnian representatives, especially the Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic and future Ambassador to the UN, Mohammed Sacirbey, which appeared to convince many in the American political elite of the need to act decisively to assist Bosnia.<sup>239</sup> As a result, the US was preparing to recognise Bosnia, along with Slovenia and Croatia, on 7 April. Having missed the opportunity of decisive action in January by granting immediate recognition, the EC believed that recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina might serve to deter war in Bosnia as, it thought, it had ended hostilities in Croatia.

### **4.3. The Outbreak of War in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

After more than a year of unrest and violent incidents, Bosnia-Herzegovina entered a phase of widespread brutality at the end of February 1992 and a state of war just after the recognition on 7 April 1992. It seems that recognition of Bosnia had given the Serbs the pretext to start their large scale carve-up operations in Bosnia.

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<sup>238</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 88. Zimmermann left Yugoslavia three months later when western embassies recalled their ambassadors. He later resigned from the State Department partly in protest against US policy in Bosnia.

<sup>239</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 88.

As mentioned above, while the war in Croatia was intensifying, the Federal Army had begun movements in Bosnia and Hercegovina. The JNA had established itself in the Bosnian countryside, removing troops and equipment from the towns and leaving only a small force there. With a good strategic planning, it began to deploy units at major communications points in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Later, the army would construct heavy artillery emplacements around major towns in Bosnia and Hercegovina, including Sarajevo, in the winter of 1991-92.<sup>240</sup>

Without a clear swathe of Bosnia and Hercegovina under their control, the Serb commanders in the occupied parts of Croatia would not have a secure rear or reliable communications with Serbia proper. As much as any local ambitions for a 'Bosnian Serb Republic' the strategic imperative was for the Serbs to break up any independent Bosnia-Hercegovina in order to guarantee their war gains in the war against Croatia. Without a corridor linking the Krajina's rear across northern Bosnia via Banja Luka to Serbia and Serb occupied Slavonia, the Krajina would be economically and militarily unviable.<sup>241</sup>

By early 1992, as the fighting wound down in Croatia, the Serb army had withdrawn from Croatia with the approval of the UN, into Bosnia, where the bulk of the military industry was based. The presence of Yugoslav Federal Army on the side of the Serbs and the arms embargo imposed by the UN Security Council on September 25 against all former Yugoslavia<sup>242</sup> had helped the Bosnian Serbs to preserve huge military superiority against the Bosnian government forces from the very beginning of the war.

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<sup>240</sup> Gow, "One Year of War," 7.

<sup>241</sup> Almond, *Europe's Backyard War*, 264.

In addition, President Izetbegovic had allowed the army to confiscate the weapons supplies of the local territorial defence units to assure the army commanders of his own peaceful intentions.<sup>243</sup>

Irregular units, notably the “Tigers”, formerly known as the Serbian Volunteer Guard led by notorious Arkan (Zeljko Raznjatovic), were also involved in preparations for the conflict in Bosnia and Hercegovina.<sup>244</sup> Other similar forces were the self-styled ‘Chetnik’ army set up by the Serbian extremist Vojislav Seselj<sup>245</sup> and the ‘White Eagles’ led by Mirko Jovic. These paramilitary groups provided the army with the ‘professional,’ all volunteer infantry which were vital to the blitzkrieg terror campaign, during which the Federal Yugoslav Army seized large parts of northern and eastern Bosnia and Hercegovina in the spring of 1992.<sup>246</sup> As one expert put it: Arkan’s men were necessary because despite the propaganda about ancient animosities between local Serbs and Muslims it was difficult to get local people to start the fighting.<sup>247</sup>

Arkan’s ‘Tigers’ had arrived in north-eastern Bosnian town of Bijeljina on April 1. These heavily armed men, most of them Serbians, not Bosnian Serbs, had pioneered the technique of ethnic cleansing by terror and recently finished their ‘clean-up’ operations in Vukovar. Some of them had moved into Banja Luka at the end of March, where they had taken control of the city, mounting road blocks and ‘roaming the streets with rocket-propelled grenade launchers, AK-47s and Scorpion automatic

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<sup>242</sup> UNSCR 713, 25 September 1991.

<sup>243</sup> Gow, “One Year of War,” 8.

<sup>244</sup> See James Gow, “Political and Military Affiliations in the Yugoslav Conflict,” *RFE/RL Research Report* 1, No. 20, 15 May 1992.

<sup>245</sup> See Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 226.

<sup>246</sup> James Gow, “One Year of War,” 8.

<sup>247</sup> Mazower, *The War in Bosnia*, 11.

pistols'.<sup>248</sup> Arkan ordered a campaign of harassment against the Muslim population of the town. His 'Tigers' took up sniper positions around the town, patrolled the streets and fired machine gun rounds into the air. They hunted down Muslim leaders, and carried out summary executions. Their aims, clearly, were first to terrify the local Muslims into flight and secondly to radicalise the local Serb population, recruiting some of its young men into a new occupation, in order to establish Serbian control over the area.

Bijeljina and Zvornik were of vital strategic importance to the Serb war effort. Together, they represented a hinge of territory that linked the two main chunks of Bosnian land that the Serb nationalists wanted to take over a broad strip of land across northern Bosnia, linking Serbia with the military base at Banja Luka, the Bosnian 'Krajina' and the occupied areas of Croatia, and a swathe on the eastern side of Bosnia, running all the way down the Bosnian-Serbian border (thus including vital entry-points for supply lines from Serbia) to the ethnically Serb areas of eastern Hercegovina.<sup>249</sup>

Jose Maria Mendiluce, the UNHCR's most senior official in former Yugoslavia, was visiting Milosevic in Belgrade and on his way back, he had to pass through Zvornik. It was just on the day when the town had surrendered to the Serbs and 'ethnic cleansing' by 'Tigers' of Arkan had started. He had been detained by the Serb and JNA forces and he witnessed the 'ethnic cleansing' campaign in Zvornik. In his words:

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<sup>248</sup> Helsinki Watch, *War Crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (New York, 1992), 149.

<sup>249</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 236.



“I was detained for two hours. I realised that I was at serious risk. I could see trucks full of dead bodies. I could see militiamen taking more corpses of children, women and old people from their houses and putting them on trucks. I saw at least four or five trucks full of corpses. When I arrived the cleansing had been done. There were no people, no one on the streets. It was all finished. They were looting, cleaning up the city after the massacre. I was convinced they were going to kill me”.<sup>250</sup>

Mendiluce’s impression that both Serbian paramilitaries and the JNA units were taking part in the capture of Zvornik was corroborated by the account of the extreme nationalist paramilitary leader Vojislav Seselj, who went to Zvornik shortly after what he called its ‘liberation’: “The Zvornik operation was planned in Belgrade,” he said;

“The Bosnian Serb forces took part in it. But the special units and the best combat units came from this side [Serbia]. These were police units - the so called Red Berets - special units of the Serbian Interior Ministry of Belgrade. The army engaged itself to a small degree - it gave artillery support where it was needed. The operation had been prepared for a long time. It was not carried out in any kind of nervous fashion. Everything was well-organised and implemented.”<sup>251</sup>

Within a few days, several more of the towns with large Muslim populations in that eastern swathe of Bosnia had been subjected to the same treatment. The psychology of terror which the paramilitary commanders introduced in these places worked well as

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<sup>250</sup> Quoted in Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 223.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

a means of frightening the local Muslims into flight. It was estimated that 95 per cent of the Muslims of Zvornik, Visegrad and Foca had fled their homes by the end of April.<sup>252</sup> The terror was not confined to Muslims and Croats, since the Serbs who dared side with the Bosnian government or merely opposed the war were dealt with in an equally brutal fashion. Most rural Serbs were confused by the war but so indoctrinated with the fear of Islamic fundamentalism that they genuinely believed that they had to defend themselves against their Muslim neighbours. The ground had been prepared by the broadcasts of Radio Television Belgrade, warning Serbs of Ustasha pogroms and fundamentalist jihads.<sup>253</sup>

During the two month period from the beginning of April to the end of May 1992, the Federal Army and its paramilitary adjuncts captured 60 per cent of Bosnian territory, accelerating their program of 'ethnic cleansing' and driving out Muslim population through campaigns of terror. Some local Serb forces raised in the 'Serb Autonomous Regions' of Bosnia also joined these operations in several areas of the country. But it is quite clear that the conquest was mainly achieved by the Federal Army forces (including planes which were used to bomb the towns of Kupres, Doboje and Tuzla) directed by Belgrade, and paramilitary groups from Serbia. In other words, even though some of the soldiers serving in the Federal Army were Bosnian Serbs, and even though it was co-ordinated with elements of a Serb insurrection in some areas, this was predominantly an invasion of Bosnia planned and directed from Serbian soil. During the early weeks of the invasion, the official statements issued by Milosevic and the federal army commanders consisted of two claims, both of them were false: first, that

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<sup>252</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 237. Also see Mazower, *The War in Bosnia*, 13.

the army was acting only as a peace-keeper to separate local fighters, and secondly that no Serbian units were crossing the border into Bosnia.<sup>254</sup>

#### **4.3.1. Bosnians and Croats Fighting Together: Serb Conquests Being Challenged**

Since the Bosnian President had not allowed any defence preparations not to provoke the war and all the weapons in possession of Territorial Defence Force had already been taken by the JNA, Bosnian government was caught by the war in a state of extreme unpreparedness. Only defence preparations that had been made was almost notably in western Hercegovina by the radical Croat dominated local governments. They had ignored the army's orders to return their weapons. Instead, they had formed what was to be known as the Croatian Defence Council (HVO). Elements of the Croatian Defence Union (HOS), the paramilitary wing of the extreme right Party of Rights in Croatia had also made preparations. In total, the Croatian forces in Hercegovina was around 15,000.<sup>255</sup> Other forces in Bosnia-Hercegovina were small, irregular, largely Muslim groups, organised by local leaders in some areas and numbering perhaps 3,500 altogether.<sup>256</sup> In contrast, the Federal Yugoslav Army and the Serbian irregulars together totalled well over 100,000 armed troops.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> See Mark Thompson, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina* (Avon: The Bath Press, 1994).

<sup>254</sup> See reports by Ian Traynor, *The Guardian*, 17 April 1992 and Anne McElvoy, *The Times*, 20 April 1992. Not only were paramilitary units crossing into the country, but also, as one eye-witness report from the border put it, 'the federal army has this week strung a massive presence of men, artillery and tanks along the road from Serbia as it surges into Bosnia.' Report by Philip Sherwell, *Daily Telegraph*, 16 April 1992.

<sup>255</sup> See Milan Vego's article, "The Croatian Forces in Bosnia and Hercegovina," *Jane's Intelligence Review* 3, March 1993.

<sup>256</sup> See Milan Vego, "The Army of Bosnia and Hercegovina," *Jane's Intelligence Review* 2, February 1993.

<sup>257</sup> Gow, "One Year of War", 9.

However, despite the huge gap between forces, the initial Serbian conquest had begun to be challenged by the end of May 1992. After a month of fighting, the Federal Army forces were pushed away from Mostar area. On 16 June, Presidents Izetbegovic and Tujman had signed a formal military alliance legitimising the use of both Croatian army troops and the local HVO forces.<sup>258</sup> In part, this was related to a weakening of the Serbian forces, resulting from the decision to divide the federal Yugoslav army into the Serbian army in Bosnia and the Military of Yugoslavia, with Belgrade trying to persuade the world that it was not involved in the Bosnian war in order to avoid UN sanctions.<sup>259</sup> UN Security Council had identified Serbia and Montenegro as responsible for the war in Bosnia and was taking action against them, demanding the withdrawal of the Yugoslav Army from Bosnia in Resolution 743.<sup>260</sup>

On 27 April, President Milosevic and the Montenegrin government declared the creation of a new federal state of Yugoslavia consisting of their two republics alone. And in early May, Milosevic announced that he would withdraw those soldiers in the army in Bosnia who were citizens of the new two-republic Yugoslavia; those who were Bosnian Serbs would be transferred, together with all the armament and supplies, to the so-called 'Serb Republic', and the Army of the Serbian Republic (*Vojska Republike Srpske - VRS*) was placed under the command of General Ratko Mladic.<sup>261</sup>

It is apparent that the entire changeover was clearly a cosmetic exercise. As one expert argues "it is not possible to believe that the army which was fighting in Bosnia

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 9ff.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

from late May onwards consisted entirely of Bosnian Serbs".<sup>262</sup> There were no foreign observers to check whether all the Serbian or Montenegrin soldiers did in fact leave Bosnia by 20 May.<sup>263</sup>

#### **4.4. Western Misperceptions About the Nature of the War in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Evolution of the International Policy**

Milosevic's plan in declaring its own republic, and announcing that New Yugoslavia had nothing to do with the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina soon produced the desired effect. Prominent Western politicians, such as Douglas Hurd were soon describing the fighting in Bosnia as 'a civil war'. A distinguished former editor of *The Times* published a number of articles in which the fighting was described as a typical 'civil war'.<sup>264</sup> The BBC referred constantly to all sides in the conflict, including the Bosnian government, as 'warring factions'; otherwise it described the war as 'a breakdown in law and order'.<sup>265</sup>

In Britain there was one extra reason for this inability to understand what was happening, which was that in the crucial early days of April 1992 Britain was in the throes of a general election. Few commentators and certainly no politicians could devote any attention to what was happening in Bosnia; by the time they woke up to the

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<sup>260</sup> "Isolating Serbia", The Editorial, *Financial Times*, 27 April 1992.

<sup>261</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 238. See also Cviic, *An Awful Warning*, 36.

<sup>262</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 239.

<sup>263</sup> See, for details, Mazower, *War in Bosnia*, 15.

<sup>264</sup> "Bosnia on the Brink," *The Times*, 10 April 1992. The tone changed, however, on 23 April 1992; the Editorial wrote that 'the Serbian offensive in Bosnia and Herzegovina is nothing less than the invasion of an independent country...There is ample evidence that the Serbian government of Slobodan Milosevic is giving tacit support to the irregulars in Bosnia...', "The New Pariah," *The Times*, 23 April 1992.

existence of a war there, all they could see was a number of equally fierce-looking combatants fighting one another for equally incomprehensible reasons. In the US the presidential elections were not to happen for another seven months; but the Bush administration was already worried about making any policy commitments to Bosnia which might prove electorally damaging, and was content to accept the strangely possessive argument of EC leaders who had claimed from the start of the Yugoslav war that this was 'a European Problem'.<sup>266</sup>

#### 4.4.1. International Involvement in the Bosnian War: The EC and the UN

Immediately after the war began in Bosnia-Herzegovina, EC diplomats warned that if Milosevic did not order his commanders to stop the fighting, Yugoslavia was not to be recognised as a successor to the former state.<sup>267</sup> That was an open admittance of Serbia's guilt in conducting the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Finally, the Community duly identified Serbs as 'primarily responsible' for the Yugoslav conflict. At the same time, there was growing international indignation at the atrocious aggressive actions of the Serb irregulars and the JNA in Bosnia. The strategic programme of systemic murder and terror known as 'ethnic cleansing' was in full-swing. The EC member states decided collectively to withdraw their ambassadors from Belgrade. Serbia (or the new 'Yugoslavia) was being diplomatically isolated in the hope that this coercive measure would force the Belgrade regime to stop the

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<sup>265</sup> Noel Malcolm, "Another Euro-Success," *The Spectator*, 2 May 1992, 5.

<sup>266</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 240.

<sup>267</sup> *The Guardian*, 11 April 1992. However, at that time, Milosevic was in possession of the central bank, most of the country's assets, much of the military hardware, a great deal of country's industries and property of most of the embassies overseas. 'Fight now, negotiate later' was always his motto.

fighting. By now, two things were understood about the situation by the international community: first, Serbia was overwhelmingly responsible for the gross violence carried out by the Federal Army, and secondly, that the Serbian leadership did not respond to reason, but only to coercion.<sup>268</sup> The UN Security Council meanwhile also decided to adopt an entire array of economic sanctions in Resolution 757, adopted on 30 May.<sup>269</sup> But, even at that stage, British and French governments had, in fact, resisted the imposition of sanctions: they wanted Milosevic to be given 'a further opportunity' to halt the violence in Bosnia.<sup>270</sup> Although the UN Resolution banned all trade, economic sanctions had very little effect on Serbia, since it was violated by shipments of oil and other supplies from Greece and up the Danube from Russia and the Ukraine.<sup>271</sup>

Having failed to stop the fighting from spreading, the EC transferred the problem to the UN. The UN had already had the quarters of UNPROFOR in Croatia established in Sarajevo - somehow optimistically aimed to deter the war spreading into Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, as soon as the fighting intensified in Bosnia, including skirmishes in Sarajevo, the UN came under pressure to expand its role to Bosnia-Herzegovina. In response to pressures, especially from the EC, Boutros Ghali sent Marrack Goulding, Deputy Under Secretary with responsibility for peacekeeping, to Bosnia in May 1992 to assess the conditions for mandating and creating a UN operation zone there. He concluded that the conditions were not appropriate for sending a peacekeeping force to Bosnia. He also indicated the levels of violence and noted the siege of Sarajevo, put emphasis on the issue that the Serbs were attempting

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<sup>268</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 92-3.

<sup>269</sup> UNSCR 757, 30 May 1992.

<sup>270</sup> Helsinki Watch, *War Crimes in Bosnia*, 150-3.

<sup>271</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 242.

to create ethnically pure areas in line with negotiations carried out by Cutilheiro.<sup>272</sup> In the week beginning 11 May, both the EC and the UN took decisions to withdraw their forces from Bosnia, thus accepting that there was nothing either the ECMM or UNPROFOR could do in the circumstances, forces that had earlier been earmarked for Croatia.<sup>273</sup>

#### **4.5. Ethnic Cleansing in Summer 1992**

While the European powers had still been discussing whether the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was a civil war of which all the parties were guilty or simply a war of aggression,<sup>274</sup> endless columns of refugees started pouring into Croatia in April and May 1992. These people actually were not fleeing the war zones. They had been driven from their homes on the grounds of their nationality. They were not the tragic by-product of the war; their expulsion was the whole point of war. In a systematic campaign, Serb paramilitary hit squads swept through northern and eastern Bosnia in the spring and summer months and, village by village, seized control of the region without, in most places, encountering real military opposition.

A common characteristic of the cleansing operation was the systematic elimination of Muslim community leaders - prominent people, intellectuals, members of the SDA and the wealthy. The existence of such lists of these people's names was in itself an instrument of ethnic cleansing. The terror it instilled in neighbouring communities, once news of the atrocities spread, encouraged many of those who feared that they

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<sup>272</sup> UN Secretary General's Report, UN Doc. S/23900, 12 May 1992.

<sup>273</sup> Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 241.



might be targeted to flee even before they were attacked. It was a destruction of a community from top down.<sup>275</sup>

However, in some places, the cleansing was violent and accompanied by mass killing. Detailed reports which emerged in the year later showed that women were being held in special buildings for the purpose of systematic rape.<sup>276</sup> Karadzic had founded his new independent state on April 6, 1992. Ethnic cleansing was the instrument which gave that state territorial definition. Rumours that the Serbs had several mass detention camps in northeastern Bosnia had been in the air for weeks, until the journalist Roy Gutman, of the New York paper *Newsday*, published a story about the camps on July 19. He had visited Manjaca; according to Serbs, a prisoner-of-war camp. But Gutman said it was clear that many of the men detained there were not combatants. Some said that they had never carried arms; others said that they had own rifles but had registered and surrendered them when the Serb irregulars entered their neighbourhood and issued the surrender ultimatum.<sup>277</sup>

When Gutman's report was unleashed Karadzic was in London for EC sponsored talks. It was the turn of United Kingdom's presidency of the EC. Karadzic comfortably admitted that there were prisoner-of-war camps, as was normal in any war. He invited any journalists to come to Bosnia and visit the alleged camps. On

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<sup>274</sup> For an assessment of the making of international response to what was going on in Bosnia from April onwards, see, the following sub-chapters;

<sup>275</sup> See for a detailed account of the genocidal ethnic cleansing, Roy Gutman, *Witness to Genocide* (Shaftesbury: Element Books Ltd, 1993) and Norman Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of Ethnic Cleansing*, Texas: A & M University Press, 1995.

<sup>276</sup> The issue of organised rape, at the very beginning, was viewed as contentious. The Bosnian government had assembled details of 13,000 rape victims; the EU Commission offered the very rough estimate of 20,000 in January 1993. What became clear was that rape was being used in many places

August 2, Newsday carried a story on front page; 'The Death Camps of Bosnia'.<sup>278</sup>  
For the first time, the Serbs were accused not just of mass detention, but of organised extermination.

On August 18, the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee received a staff report suggesting the detailed accounts had been available to the governments of the western world and to the UN long before these were published in the newspapers. The main findings of the Report were that the ethnic cleansing campaign had substantially achieved its goals: there now existed an almost exclusively Serb-inhabited region, in territory contiguous to Serbia, and covering seventy percent of the territory in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The international community, it is argued, knew about the scale and nature of the refugee crisis as early as May 1992. Muhamed Sacirbey, then Bosnia's Ambassador to the UN, claimed to have told Boutros Boutros-Ghali personally about the concentration camps as early as the middle of May. In July 1992, they submitted a more precise list of camp locations. On July 3, the UNHCR circulated a report to the UNPROFOR and the EC Monitoring missions concerning abuses at four camps. On July 27, it also circulated a report specifically about Omarska. George Kenney, the US State Department Official who resigned in protest at American policy in Bosnia, later accused the US of a cover-up.<sup>279</sup> Everybody pretended like nothing was happening.

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as part of a general policy of 'ethnic cleansing'. It was not a matter of 'by product of the war' as individual acts by disorderly soldiers.

<sup>277</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 249.

<sup>278</sup> See Roy Gutman, *Witness to Genocide* (Shaftesbury: Element Books Ltd, 1993).

<sup>279</sup> Silber and Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia*, 251.

At the end of April 1992, there were 286,000 refugees from Bosnia. Most of them tried to find shelter in Croatia. By the beginning of June this number had risen to three quarters of a million; and to 1.1 million by mid-July. By the end of the year 1992, almost two million Bosnians -nearly half of the population- had become refugees. At the end of July, Croatia's Deputy Prime Minister, Mate Granic, announced that his country could take no more refugees. Croatia with a population of just 4.7 million, was now also a home to almost a million refugees, and was turning to a large refugee camp. He appealed to Western countries to start taking more.

The Twelve countries of the EC, chaired by Britain, held a one day conference in Geneva. Germany, with 200,000 former Yugoslavs living within its borders, many of them as refugees, argued for a quota system, each country accepting an agreed number of refugees according to its size, and ability to accommodate them. Britain's Baroness Chalker, Minister of Overseas Development, argued that 'the refugees should be accommodated as close as possible to their homes, so that their return could be made all the more readily once the fighting had died down. She won the support of the others saying that she was not speaking in the interests of the British or the EC tax payer but in the interests of the refugees themselves.'<sup>280</sup> Unfortunately, assuming that the refugees would be able to return after the fighting had ended was to miss the whole point of the war, which was being waged deliberately to ensure that they would never return. Obviously, in the meantime, the world had a humanitarian not a political, crisis on its hands, and therefore, it called for a humanitarian, not a political response.

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 247.

#### **4.5.1. Mitterand's Visit and Opening of the Sarajevo Airport**

During the summer months of 1992, while all the campaign of ethnic cleansing was taking place in the Bosnian countryside, the world's attention almost exclusively concentrated on the siege and bombardment of Sarajevo. While all the world's attention concentrated on Sarajevo, western governments had to make some efforts to alleviate the city's suffering. Since they were not in favour of intervening militarily into the conflict and taking sides, the best option was to start humanitarian assistance. It became clear that if Sarajevo were not relieved soon, large numbers of people would starve to death. On June 8, the UN Security Council approved a plan to take control of Sarajevo airport and begin an airlift of humanitarian aid. In fact, it was Secretary-General's recommendation to restrict the UN presence in Bosnia only to the capital city which was by then entering its third month under siege.

In the three weeks between Boutros Ghali's announcement and the UN took control of Sarajevo airport, elements in the international community, led by France, had begun to threaten Serbs with the use of force. At the same time there had been arguments within the international community about Bosnia as to whether force should be used, and how much force was enough.

At the Lisbon Summit of the European Council on 27-28 June, some member states in the EC argued that it was too early and dangerous to open the Sarajevo airport. President Mitterand took a surprise visit to Bosnian capital to show the fellow leaders in the EC who were tending to waver their hands, counselling caution and displaying inhibition that it was time to take action. With all land routes into Sarajevo blocked by

the Army of the Serbian Republic (VRS), the aerial lifeline was very important to Sarajevans. The siege of Sarajevo began to be broken immediately as the French military landed the first humanitarian aid flight into Bosnia, following the *Act de Presence* of their President, on the early hours of 29 June, even before the Serbs holding the airport relinquished control to the UN later on the same day.<sup>281</sup>

The consequences of President Mitterand's surprise visit to Sarajevo seemed like having a real effect on British policy. Mitterand's visit, as an act, demonstrated to the more cautious and faint-hearted that things could be made to happen with a little boldness. An assessment was, as General Morillon later pointed out, that politicians should be prepared to lead and be bold enough on occasion to ignore the cautious advice of officials.<sup>282</sup>

#### 4.5.2. The Friction Between the EC and the UN

Mitterand's unexpected visit was also directed to the UN Secretariat, in particular, to the Secretary General. There was a growing feeling that the Secretary-General was simply opposed outright to the UN involvement in Bosnia, which he regarded as a 'rich man's war'. On a visit to Sarajevo in July 1992, Boutros Ghali made his infamous remark that there were other more deserving causes, and that the massive media attention given to Bosnia-Herzegovina was diverting resources away from the Third World.<sup>283</sup> In the view of the Secretary-General, Bosnia was a European matter and it was only because it was in Europe that it was receiving so much attention, when

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<sup>281</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 93-5.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 94-5.

there were numerous cases which he regarded as similar, some of which were arguably worse. He even warned that increased commitment in Bosnia could lead to a 'kind of Vietnam for the United Nations'.<sup>284</sup>

The friction between the UN Secretary-General and both his political masters on the Security Council and the EC came to a head in July. On 17 July the EC team, Carrington and Cutilheiro, at a meeting of sub-conference in London, gained agreement on a cease-fire around Sarajevo in which all Serbian heavy weaponry would be placed under the UN control. Boutros-Ghali, rather than welcoming this process, reacted by saying that the EC made agreements on behalf of the UN without speaking to the UN first. On 22 July, he publicised a letter refusing openly to co-operate with Lord Carrington's latest cease-fire which required another 1100 UN monitors to supervise the heavy weapons of all sides. In reality the EC negotiators had been trying to discuss the matter with him by telephone. Although he was understood to be there, he did not take Carrington's calls. It is easy to conclude that Boutros-Ghali was sulking, feeling that if demands continued to be made on the UN, then this would only be done if the UN were involved from the outset in making arrangements for engagement. A cease-fire in a country where he felt the UN had little place, certainly as a surrogate for the EC when the latter could not deal with a problem itself, was of far less importance than the question of the UN's status. Boutros-Ghali justified his objections by citing the UN Charter: 'the UN could make use of the regional

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<sup>283</sup> Quoted in Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse*, 195n.

<sup>284</sup> Boutros Boutros Ghali, Quoted by Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 242.

organisations to help in its work; but there is no suggestion in the Charter that the opposite could apply.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 97-8. See Secretary General's Report, UN Doc. S/24333, 21 July 1992.

## CHAPTER V: BRITISH RESPONSE TO THE WAR IN BOSNIA AND HERCEGOVINA

### 5.1. Britain's Perception of the War in Bosnia and Hercegovina

By the beginning of July 1992, when news about atrocities against the civilians in Bosnia reached its peak and international attention was on the concentration camps in Bosnia, United Kingdom took over the EC Presidency. The debate on whether to intervene militarily in Bosnia-Hercegovina to stop the bloodshed or not had been on the agenda for quite some time. Until that time within the EC, 'there did seem to be a degree of consensus over Yugoslavia' as the Community sought to bring palliative measures on the situation.<sup>286</sup> It was hoped that these levers which, after November 1991 including sanctions, would restrict Serbia in its actions against Bosnian Muslims. The failure of all the efforts, however, began to erode whatever consensus existed among the member states.

The key disagreement was over the issue of military intervention. British government was always publicly opposing the military involvement at any force level. The British highlighted all the difficulties and warned of the dangers of being drawn into a long-term anti-insurgency operation'.<sup>287</sup> In addition, proposals by Western commentators and leading public figures such as ex-British Prime Minister Lady Thatcher for a

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<sup>286</sup> Trevor Salmon, "Testing Times for European Political Cooperation: The Gulf and Yugoslavia, 1990-1992," *International Affairs* 68, no. 2 (1992), 248.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.



combination of air strikes against Serb military targets and the lifting of the arms embargo were dismissed by British ministers out of hand as unrealistic.<sup>288</sup>

The main reason of this restrained and conservative approach by Britain from the very beginning of the conflict was interpreted as the failure of understanding the nature and underlying causes of the war in Yugoslavia. At no point during the entire Bosnian war had the pronouncements of British politicians shown any clear understanding of 'who made this war happen and why'.<sup>289</sup>

First, the Yugoslav conflict was understood in terms of historic animosity and Britain originally saw the war in Yugoslavia through ethnic and historical glasses. Few days after the Croatian and Slovenian declarations of independence in June 1991, Douglas Hurd declared that 'Yugoslavia was invented in 1919 to solve a problem of different peoples living in the same part of the Balkans with a long history of peoples fighting each other'.<sup>290</sup> Basically, according to the British Foreign Secretary, the war in Yugoslavia was inevitable because the driving forces behind it were 'ancient ethnic hatreds'.<sup>291</sup> In fact, as a well known British expert on the Balkans points out, the examples of Yugoslav peoples fighting each other are only 'untypical episodes' in

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<sup>288</sup> Cviic, *An Awful Warning*, 36.

<sup>289</sup> Noel Malcolm, "Bosnia and the West: A Study in Failure," *The National Interest* 39 (Spring 1995), 4.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5. Malcolm also quotes Sir Crispin Tickell, a high-ranking British Diplomat, announcing that the history of hatred between the Yugoslav peoples goes back to 'thousand of years'. In fact, the Slav peoples are known to have settled in the Balkans only in the sixth and seventh centuries.

<sup>291</sup> In fact, the fear of the 'Croatian Ustashe' were the main argument of the Serbs in Krajina to justify their actions. According to the minutes of evidence, Dr. Pavlowitch answers the question of the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee at the November 27, 1992 session. Dr. Pavlowitch mentioned to the Committee that 'it is simply reacting to the misapprehension that these things have always been like that and that they are hatreds that go back to centuries. millenia into history. It all goes back really, I suppose to the second world war and the tragic events on that war.' See Evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign Affairs Committee, Central and Eastern Europe: Problems of the Post-Communist Era*, First Report, Vol. II, HMSO, London, 1992, 83-4.

Balkan history. And, although the killing was severe during the Second World War, it was not obvious why 'nearly fifty years later people should rise up to re-enact these horrors'.<sup>292</sup>

The political strategy of the Serbian communist leader, Slobodan Milosevic, since 1988; the take over of the political machinery in Montenegro and Vojvodina, the illegal suppression of autonomy of Kosovo/a, the mobilisation of Serbian nationalist feelings (including massive media campaign) throughout Yugoslavia, the slow motion constitutional coup against the federal presidency, the theft by Serbia in 1990 billions of dinars from the federal budget, therefore destroying the federal economic program and arming of Serbian minorities during 1990 and 1991 in Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina were all ignored by British policy-makers.

Holding to this theory of 'ancient ethnic hatreds' about Yugoslavia was in fact very convenient since it implied that 'everybody is more or less equally guilty,' and that there seemed no need to make a differentiation between aggressor and victim.<sup>293</sup> 'Everybody is to blame for what is happening in Bosnia and Hercegovina' declared Lord Carrington, three weeks after the initial Serbian attack there, 'and 'as soon as we get the cease-fire, there will be no need to blame anybody'.<sup>294</sup> The military commanders who were sent into Bosnia and Hercegovina quickly adopted the same attitude. General Lewis MacKenzie, was later going to describe his views as 'dealing

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<sup>292</sup> Malcolm, "Bosnia and the West," 5.

<sup>293</sup> Daniele Conversi considers this attitude as of 'equidistance' and a result of 'moral relativism' reflecting a belief in the non-universality of human values, including human rights. See Daniele Conversi, "Moral Relativism and Equidistance in British Attitudes to the War in the Former Yugoslavia," in *This Time We Knew: Western Responses to Genocide in Bosnia*, ed. by Thomas Cushman and Stjepan Mestrovic (New York and London, 1996), 244-81.

<sup>294</sup> Quoted in Malcolm, "Bosnia and the West," 6.

with Bosnia is a bit like dealing with serial killers -one has killed fifteen, one has killed ten, one has killed five', and asked 'Do we help the one who has only killed five?'.<sup>295</sup>

The natural result of failure of understanding or initial misdiagnosis about the nature of the conflict led to the misleading conclusion about how to stop it. The best thing to do was considered as containing the conflict spreading to the other parts of the region and limit the level of violence, then sit back and let the ancient hatreds burn themselves out. Since it was perceived as an outbreak of sheer violence in terms of civil war rather than a concerted and planned attack to achieve a specific political aim (Greater Serbia), reducing the amount of violence and fighting by stopping the arms entering the war zone would be enough. Douglas Hurd said that 'to allow arms into Bosnia is like putting petrol on the flames'.<sup>296</sup>

Obviously intervening in the conflict on behalf of one side was out of the question. Politicians who liked to describe their policy as 'non intervention' or their approach as 'impartial' had, in fact, intervened decisively to determine the outcome of the conflict. Serbia and its proxy forces in Bosnia and Hercegovina had from the very beginning large stockpiles of the fourth largest army in Europe while the Bosnian government had let the JNA confiscate even the armaments of its police forces.<sup>297</sup> The arms embargo was the 'single most damaging instrument' of the Western policy on Bosnia and Hercegovina.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Quoted in Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse*, 194n.

<sup>296</sup> Quoted in Malcolm, "Bosnia and the West," 6.

<sup>297</sup> By September 1992, it was estimated that the Bosnian government forces had two tanks and two armoured personnel carriers (APCs), while the Serb forces had three hundred tanks and two hundred APCs. Malcolm, "Bosnia and the West," 7.

<sup>298</sup> See Albert Wholstetter. "Genocide by Embargo," *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, 10 May 1994.

British government was insistent on not lifting the arms embargo since intensification of war might harm its humanitarian forces on the ground. In fact, the humanitarian mission was a real disaster. The UNPROFOR soldiers deployed in Bosnia and Hercegovina neither had the mandate nor the mechanisms to provide peace and security in the area. Their position in the war was basically ridiculous. There was no peace to keep on the ground and they did not want to intervene on behalf of any side and simply watched the powerful Bosnian Serb army and the irregulars to kill the civilian people in the towns and cities.<sup>299</sup>

#### **5.1.1. Historical Dimensions of Pro-Serbian Sentiment in Britain**

Some authors argue that, overall, British attitudes towards Yugoslavia have been characterised by a certain degree of Serbophilia.<sup>300</sup> Obviously, Britain's deep involvement with Yugoslavia went back before the Second World War. More than one hundred years ago, British policy was split about how to respond to the moral and political dilemma posed by the great revolts against the Ottoman rule in the Balkans, first in Bosnia and then Bulgaria. British political life was divided between the jingoist supporters of the Ottoman Empire as a bulwark of stability and a block to Russian influence, and proponents of the right to self-determination and sceptics of the viability of the decaying Empire as a guarantor of anything, least of all stability.<sup>301</sup> As Norman Stone points out 'the Serbs appeared to be both anti-Catholic and anti-Turkish -both

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<sup>299</sup> See the memoirs of British soldiers in Gorazde. First Battalion of Royal Welch Fusiliers, *White Dragon*, Royal Welch Fusiliers (Wrexham, 1995).

<sup>300</sup> Conversi, "Moral Relativism and Equidistance," 244-281.

<sup>301</sup> Almond, *Europe's Backyard War*, xii-xii.

of which appealed to the Liberals of the Gladstone's vintage.<sup>302</sup> William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898) returned to political scene with his pamphlet, "The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East" in September 1876, and declared his admiration for the nationalist rebellions shaking the Ottoman Empire.<sup>303</sup> Although Serbian war of liberation began in 1804, it was the Greek revolt after 1821 that attracted the civilised world's attention and sympathies. Nationalists all over Europe heralded the heroic struggle of the Serbs and the Greeks fighting against the Ottomans. In some cases, their struggle was represented as the defence of Western civilisation against Islamic, Eastern and other barbarian threats.<sup>304</sup>

In addition, among the historians, nearly anyone who knew about Central Europe was pro-Yugoslav or pro-Serbian and Foreign Office often consulted them as experts. The most popular of them was R. W. Seton Watson (1879-1951) and he actively participated in the ongoing debate on the shape of the Balkans during the first decade

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<sup>302</sup> Norman Stone, "British Policy Towards the Yugoslav Crisis," *Paper presented at the International Conference on Bosnia and Herzegovina*, organised by Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey, 1995, 6. The appreciation of the Protestant-Orthodox connection by the Anglican clerics stems from the image of Christian Orthodoxy conceived as being in opposition to Rome. The basic idea was that Eastern Christendom, by virtue of its Orthodoxy had kept intact the original sprit of Christianity and Post-Reformation Anglicans were exhorted to restore this purity on a world wide scale in alliance with Eastern Orthodoxy. Among the nineteenth century clergymen, the priest John Mason Neale translated several books from Balkan theologians and intellectuals, and published a book on the Orthodox Church in Serbia and other Balkan countries. See, Leon Litvack, *John Mason Neale and the Quest for Sobornost* (Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>303</sup> See Almond, *Europe's Backyard War*, Chapter 4, '1876 and all that' especially 96-7ff.

<sup>304</sup> See, for example, book by Robert George Dalrymple Laffan, *The Guardians of the Gate: Historical Lectures on the Serbs* (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1918); noted in Daniele Conversi, "Moral Relativism and Equidistance in British Attitudes to the War in Former Yugoslavia," in *This Time We Knew: Western Responses to Genocide in Bosnia*, ed. by Thomas Cushman and Stjepan G. Mestrovic, New York, London, 1996, 250-1. Similarly, Rebecca West praising the Serbian ultranationalists, points out that 'without people like them the Eastern half of the Europe would have been Islamised, the tradition of liberty would have died forever under the Habsburgs, the Romanoffs and the Ottoman Empire, and Bolshevism would have become anarchy'. See Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, 67.

of the century.<sup>305</sup> However, the best known and most influential British Serbophile was certainly Rebecca West (1892-1983). When she had travelled throughout Yugoslavia during the 1930s, she had picked up a great deal of pro-Serbian sentiment. Her book, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, was the first great public introduction to Yugoslavia in Britain and America and perhaps still remains the best-written of pro-Serbian accounts of Yugoslav history, politics and lifestyles.<sup>306</sup> It is still read as a key source of information about Yugoslavia and shapes the British attitude towards that country.<sup>307</sup> In fact, there is not a comparable book which argues a different view in the same quality. Although, there were some other Balkan specialists, they were not liked by the British government. The case of Mary Edith Durham (1863-1944) was quite remarkable; she was initially anti-Austrian and pro-Albanian, and favoured the creation of Yugoslavia, she turned increasingly anti-Serbian in the wake of Sarajevo assassination. She wrote many letters to newspapers, magazines and MPs in which she attacked Belgrade and Aleksandar Karadjordjevic's dictatorship. Eventually, she was unsuccessful and abhorred by the Foreign Office.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Hugh Seton-Watson and Christopher Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe: R. W. Seton Watson and the Last Years of Austria-Hungary* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981). For R. W. Seton-Watson's initial Serbian sympathies, see *Serbia, Yesterday, To-Day and To-Morrow: A School Address* (London, Vacher and Sons, 1916); *The Sprit of the Serb* (London: Nisbet, 1915); and *Serbia's War of Liberation* (London: Women's Printing Society, 1916); *Absolutism in Croatia*, (London: Constable, 1912); *The Southern Slav Question and the Habsburg Monarchy*, (New York: H. Fertig, 1969).

<sup>306</sup> Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: The Record of a Journey Through Yugoslavia in 1937* (Edinburgh, Canongate Classics, 1993).

<sup>307</sup> David Owen, in his memoirs, mentions how he had 'dipped into, rather than re-read Rebecca West's account of her travels through Yugoslavia in the late 1930s'. According to his account "on every page he found a labyrinth of history, weaving a complexity of human relations that seemed to bedevil the whole region". David Owen also 'glanced' her book before an interview in BBC. David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (London: Indigo, 1996), 6.

<sup>308</sup> See Mary Edith Durham, *Twenty Years of Balkan Tangle* (London: Allan and Unwin, 1920); idem, *The Sarajevo Crime* (London, Allan and Unwin, 1925). An example of her previous work; *Through the Land of the Serb*, Edward Arnold, 1904.

Indeed, due to the works of Rebecca West and similar others, Serbophilia was conveniently complemented by Croato-phobia. Memories of the Ustasha atrocities during the Second World War undoubtedly played a crucial role in this perception. Milosevic and his nationalists rose to power by reviving a series of imaginary threats to the Serb nation in mobilising support for their campaign against the Tudjman Government in Zagreb. In Britain, the politicians, heavily affected by the Serbian propaganda or by pro-Serbian views of some senior advisers to the Foreign Office,<sup>309</sup> sympathising with the Serbian worries, concluded that ‘in those days, the beginnings of the fears among Serbs living in Croatia turned out to be all tragically justified in the Second World War’ and that, therefore, ‘we should put some weight on the central claim of the Serbian authorities certainly and Serbian opinion that Serbians in Croatia are in deadly danger today (like they had been during the Second World War) and therefore it follows that there must be either Federal Army activity or some other independent force acting as a buffer’.<sup>310</sup>

In addition, Serbian accusations of a new ‘Zagreb-Berlin Axis’ were reinforced by Germany’s increasing support for the Croatian and Slovenian independence in June 1991. Even after the atrocities of the Serbian-led JNA in Croatia became evident,

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<sup>309</sup> Sir Fitzroy Maclean, Sir William Deakin and Julian Amery witnesses of the many sided war in Yugoslavia during the Second World War had a misleading impression of Croatia and certainly they were not in favour of Croatian nationalism. As Norman Stone points out, although ‘it was certainly true that Croatian nationalism in Bosnia, then as now, could be ugly, provincial, and silly; but the Croats in general were more strongly represented among the Partisans than the Serbs, then there was more resistance to Germans in Croatia than in Serbia’. See Stone, “British Policy,” 5.

<sup>310</sup> See Evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign Affairs Committee, Central and Eastern Europe: Problems of the Post-Communist Era*, First Report, Vol. II, HMSO, London, 1992, 83.

accusations of neo-fascism directed at Croatian nation as a whole became common currency in Britain.<sup>311</sup>

Moreover, the Foreign Office was closely connected by 'experts' who were indeed Serbian lobbyists.<sup>312</sup> The most notable of them were Nora Beloff and Jovan Omer Zametica (John Zametica).<sup>313</sup> Echoing Belgrade's views, in March 1992, journalist and part time historian Nora Beloff described the newly independent Croatian state as a 'fascist laboratory'<sup>314</sup> and wrote that "laws of citizenship favour patrial Croats, extortionate taxes are levied against Serb-owned properties, and no Serb can hope for redress in a Croat court against arson and assault. In these circumstances, constitutional guarantees of minority rights should not be taken more seriously than the whole array of human rights promised in Stalin's 1935 constitution, at the height of terror".<sup>315</sup> Beloff also mentions its correspondence with Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd in which she argued against recognition of Croatia and Slovenia. According to

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<sup>311</sup> British politicians were not alone having anti-Croat sentiments; French President Mitterand told a German newspaper in November 1991, as Vukovar was about to fall, 'Croatia belonged to the Nazi Bloc, not Serbia'. In fact, the Croatian President Franjo Tudjman never collaborated with the Ustasha Regime, instead fought against it and the Axis powers in the Partisan army, whereas Mitterand, as Mark Almond points out, rose rapidly in the civil service of Vichy France before 1943, even receiving a medal from Petain's regime for his distinguished service. Then he changed sides when Allied victory was evident. See Almond, *Europe's Backyard War*, p. xii-xiii. British officials and press also ignored the relations between the Italian ultra-nationalists, anti-Croat, and Belgrade authorities. In May 1991, the new right leader Gianfranco Fini reclaimed the 'return of Istria and Dalmatia in case of a break-up of Yugoslavia'. In August 1991, he visited Belgrade to meet key figures of the regime, whom he praised for unitary efforts. Conversi, "Moral Relativism and Equidistance," 255-6.

<sup>312</sup> See Noel Malcolm, "The Whole Lot of Them are Serbs," *The Spectator* (June 10, 1995), 14-18.

<sup>313</sup> Initially a British academic, Jovan Omer Zametica later became an adviser to the Bosnian Serb presidency (to Karadzic) and official spokesman for the Serbs. He is of mixed parentage and his father was a Muslim from Bosnia and Herzegovina. He initially changed his birth name Omer as Jovan, then adopted 'John' for the benefit of his English audiences and colleagues. *Lecture Notes*, Course 'The Rise and Fall of Yugoslav State', by Dr. James Gow, King's College, London, March 1998.

<sup>314</sup> Nora Beloff, "The Third Way," *New Statesman and Society* (March 27, 1992), 26-7.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*



Beloff, Hurd agreed with her, while contending that 'he needed to placate Helmut Kohl'.<sup>316</sup>

Noel Malcolm argues that 'conspiracy theorists have often suggested to him that the British Ministry of Defence was penetrated by pro-Serb elements long ago'.<sup>317</sup> Belgrade born, pro-Serb activist Jovan Gvozdenovic (calls himself John Kennedy) had been personally connected, via the Conservative Council on Eastern Europe, with Henry Bellingham MP.<sup>318</sup> Kennedy, in his article in the nationalist Belgrade magazine *Intervju*, wrote, saying that 'Bellingham says that John has had access to the highest levels of the Conservative Party'. As Noel Malcolm puts it 'this statement gains a special significance from the fact that Bellingham is now parliamentary secretary to the Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind'.<sup>319</sup>

Similarly, John 'Jovan' Zametica was giving lectures to British military training courses as an 'independent' expert long after the start of the Yugoslav war. His monograph, published by London International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Adelphi Paper series was accorded the status of an objective and reliable account of events in Yugoslavia.<sup>320</sup> Zametica identified the causes of the war in the 'incompatible nationalist aspirations' of the peoples of Yugoslavia just like Foreign Office describes it. He also blamed the Titoist politics and his division of Serbia in the 1974

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<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Noel Malcolm, "The Whole Lot of Them are Serbs," *The Spectator* (10 June 1995), 15.

<sup>318</sup> John Kennedy himself, as a Tory candidate, conducted lobbying effort in conjunction with Ian Greer Associates (IAG). According to David Leigh and Ed Vulliamy, Kennedy was given 50 per cent of the Serb government contract with IAG. D. Leigh and Ed Vulliamy, "Blood Money: How Serbia Bought British Favours," *The Guardian*, 16 January 1997.

<sup>319</sup> Noel Malcolm, "The Whole Lot," 16.

Constitution creating 'weak Serbia and strong Yugoslavia' as responsible in the current bloodshed. Especially, the Albanian people and their revolt against Serbia 'provided the catalyst for the subsequent rise of Serbian nationalism'.<sup>321</sup> Oddly enough, he later became advisor to the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic.

Zametica's ideas were used directly to justify Britain's pro-Serbian line; Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina were scared because they were sure that, like it happened before, they were going to be exterminated by Croatian fascists or Muslim fundamentalists. So, it had been believed that the Federal Army had to intervene to protect them by all means. This propaganda deeply influenced the British academic and political circles. In fact, it was obvious that British politics had been moving in a vacuum that had been filled by the Serbs, who controlled the most sophisticated propaganda machine in Yugoslavia. Christopher Bennett regrets that;

"The greatest diplomatic error in Yugoslavia was made before the conflict degenerated into war. This was the failure to listen to anything but the Serbian point of view. Slovenian and Croatian envoys who went abroad to canvass international opinion were cold-shouldered by foreign ministries, while, astonishingly, foreign diplomats based in Belgrade were prepared to write weighty reports on Yugoslavia without visiting Zagreb or Ljubljana. *Here Britain was the greatest offender.* While other EC Countries were at least quick to dispatch diplomats to Croatia soon after war broke out, Britain took pains not to hear the Croatian point of view and throughout six months of fighting the Foreign Office chose not to send a single diplomat to Zagreb. Given the amount of time and

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<sup>320</sup> John Zametica, "The Yugoslav Conflict: An Analysis of the Causes of the Yugoslav War: The Policies of the Republics and the Regional and International Implications of the Conflict," *Adelphi Papers*, No. 270. London: Brassey's for the International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1992.

<sup>321</sup> John Zametica, "The Yugoslav Conflict," 75.

energy which would be devoted to Yugoslav matters in succeeding years and the gravity of the decisions the international community would be taking regarding Yugoslavia, the complacency was remarkable.<sup>322</sup>

Obviously, with such a distinguished lineage of London-based authors ready to condone the Serbs' worst atrocities, the Milosevic government and its allies in Bosnia and Hercegovina felt immensely protected in carrying out their project of creating 'Greater Serbia'.<sup>323</sup>

It seems that the deep economic depression John Major government found itself confronted with as soon as it came out of the elections at the beginning of April 1992 was to affect the way in which British foreign policy was to be made. Indeed, the recession had begun much earlier and had been somewhat instrumental in forcing former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to leave office, and the election campaign was marred by large numbers of people being laid off on a daily basis. The problem was that in the months following the election from which John Major came out unexpectedly victorious, the economic situation got much worse. This made it difficult for the government to spare considerable amount of money and time for other matters like Bosnia. Indeed, a British expert articulated, 'leaving aside any military scruples, neither Britain nor the US was willing to spend cash in a time of recession (compounded by President Bush by imminent elections). Whereas the Arab states had paid for Britain's contingent in the Gulf, domestic recession seemed to rule out sending

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<sup>322</sup> Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse*, 174.

a force to Bosnia, particularly as the government deficit looked set to hit fifty billion pounds in 1993'.<sup>324</sup> However, albeit understandable initially, this policy gradually became untenable not least because in the months ahead others appeared prepared to carry the burden, particularly the US, in financial and military terms, of a forward policy in Bosnia, but Britain remained unmoved and did all it could to 'talk' them out of taking action.

It also seems that the rift between Thatcher and Major which began following the latter's endorsement of closer integration of the EC and deepened after the Danes rejected the Maastricht Treaty in March 1992 in a popular referendum contributed to the making of an anti-interventionist policy by Britain in Bosnia. The fact of the matter is that although John Major had been hand-picked the outgoing Prime Minister Thatcher, Major's support for the Maastricht Treaty and deeper integration of the EC soon created divisions within the ranks of the Conservative Party. The Thatcherite members of the Conservative Party gave vent to their frustration with John Major in March 1992, only a month before the elections took place, when the Danes rejected the Maastricht. It was somehow expected that John Major's endorsement of the Maastricht Treaty would harm the Conservative voters. Surprisingly, however, John Major won the elections. Yet, the internal quarrel within the party ranks over Europe was far from over: Baroness Thatcher started her salvo against John Major soon after the elections by criticising his support for the Maastricht in an interview which came out in *Newsweek* magazine. It was not only the content but also the derogatory tone of the interview which irked the Major wing of the Conservative Party. It, at the same

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<sup>323</sup> See Brad K. Blitz's article "Serbia's War Lobby: Diaspora Groups and Western Elites," in *This Time We Knew: Western Responses to Genocide in Bosnia*, eds. Thomas Cushman and Stjepan G.

time, fanned the flames of the Euro-sceptics, by implication, Thatcherite section of the Party. From then onwards, John Major flanked by well-known anti-Thatcher figures like Douglas Hurd, Michael Heseltine, Foreign Secretary and Secretary of Trade and Industry respectively, appeared at pains to say or do more or less the opposite of what Baroness Thatcher suggested on policy matters. Therefore, when Baroness Thatcher came out very strongly for an active and pro-Bosnian policy, it looked as if John Major and Douglas Hurd would resist it. Indeed, during much of the carnage in Bosnia, each time Baroness Thatcher called for air strikes against Bosnian Serb gun emplacements, coupled with the lifting of the arms embargo on the Bosnian Government, either John Major or his Cabinet Ministers seemed to have thought that Baroness Thatcher was using the Bosnian issue as an opportunity to attack John Major for his European policies.

It must be pointed out that, by the time John Major's government came about following the election victory in early May 1992, the US Administration had almost formulated a non-interventionist attitude towards the Yugoslav wars of dissolution. Although Bush was the most popular US President in decades according to public opinion polls conducted on the wake of the Gulf War, his popularity was soon to plunge as a result of a deep recession the US economy was going through. The year 1992 was the election year and his Democrat rival Clinton was critical of Bush Administration on the grounds that President Bush had acted like a 'foreign minister', that he had indulged only in foreign adventures, and that he had neglected economy. Moreover, Colin Powell was dead against any American military involvement in what

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Mestrovic (New York, London, 1996), 187-243.

<sup>324</sup> See Almond, *Europe's Backyard War*, 252-3.

he considered a place with no American interests. Therefore, President Bush appeared quite inhibited in his Yugoslav policy in general, and Bosnia in particular. When John Major's government looked to the US for policy advice, they realised that the motto of the day was non-involvement. Under these circumstances, Britain, even if it wished, could not mount military intervention; nor could it necessarily argue for large scale military involvement on its own, or even together with its EC partners without the US. In a sense, the non-interventionist approach adopted by Britain at the early stages of the war in Bosnia, was perhaps the only act in town. In other words, Britain was constrained by Washington's stance. However, what was peculiar was that when the US expressed willingness to use air power against Serb military targets and to lift the arms embargo on the Bosnian Government at the later stages of the genocidal war in Bosnia, it was Britain which continued to argue against outside military intervention.

Oddly enough, Britain's policy which was shaped by Washington's unwillingness to act at the inception of the war in Bosnia, gradually went through a change whereby it began to advocate a peace at any price. The argument frequently uttered by British officials was that the Bosnian Serbs had won the war through a *Blitzkrieg* and to roll back Serbian gains was impossible without massive military intervention both on the ground and from the air. British officials also uttered the view that even then it was by no means certain that Bosnia would be pieced together to its pre-war social structure. In a broader sense, it was too late to do anything. The best course of action would be to look for a peace of any sort rather than a just peace. If it required pressure on the Bosnian government side, the victim of aggression, to achieve a peace at any price, Britain was prepared to do that instead of taking up a stronger stance against the Serbs, the aggressor.

### 5.1.2. British Actions in the War in Bosnia and Hercegovina

All these misperceptions obviously contributed to the making of British policy towards the Yugoslav war in general and Bosnian war, in particular. By the middle of July 1992, Douglas Hurd set off following Mitterand's footsteps in his capacity as President of the EC Council of Ministers for his own expedition around the Balkans. He declared 'we have to do our utmost to stop this suffering continuing. It is not just a matter of relieving those who are already suffering, it is trying to prevent this going on in the future'.<sup>325</sup> Two days later, on 17 July, Mr. Hurd said, in Sarajevo, that the EC would not accept the partition of Bosnia nor any alteration of its borders by force. Hurd told a press conference in Sarajevo, 'I don't believe Serbia will be able or will wish indefinitely to continue in a position without trade, without friends, without any position in the world.'<sup>326</sup> Although, even at the early stages, unlike some of his colleagues who still preferred to find responsibility for the conflict difficult to allocate, Douglas Hurd had no problem in clearly identifying the Serbian leadership as the source of war, or in advocating economic sanctions. However, the dominant tendency was to see the inter-communal element in the war, villages and neighbours mingled in fighting against each other.

Nevertheless, after his visit to Sarajevo, Hurd admitted, 'I now have quite a different and much more vivid impression of what it's all about. I'm bubbling over with impressions at the moment which will take a bit more time to sort out'.<sup>327</sup> He sounded less certain about solving the Bosnian problem by increasing pressure on the Serbian

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<sup>325</sup> Quoted in Almond, *Europe's Backyard War*, 250. Mr Hurd was interviewed on Channel 4 News, 15 July 1992.

side. The UNPROFOR commander in Bosnia, Lewis MacKenzie, who was later openly to demand the appeasement of the Serbs might have played a role influencing Douglas Hurd's perception of the conflict. While serving in the besieged city Sarajevo which was surrounded by the Serbian heavy artillery to suffocate the city till surrender, General MacKenzie was equally apportioning the blame to both sides, perhaps seeing the Muslims as provocative of the conflict.<sup>328</sup>

The relations between the Bosnian officials and General MacKenzie had never been good. As early as April 23, when Lord Carrington went to Sarajevo and met President Izetbegovic, he was also briefed by the UN Commander there. The Sector Sarajevo commander openly criticised the Bosnian army for impeding his efforts to carry out his mission. He accused the Bosnian Presidency of coercing the international community into intervening militarily, and therefore being in no mood to be cooperative about honouring the cease-fire agreements.<sup>329</sup> He recommended that Carrington 'advise the president that he would not receive military intervention and consequently should negotiate a solution with Dr. Karadzic and the Bosnian Serbs'. MacKenzie agreed that the logical consequences of Serb and Croat territorial ambition was that Bosnia should be wiped off the map, and the republic's two million Muslims should agree to live under either Serbian or Croatian domination.<sup>330</sup> As a result, his relationship with the Bosnian authorities was irrevocably soured. Quickly he came to

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<sup>326</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 250. As reported on 6 pm News on BBC I, 17 July 1992.

<sup>327</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 250-1. Interview with Channel 4 News, 20 July 1992.

<sup>328</sup> Nevertheless, his opinion was going to be shared by many others soon afterwards; the most important of them being David Owen.

<sup>329</sup> In fact, MacKenzie was right in his conclusion; Izetbegovic's strategy was to try to force international military intervention. Izetbegovic, by the end of the summer 1992, was calling for an international policy that became known as 'lift and strike' - the lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia-Herzegovina and the use of NATO air-power to hit Serbs' overwhelming firepower superiority.



be regarded as pro-Serbian 'Chetnik' by the press and population in Sarajevo, as well as by others outside Bosnia.<sup>331</sup> Actually, after retiring from the Canadian Army in 1993, he confirmed this opinion by making a series of public appearances in the US organised by SerbNet, a Serb-American lobby group.<sup>332</sup>

On 20 July 1992, the thirty-ninth Bosnian cease-fire broke down with the hopes of the EC, its member states and the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council. It was apparent that European mediation led nowhere and that Britain's EC partners were tired of diplomatic attacks of the British Government with its 'well-oiled diplomatic machine' as the situation on the ground in Bosnia and Hercegovina went from bad to worse to catastrophic. There were real pressures for the use of coercive action against the Bosnian Serbs as the awful picture emerged of the 'ethnic cleansing', including the concentration camps, as well as systematic rape, killing and terrorisation. Lord Owen, writing as an individual commentator, at the time, called for air strikes against the Serbs. Even Lord Carrington felt that an international 'military presence' on the ground might assist in stopping the fighting. But Douglas Hurd remained firm and replied to all such calls for intervention, stating that: "there is ample justification for action. If we judged that a few days of sharp military action would bring the suffering to an end, the case would be overwhelming".<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> See Lewis MacKenzie's memoirs, *Peacekeeper* (Vancouver: Douglas McIntyre, 1993).

<sup>331</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*. p. 96. Also see Gutman, *Witness to Genocide*, 168-173.

<sup>332</sup> Once on such an occasion, he told the House Armed Services Committee: 'Dealing with Bosnia is a bit like dealing with serial killers -one has killed fifteen, one has killed ten, one has killed five', and asked 'Do we help the one who has only killed five?', Quoted in Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse*, 194n.

<sup>333</sup> Quoted in Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 245. Article by Douglas Hurd, *Mail on Sunday*, 9 August 1992.

He was admitting for the first time that it might be right to 'increase the level of fighting' in the short term in order to end it in the long term. But he was still resolutely opposed to the idea of applying this principle by allowing the Bosnian government to defend itself using its own forces and an adequate supply of weapons. Since, he, like other most Western leaders, still viewed the fighting in terms of a civil war: 'It is a war with no front line...village is divided against village', he was reluctant to intervene with British troops on the ground.<sup>334</sup>

In the meantime, the French were attacking openly at Carrington's ineffective role and calling for a new and grander peace conference, even hinting that the UN should replace Lord Carrington. French President Roland Dumas at the Munich summit of the G-7 openly called for enlargement of the EC conference which, it was felt, had become exhausted. In addition, tension between the EC and the UN had reached breaking point, Britain being in the forefront. In an interview, Boutros-Ghali had referred to himself as being seen as a 'wog', a British colonial term of disparagement.<sup>335</sup> Therefore, establishment of a joint procedure was prerogative to soothe relations between the EC and UN. Serbia, also, from the very beginning declared its position unsafe dealing with a German dominated EC foreign policy and hinted that, in a UN directed Conference, it would feel itself in a position to make some concessions.

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<sup>334</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 245-46. Douglas Hurd's perception of the war, as 'this was a civil war between Bosnian villagers' and the way he says them actually derives from Serbian propaganda. See Adrian Hastings, *SOS Bosnia* (London: United Kingdom Citizens' Committee for Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1993).

<sup>335</sup> Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 22. Owen tells that 'although there were problems between the UN Secretary General and the UK Permanent Representative. David Hannay... it was kind of him to see Owen, a retired British politician.'

Under these circumstances, John Major had to act as if Britain's presidency was not to be marred by the loss of its chairmanship of the EC Yugoslav Peace Conference. Anxious to avoid the humiliation of seeing Britain's hold on the peacemaker's position snatched away by France, John Major, fresh from his election triumph, decided to trump any criticism of the Hague Conference and Lord Carrington's approach by summoning a bigger and better conference to London at the end of August.

Unfortunately, at the end of July, as the Conference was being mooted, Douglas Hurd actually wiped off all the effectiveness of the Conference by telling the BBC: "I suppose all options will be discussed, but one option that I don't think is feasible, and having been to Yugoslavia, I am even more clear about it, and that option is using military force against hostile opposition to impose a particular solution".<sup>336</sup> Hurd was sure that the London Conference would not lead 'to a solution which is imposed against force by force'. Ruling out the use of force against any resistant part to the war, of course, simply left it open to that side, particularly if it was winning, to attend the London Conference and still carry on with the war. Douglas Hurd's public pronouncements in the run-up to the London Conference must count among the most contradictory series of diplomatic signals ever dispatched by a holder of his high office.<sup>337</sup> Hurd had nothing to offer but talk. There were objectives -a cease-fire, political arrangements, etc. - 'but you only reach them by talking.

In the run up to the Conference, the international atmosphere was heavy with both the prospects of strong coercive action and international capitulation to the realities of

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<sup>336</sup> Almond, *Europe's Backyard War*, 261. Douglas Hurd was quoted on the 6 pm. News, BBC Radio 4, 25 July 1992.

Serbian territorial acquisition in Bosnia. These contradictory concerns had resulted in the UN Security Council Resolution 770 on 13 August 1992 authorising 'all necessary measures' to be taken in order to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid.<sup>338</sup> When those framing the policy felt unable to take more robust military action to stop the bloodshed in Bosnia-Herzegovina, they invented some form of 'humanitarian intervention' instead of 'military intervention'. Despite massive evidence by June 1992 of Serb concentration camps in Northern Bosnia, in which women were systematically raped and men of military age executed, the UN refused to treat this as an inter-state war of aggression, but only as humanitarian crisis.

UNSCR 770 had authorised the use of all necessary measures to facilitate, in coordination with the UN, the delivery of relief by reputable humanitarian organisations and agencies.<sup>339</sup> Major Western governments, unable to establish the peace on the ground, named their new policy 'comprehensive response', and designated UNHCR as 'lead agency' to define the international mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The aim of this very noble policy was to give 'humanitarian aid' to as many people as possible in isolated communities, under siege, thus enabling them to remain where they were and to avoid becoming refugees. This policy served two main purposes. First, it relieved the international community the burden of accommodating refugees out of Bosnia-Herzegovina, mainly in their own countries as asylum seekers. Secondly, it confirmed that the international relief agencies would not any more find themselves the collaborators to ethnic cleansing.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>338</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 225-6.

<sup>339</sup> UN SCR 770, 13 August 1992.

<sup>340</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 111. Also see, Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 247-8.

Just after the London Conference, on 14 September the Security Council passed Resolution 776, carrying the concept further and representing a major extension of UNPROFOR's mandate.<sup>341</sup> This enabled UNPROFOR throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina to provide the type of protective support for UNHCR convoys which they had hitherto provided around Sarajevo.<sup>342</sup> Glynn Evans, at the time in charge of the UN desk in the British Foreign Office, claims that, it was a British idea to extend the mandate of UNPROFOR to use force to protect the aid convoys.<sup>343</sup> The first British commander in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colonel Bob Stewart, nevertheless records that his mandate and the rules of engagement were far from clear.<sup>344</sup> He recalls that;

“Summoned to a briefing at the Ministry of Defence (MoD), I knew that I had been singled out to lead the first British infantry battalion in Bosnia, where the security situation was deteriorating badly. The MoD briefing gave me *very little useful information*, however. Everything was very tentative and it was clear that several senior officials present had severe misgivings, the army having been committed to action by a political decision of the government. It seemed our purpose was simply to assist the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to get aid delivered -nothing more. *It was all very vague.*”<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> UN SCR 776, 14 September 1992. Paragraph 2 of Resolution 776 explicitly stated that the enlargement of UNPROFOR was to implement paragraph 2 of Resolution 770 which accorded the authorisation under Chapter VII of the UN Charter permitting ‘use of all necessary measures’ to secure the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

<sup>342</sup> Rather different in character than the mission in Croatia, the mandate for UNPROFOR in Bosnia was primarily humanitarian.

<sup>343</sup> Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 17.

<sup>344</sup> Bob Stewart, *Broken Lives: A Personal View of the Bosnian Conflict* (London: Harper Collins, 1993).

<sup>345</sup> Bob Stewart, “Love in a Cold Climate,” *The Sunday Times*, 12 October 1997.

The only thing made clear was that, while escorting the aid convoys in Bosnia-Herzegovina, UNPROFOR was to use its armaments only in self defence if fired upon first. In that sense, the restrictions put on the British contingent at Vitez was more strict than the rules of engagement the French government envisaged for the French force in Bihac.<sup>346</sup> In order to avoid giving the impression that British decision to commit troops to UNPROFOR II might be seen as leading to more robust action, the British Ministry of Defence assured MPs that the British contingent would be withdrawn if fired upon.<sup>347</sup>

It was apparent that UNPROFOR's deployment in Bosnia and Herzegovina was not a UN peace keeping force being deployed in the traditional static, conflict termination role of classic UN peace keeping. It was not a peace enforcement operation either. In fact, UNPROFOR's *de facto* mandate was to create and maintain stalemate on the ground to allow international diplomacy to work.<sup>348</sup> In fact, the decision to send peace-keepers to Bosnia and Herzegovina instead of robust forces to impose a peace guaranteed that no serious effort would be made to antagonise Serb forces or to reverse Serbian war gains.<sup>349</sup> This was quite in line with Britain's expectations that the Serbs had won war, and that it was only a question of this fact determining the peace treaty. And, therefore, any action likely to reverse Serbs' gains or even to considerably slow down the Serbs' war machinery was anathema to Britain at that time. As a British expert puts it boldly:

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<sup>346</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 112.

<sup>347</sup> Jane M. O. Sharp, *Bankrupt in the Balkans*, 13-4.

<sup>348</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 101-2.

<sup>349</sup> Sharp, *Bankrupt in the Balkans*, 18.

“A consensual non-combatant doctrine is advantageous and contributes to stability when peace keepers are maintaining a cease fire. But when passive peace keepers are maldeployed into the middle of an ongoing war, it is apparent that they encourage more offensive action from the strongest belligerent. Far from being impartial, peace keepers deployed in a war zone will always favour the party that has the most military success.”<sup>350</sup>

Obviously, sending soldiers without empowering them with necessary means to ensure the route was open for free passage of aid convoys has created problems throughout UNPROFOR’s mandate. UNPROFOR forces had to try means like bargaining and bribing the local militias to pass the aid convoys through. In some places, Bosnian Serbs were regularly receiving as much as a quarter of the deliveries which passed through the check points, and extorting large sums of money.<sup>351</sup>

As another British expert pointed out, it was not only a question of neglect, namely, the lack of mandate for soldiers on the ground, but it was perhaps because of the nature of British policy that Britain’s soldiers in Bosnia soon became friends of their Serb counterparts:

“psychological factors include the military camaraderie instinctively felt by the British officers for their Serb opposite numbers, many of whom had been full time soldiers in the old Yugoslav Federal Army. These were people with whom one could swap regimental cap badges and military anecdotes; General Rose, in a dismaying lapse of

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<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

judgement, even accepted an elaborate painting of himself, surrounded with symbols representing the rebirth of Serbian nationhood. The Bosnian army on the other hand, was a makeshift thing to begin with, lacking a proper equipment and uniforms and staffed mainly by volunteers. Another psychological aspect of this is that, 'when you have been sent to protect people and are unable properly to do so, it is only human that some of your feelings of frustration should turn into a kind of irritated resentment directed against those people themselves.'<sup>352</sup>

## 5.2. "Everyone is a Loser"<sup>353</sup>: The London Conference

London Conference, co-chaired by the British Prime Minister John Major as the President of the European Council, and the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, was held on 26-7 August 1992. It created a jointly-run International Conference on Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) to replace the European Community Conference on Yugoslavia (Carrington Conference).<sup>354</sup> As a joint EC-UN initiative, the two would be working more closely together; the EC would pursue the diplomatic cause and the UN would primarily be responsible for operations on the ground. In sum, the London Conference would give new impetus and clarity to the international quest for peace and principle. Membership of the August 1992 London Conference

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>352</sup> Malcolm, "The Whole Lot," 16.

<sup>353</sup> The *Financial Times*, a reliable monitor of Foreign Office thinking, subtitled its montage of map and dramatis personae to illustrate its coverage of the London Peace Conference: 'Yugoslavia: everyone's a loser'. However, as time went by the suspicion grew that some people in the Foreign Office had decided that on balance they wanted Serbia to win. Almond, *Europe's Backyard War*, 258.

<sup>354</sup> Prior to the set up of ICFY by the London Conference in August 1992, the UN and the EC's peacemaking efforts in Former Yugoslavia had not been drawn together in one body: the UN's had been entrusted to the Secretary General's Envoy, Cyrus Vance, the EC's to their Envoy, Lord Carrington.



included, in addition to all international bodies, the Former Yugoslav parties and all the neighbouring states.

One immediate development at the Conference was the replacement of Lord Carrington as the EC Special Envoy with another former British Foreign Secretary, David Owen. Owen's co-chairman was the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy, Cyrus Vance.<sup>355</sup> First signs were promising. Lord Owen told the *Sunday Telegraph* that he believed that the "London Conference was the turning point. Serbia learnt what it meant to be an international pariah -that the world was not prepared to sit back and shrug off its territorial acquisitions." Turning to the fate of the Muslims in Bosnia, Owen insisted that "we have to convince them that they are not going to be the victims of *Realpolitik*...if we allow it to happen to the Muslims of Bosnia the whole of Islam will react and rightly so."<sup>356</sup>

Appointment of Lord Owen had created an atmosphere of optimism among the Bosnian Muslims including the Bosnian Government officials and equally depressed the Serbian side. Lord Owen had previously made his presence felt in the Bosnian matter by demanding that NATO use its air power to halt the Serbs, just as Lady Thatcher had done. According to Lord Owen:

"Had NATO intervened from the air in the autumn of 1991 against the Yugoslav JNA, it could have moderated the worst excesses of the war... If NATO forces had attempted to move in on the ground, in areas like Knin in the Krajina, a Serb stronghold, they would have found it hard to pacify them and would have risked being locked into

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<sup>355</sup> Unlike Lord Carrington, Lord Owen would go into full-time work in Geneva.

a conflict -possibly a long one- with the Serbs. But NATO action from the air could probably have stopped the three-month Serb shelling of Vukovar, and NATO action from the sea the short spell of shelling of Dubrovnik.”<sup>357</sup>

Although Lord Owen made it clear that he was reluctant to see ‘British forces involved in a combatant role’; obviously, he was in favour of the British Government making a stark choice to stop the atrocities;

“At what point should we say enough was enough?. First we had watched the shelling by the JNA and Serb militias of Vukovar, then Dubrovnik; then the Serb shelling of Sarajevo; and now we were discovering what were being described not unreasonably, as Serb concentration camps... John Major, as Prime Minister, should call for an international threat of air strikes in relation to the Serbs in a fashion not dissimilar to the ‘safe haven’ initiative which I urged him to take over the Kurds that previous year”.<sup>358</sup>

Getting tougher on the issue, on 30 July 1992, in the *BBC Today* radio programme, David Owen called on John Major to act and to use NATO air power to impose a cease fire.<sup>359</sup> He also sent a letter to Prime Minister, urging him not to accept the

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<sup>356</sup> See *Sunday Telegraph*, 27 September 1992, quoted in Almond, *Europe's Backyard War*, 260-1.

<sup>357</sup> Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 12-3. However, he also argued that the Europeans in NATO could not have acted militarily in 1991 without the US. The Germans were excluded from military participation, and Turkey and Greece, he added, were felt to be mutually excluded; Britain and France were never ready to put ground forces into a combatant role in what they felt was a civil war of far greater complexity than was presented on television news bulletins.

<sup>358</sup> Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 13.

<sup>359</sup> He argued that, since the prison camps were in western and northern Bosnia, not in the mountains, the associated military installations could easily be reached from NATO airfields based in surrounding countries and, given the flat terrain, action from the air against Serb military targets could have been as surgical as in the desert flatness of Iraq. ‘About the military intervention’, he said

conventional wisdom that nothing can be done militarily to stop the escalation of fighting and the continuation of grotesque abuses of human rights'. Owen wrote that Lord Carrington's mission on behalf of the European Community can not deliver the sort of peacemaking not just peacekeeping that is so urgent'. He suggested that 'the first essential step was to stop by threat of force the use or movement of any military aircraft, tanks, armoured vehicles, or artillery in the former territory of Yugoslavia. And NATO had the power to enforce such an immediate cease-fire'. Also mentioning current attacks on bigger cities such as Sarajevo and Gorazde, he advised 'reinforcements by air with troops acting under the authority of UN, if necessary initially parachuting men and materials in to secure air communications'. He added that 'If these actions are taken within days, a peace settlement can be negotiated, otherwise, if no action is taken immediately, there will be virtually nothing left of Bosnia for the Muslim population to negotiate about'.<sup>360</sup>

David Owen's opinion, at that time, was that London Conference was a defusing device, a diplomatic way of reducing pressure to act - a mere delaying tactic. Owen was right in considering the Conference as another tactic to calm down the public opinion demanding concrete action to stop the suffering of people in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This was a recurring pattern, once television screens exhausted their material on ethnic cleansing and atrocities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, public opinion would forget about the situation in Bosnia thereby reducing pressure on the politicians

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that 'there, unlike Sarajevo, there was an opportunity for limited action for a humanitarian purpose which did not set NATO on an automatic escalator to putting in ground troops'. 'Moreover', he argued, 'the UN was not yet involved on the ground except for a small contingent of 300 to keep Sarajevo airport open who would need to be removed or reinforced before any strike action, as would UNHCR and other aid workers'. David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 13-4. BBC Radio Four, Today, 30 July 1992.

or immediate and effective action. So, whenever, such a tide occurred with heavy Serbian attacks on civilians, western politicians were appearing on television screens with promises to stop the violence and atrocities, taking firm action but at the end they would end up only with face saving gestures.

In his replying letter to Lord Owen, Prime Minister, John Major stated the main aim of launching London Conference on 26 August, as 'to mobilise international pressure on all the former Yugoslav parties and in particular the Serbs to abandon their wholly unacceptable use of force'. However, he specifically mentioned that 'he does not believe that that was the right time to think in terms of a military solution'. John Major argued that, Britain 'could not unite the international community behind such a policy'. To his view, 'there are real difficulties over proposals to use either air power or ground forces. Air power would be unlikely to be enough. The number of forces involved, the likely length of the operations and the level of casualties (civilian as well as military) would be very high'. He also argued that 'we are not dealing with an orthodox war, a single enemy, a front line, or clearly identifiable targets'. He continued 'Nor do I detect any support in Parliament or in public opinion for operations which would tie down large numbers of British forces in difficult and dangerous terrain for a long period.'<sup>361</sup>

Before he became co-chairman of the International Conference in Former Yugoslavia, David Owen disagreed with the government's objections to any aggressive military response and 'challenged the Whitehall mood that there was nothing that could be

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<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 15-6. Owen's letter to Prime Minister dated 30 July, 1992, it was also published in the *Evening Standard*, 30 July 1992.

done'.<sup>362</sup> So, when the decision was announced at the end of August 1992 to appoint Lord Owen as EC negotiator on ex-Yugoslavia, it was seen as a clear warning that Europe was prepared to get tough with Serbia. Nevertheless, within weeks, the fragility of Owen's decisiveness became apparent; by September 1992 he was arguing against tightening sanctions on Belgrade, and urging the world to give the 'Yugoslav' government what he called 'the benefit of the doubt'.<sup>363</sup> By February 1994, Lord Owen was telling the media, 'Only a fool would support air strikes'.<sup>364</sup>

### **5.2.1. The Failure of the London Conference and Establishment of the Permanent Conference in Geneva**

John Major, in his opening address to the London Conference as co-chairman, indicated that the need for a peace process that 'should be coupled with necessary international pressures to bring success'.<sup>365</sup> Others were more specific in describing the elements of coercion; the admission of observers in a number of places in the former Yugoslavia, especially Serbia and Montenegro, a tightening of the trade embargo, expulsion of Serbian representatives from international bodies, and the

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<sup>361</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 20. However, about lifting the arms embargo, Owen told Bosnian Government's representative to UN, Muhamed Sacirbey that 'He could not see any way in which the UN arms embargo would or should be lifted'. While Owen admitted that it was discriminatory against the Muslims, as it had been against the Croats, in that the Serbs in Bosnia had large supplies of equipment and ammunition', 'no Security Council', he argued, 'could be seen to fuel the fire by lifting the ban'. Ibid., 23.

<sup>363</sup> Quoted in Noel Malcolm, "New Light on Owen," *Bosnia Report* (Newsletter of the Alliance to Defend Bosnia-Herzegovina), Issue 2, December 1993, 1-2.

<sup>364</sup> Quoted in Mark Almond, *Europe's Backyard War*, 261. Lord Owen's statements, 8 February 1994.

<sup>365</sup> Opening Speech given by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon John Major MP, at the London Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, 26 August 1992, 66. See *The International Conference on Former Yugoslavia*, Official Papers, Volume I, ed. B. G. Ramcharan (The Hague, London, Boston: Kluwer Law International, 1997), 64-68.

setting up of an international tribunal to try those guilty of, or responsible for crimes against humanity.<sup>366</sup>

In addition, a specific military proposal came from French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas on 'air-exclusion zone' over Bosnia banning all military flights, other than authorised by the UN. He proposed surveillance and reconnaissance flight over Bosnian territory and introduced the idea of controlling the Bosnian air space. That action would certainly ease humanitarian flights into Sarajevo and deny the Serbs its absolute military advantage in the air.<sup>367</sup>

During his address to the London Conference, Yugoslav Prime Minister Milan Panic was very co-operative in his attitude and insistently opposing the use of force to change borders between republics. He also announced that Belgrade had officially recognised Slovenia and prepared to recognise the other republics.<sup>368</sup> This meant that the new Yugoslavia had no territorial claims on any of its neighbours and that it rejected the 'barbaric practice of ethnic cleansing in any form'.<sup>369</sup> Panic even

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<sup>366</sup> Statement by Mr. Hans van den Broek, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands at the London Conference on Yugoslavia (145-8). Others supporting further action in their interventions at the Conference included German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel (94-7), Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada; Barbara MacDougall (148-52), Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark Uffe Elleman-Jensen (84-7) and Austrian Foreign Minister Alois Mock. See "Final Documents," in *The International Conference on Former Yugoslavia*,

<sup>367</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 226-7.

<sup>368</sup> 'The Speech of Mr. Milan Panic at the London Conference, Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, 26 August 1992.

<sup>369</sup> While the Federal Prime Minister (holding a higher position than that of a republican president) was making a number of agreements and, in some cases offers, Milosevic, Serbia's President, was sitting behind and kept silence throughout the Conference. In fact, during the Conference Milosevic and Panic argued publicly and behind the scenes, Milosevic even threatened to punch him. Milosevic chose Panic, Belgrade born millionaire from California, to get his help to end Yugoslavia's quarantine through Panic's connections in Washington. However, after he became the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, Panic had refused to follow orders from Milosevic. The enmity between two politicians erupted during London Conference. It is reported that, at the Conference, Milosevic asked to speak. Panic scribbled something on a piece of paper and held it up in front of Serbian President. It said 'shut up' in English. Panic then showed the paper to the Acting Secretary of State, Lawrence

suggested that the Bosnian Serb forces withdraw from the two-thirds of the land occupied by Bosnian Serb forces.<sup>370</sup>

By the end of the Conference, it seemed much progress had been made; There was general agreement on principles and on a programme of action which would have immediate effect both on the ground and in Geneva where the International Conference on Yugoslavia would go into permanent session. Major hailed the Conference a success, providing a comprehensive framework for the first time since the conflict erupted. "We know now what needs to be done," he said, "how it needs to be done and by whom it needs to be done".<sup>371</sup> However, the initial optimism was soon to fade as the international community pleased with what it achieved in London and western governments averted the wave of criticism and pressure from the public consciousness.

One of the key successes of the London Conference claimed by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office was an accord that the Serbian camp would notify the UN of all heavy weapons and their positions within 96 hours, and place the weapons under UN supervision within seven days. The Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic signed a special agreement with Douglas Hogg, the UK Deputy Foreign Minister. However, as Boutros-Ghali complained before, the UN was not equipped to implement these kind of agreements.<sup>372</sup> As a British expert points out; 'it later emerged that 'supervision' was to be interpreted in its original, etymological sense: the UN monitors were allowed

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Eagleburger, former Ambassador to Belgrade and -once- a friend of Milosevic. See Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, Chapter 19, 'We are the Winners, The London Conference', 258-64.

<sup>370</sup> The Speech of Mr. Milan Panic at the London Conference, Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, 26 August 1992. "Final Documents," in *The International Conference on Former Yugoslavia*.

<sup>371</sup> Quoted in Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 260.

to look over the artillery pieces above Sarajevo every day while they were being fired'.<sup>373</sup>

The 'Statement of Principles' agreed during the conference was important because it established the standard by which all the parties to the negotiations mostly the Serbs, agreed to be judged.<sup>374</sup> These set of thirteen principles were:

1. cessation of the use of force
2. non-recognition of all advantages gained by force
3. negotiation by all parties on the basis of these principles
4. respect for human rights
5. guarantees of human rights for persons of ethnic and national minorities
6. condemnation of ethnic cleansing; closure of all detention camps; and return of all displaced persons
7. compliance with the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 codifying international humanitarian law for the protection of victims of war, and personal responsibility for any breaches of these conventions.
8. obligation to respect integrity of states and inviolability of frontiers
9. settlement of issues by consensus or arbitration not by force
10. full compliance with all UNSC Resolutions
11. provision for humanitarian aid to reach those in need, especially children
12. the co-operation in international monitoring, peace keeping and arms control operations

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<sup>372</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 230.

<sup>373</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 246.



13. need for international guarantees to ensure full implementation of agreements reached within the framework of the International Conference.

A leading British expert argues that “if followed, the principles established during the London Conference would have produced a very different peace agreement than the one agreed at Dayton in November 1995”.<sup>375</sup> However, in the final declaration, the Conference participants just urged the ‘warring parties’ to lay down their arms, or risk increasing isolation and tougher sanctions. It was stated that;

“If... Serbia and Montenegro do intend to fulfil these obligations in deed as well as word they will resume a respected position in the international community...If they do not comply the Security Council will be invited to apply stringent sanctions leading to their total international isolation.”<sup>376</sup>

At that time, no western government (least of all the British who hosted the Conference) was prepared to make the case to impose a settlement risking any kind of military involvement. At the end, the implementation of the principles agreed at the Conference had not been secured. As one senior American official admitted;

“History might have taken a different course if, the day after the London Conference, we had started insisting that all the terms of the London Conference agreement were upheld. There was a serious

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<sup>374</sup> The London Conference, LC/C2 (Final), 26 August 1992, in *The International Conference on Former Yugoslavia*, 33-4.

<sup>375</sup> Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 19-20.

debate and there was serious concern. We felt, even then, that the willingness to use force to enforce the terms of the London Conference was probably essential, that that was the only thing that the Serbs would respect.”<sup>377</sup>

In a sense the London Conference was typical of the international response to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Unless the war came to threaten their own interests directly, Britain and France, the two countries with the military might to make a difference, were determined to stay out, and thus international involvement was restricted to measures aimed at ensuring that fighting did not come to threaten western European interests.

As a result, both the atmosphere at the London Conference and the attitudes of organisers mainly the British government was comforting rather than threatening for the Serbian camp to comply with the agreement. Although the text was harsh, for the Serbian President the outcome was much better than expected. The declaration did not mention the ‘use of force’ to punish the warring parties. This was an important victory for Serbia. Accusations and condemning words alone would not penalise the Serbs. As Dusan Mitevic, confidant of Milosevic and Chief of Belgrade television, said:

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<sup>376</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 261-2.

<sup>377</sup> This American official is David Gompert who was the Senior Director for Europe and Eurasia, National Security Council Staff with the Bush Administration. Quoted in Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 231. Also see David C. Gompert, “The United States and Yugoslavia’s Wars,” in *The World and Yugoslavia’s Wars*, ed Richard H. Ullman (New York: A Council on Foreign Relations Book, 1996), 122-44.

“Looking at it cynically, the London Conference virtually endorsed all the effects of war... Until then, Serbia and Yugoslavia were being struck off the agenda everywhere... but all of a sudden, Cosic was at the conference table as president of Yugoslavia... and Panic was there as prime minister. You mustn't forget that the Conference ended with John Major saying 'God help us and Mr. Panic for a peaceful solution to the problem...' Milosevic was also there -with all the cards in his pocket. And this was the first time the Bosnian Serbs with Karadzic appeared, not as official members of the conference, but there anyway.”<sup>378</sup>

Obviously, the agreement achieved at the end of the London Conference was far from addressing the fundamental causes of the conflict. The emphasis was put on two kinds of things: military solutions to military problems, and humanitarian solutions to humanitarian problems. Although the term 'ethnic cleansing' was now in general currency, there was still a tendency to assume that the essential problem was military, and that the flight of coerced and terrorised populations was merely a by-product of the fighting. It was then described as a humanitarian problem which could be solved by moving refugees into refugee camps outside Bosnia.<sup>379</sup>

Unfortunately, the London Conference had not changed the basic cause of the failure of the international peacemaking efforts; failure of understanding the underlying causes of war. Although in their statements during the summer months of 1992 and in the London Conference in August 1992, British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd and Prime Minister John Major both expressed views that suggested they understood the

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<sup>378</sup> Quoted in Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 262.

<sup>379</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 246.

difference between the Serb aggressors and the largely Muslim and Croat victims of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, thereafter government spokesmen increasingly equated aggressors and victims as equally guilty for the war.<sup>380</sup> This 'evenhandedness' might have been as a result of the 'reelpolitik' which says that it is more important to end the war quickly even if on Serb terms, than to seek with justice. British government, during the war in Bosnia, resorted to all kinds of possible means to justify its conviction that 'this is a civil war and an eruption of hundreds of years of ethnic hatred among the Balkan peoples'.

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<sup>380</sup> Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 21.

## CHAPTER VI: BOSNIAN PEACE PROCESS:

### ANGLO-AMERICAN RIFTS

#### 6.1. International Conference on Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) and the Vance-Owen Plan

As a new stage of the EC's diplomatic efforts, the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) formally became the successor to the European Community Conference on Yugoslavia and convened for the first time on 3 September 1992 at the UN headquarters in Geneva. Although it was structured to handle negotiations on the future of post-Yugoslav states and their relationships, the main focus of international diplomacy and most of ICFY's attention were on the war in Bosnia and Hercegovina.<sup>381</sup> While the terrors of Bosnia and Hercegovina were continuing, the officials at ICFY in Geneva were working on a plan for the constitutional settlement of the war. Previously, the EC plan which had been based on the adoption of an idea of ethnic territories or 'cantons' was rejected by the Bosnian Government. Unfortunately, it had served in reality as a 'charter for ethnic cleansing'; ethnically designated cantons created the basis for ethnically pure territories.<sup>382</sup>

In early October 1992, the 'Bosnia and Hercegovina Working Group' in Geneva headed by Finnish diplomat Martti Ahtisaari drafted a set of five options for the future of Bosnia and Hercegovina. These five options ranged from the Bosnian Government

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<sup>381</sup> Graham Messervy-Whiting, *Peace Conference on Former Yugoslavia: The Politico-Military Interface*, London Defence Study No. 21 (London: Brassey's for the Centre for Defence Studies, 1994), 2-3.

<sup>382</sup> See Chapter IV.

preference -a centralised multi-ethnic, multi-confessional states with local functions assigned to some 4-10 communes and whose boundaries would not be set on ethnic lines -to the Serb and Croat preference for the three way partition of Bosnia into a Bosnian Muslim state, allowing the Bosnian Serbs an autonomous state closely associated with Serbia and the Bosnian Croats similar arrangement with Croatia. In between, there were three other options with varying degrees of autonomy for the three main ethnic groups, all within a single state of Bosnia and Hercegovina.<sup>383</sup>

The option which was presented as Vance-Owen Plan in late October 1992 was in the middle of the range; envisaging a set of 7-10 regions, most of which would have ethnic majorities, but which were to be constitutionally designed as multi-cultural.<sup>384</sup> Rather than being divided into three ethnically created 'cantons', the country would be 'regionalised' in a larger number of units and, most important, a single Bosnian state with a central government aimed to be retained.<sup>385</sup> Negotiations continued throughout the autumn 1992, in the Working Group and with the Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serb and Croat leaders.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> The five options were; a centralised state; a centralised federal state with significant functions carried out by between four to ten regions; a loose federal state of three ethnic units, not geographically continuous; a loose confederation of three ethnically determined republics with significant independence, possibly even in the security field and finally; a Muslim state, with Serbs becoming part of FRY and Croats becoming part of Croatia. ICFY Working Paper on Constitutional Options, 4 October 1992. This was also the preliminary plan submitted to the parties in October 1992. Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 65.

<sup>384</sup> The 'Options for Bosnia and Herzegovina' document was presented to the UN Security Council in a Report by Secretary General on 11 November 1992. See the Report of the UN Secretary General on the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia, UN Doc. S/24795, 11 November 1992.

<sup>385</sup> The new model was described as the 'Provincial Model' as opposed to Carrington's 'Communal Model'.

<sup>386</sup> As Graham Messervy-Whiting reported 'channels were quickly opened up with all the local parties' as he called them, including the Presidency, Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat parties. Graham Messervy-Whiting, *Peace Conference on Former Yugoslavia*, 3. At that time, the wartime Bosnian Presidency consisted of three Muslims (Izetbegovic, Abdic and General Delic), three Serbs (Pejanovic, Ljubic-Mijatovic, and Lazovic), three Croats (Lasic, Boras and Akmadzic) and one 'other' (Ganic, a Muslim). See *Ibid.*, 37.

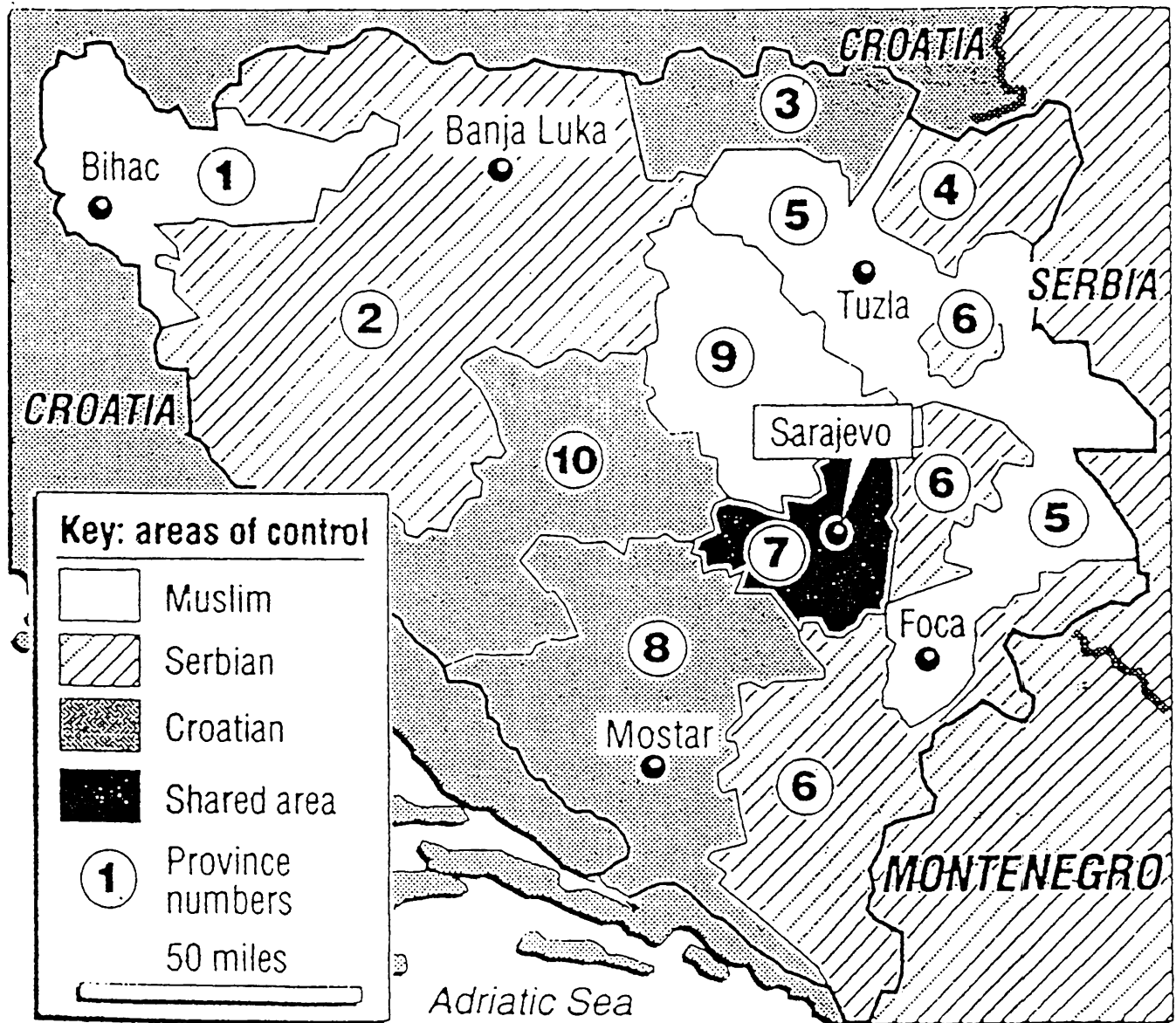
Finally, after plenary discussions with the parties, co-chairman put before the Steering Committee on 30 January 1993 'Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Hercegovina' in two parts; the military agreement and the constitutional document with the provisional map as an annex.<sup>387</sup> The core of the Vance-Owen plan was to create a highly 'decentralised state' in which the three ethnic groups would be recognised as the 'constituent units of' Bosnia and Hercegovina. The state was going to be organised administratively into ten provinces with a substantial autonomy (Map 4). Each of the Provinces would have a mixture of the different ethnic groups, also containing a dominant majority from one particular group. In each province a Governor, Vice-Governor and ten other members were to be nominated by the local parties on the basis of the composition of the population of that province, as determined in the 1991 census, that is, before the outbreak of war and 'ethnic cleansing' in Bosnia and Hercegovina with the proviso that none of the three parties would be underrepresented.<sup>388</sup> Three provinces were to be designated Serb majorities (Banja Luka, Bijeljina and Nevesinge), two with a Croat majority (Mostar and Bosanski Brod), four would have Muslim majorities but would retain their multi-ethnic character (Bihac, Tuzla, Zenica and Travnik). One province would be assigned to the multi-ethnic central government in Sarajevo, which would be responsible for foreign policy, international commerce, citizenship rights, defence and taxation.

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<sup>387</sup> The Vance-Owen Plan was first published by the UNSC as Secretary General's Report UN Doc. S/25221\_dated 2 February 1992. On 2 January 1993, the First Plenary Session of Bosnian parties convened by the ICYF took place and January version of the plan was unveiled. That meeting was attended by five delegations, headed for the Bosnian Croats by Mate Boban, for the Bosnian government by President Izetbegovic and for the Bosnian Serbs by Karadzic, as well as by President Tudjman of Croatia and President Cosic for FRY. See, Opening Statements by the Parties and the ICYF Co-chairmen at plenary session, Geneva, 2 January 1992. Messervy-Whiting, *Peace Conference*, 8-11.

<sup>388</sup> For full details, see Annex A, UN Doc. S/25221, 2 February 1993.

MAP 4  
 THE VANCE-OWEN PLAN



SOURCE: *The Guardian*



January 1993 version of the Vance-Owen Plan was drastically different than the original October version, since it had put ethnic labels on the 'regions'. Although David Owen argues in his book 'Balkan Odyssey' that they were careful 'not to label any provinces Serb, Croat and Muslim contrary to the impression given by some newspapers and commentaries', but they put 'numbers and place names on the map', basically implying who would get what.<sup>389</sup>

At a conference convened by the Royal Geographic Society in co-operation with the Institute of British Geographers on London, the view was put forward arguing that the Vance-Owen plan had distinctly harmful effects "by use of ethnic-terminology in its map and its imprecision in the drafting of its boundaries, which may have promoted aggression and further conflict".<sup>390</sup> The group of all distinguished geographers with long research experience in the region stated that "as one of the West's major contributions to 'solving' the region's problems, it is felt that the Vance-Owen Plan actually stimulated the civil war and may have encouraged further ethnic cleansing".<sup>391</sup>

The insistence on 'proportionality' in constituting the Provincial political structures could have been considered as a principled step back from the idea of ethnic 'cantons'.

However, by the time, Vance-Owen Plan was on the negotiating table, 'ethnic

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<sup>389</sup> Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 95. Owen gives Noel Malcolm as an example of the critics of the plan since Noel Malcolm rightly criticised the January version of the plan, arguing that 'in the January version, unlike the initial version proposed in October, the cantons were given 'ethnic labels' on the map, and at the same time the impression was given that the precise boundaries on the map were not yet final'. Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 248.

<sup>390</sup> Half a day conference titled 'Interpreting the Balkans' was held on 18 May 1995 by the Royal Geographic Society. See Press Release of the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers), London, 18 May 1995.

cleansing' had been underway for almost a year in Bosnia and this made the prospects for fully implementing the Plan was marginal:

The merits of the Vance-Owen plan were its insistence that refugees should be allowed to return to their homes throughout Bosnia, and its provision that the cantons corresponding to Serb occupied areas would not be connected on the map in such a way as to make it easy for them to seek to join Serbia as a single territorial block. Unfortunately these two meritorious principles were flatly contradicted both by the rest of the plan, and by reality. The rest of the plan gave full legislative, judicial and executive powers (including policing) to the cantons, making it impossible to believe that Muslim refugees could safely return to Serb-ruled cantons. And the reality on the ground was that the Serb-held areas were already joined on the map; Serb military leaders would never sacrifice these links, which were a key element in their plans..<sup>392</sup>

Perhaps, it could be argued, as one British expert did, that, "although Lord Owen was talking about dealing with ostensible concerns of the Serbs', the Vance-Owen Plan denied them their two cardinal war aims: ethnic purity and, yet more important, contiguous territories".<sup>393</sup> This was, as Lord Owen admitted, 'nothing more than the best that could be achieved in poor circumstances'.<sup>394</sup> Basically, Vance-Owen Plan was not a total rejection of Serbian policy and acquisition of territory by use of force but, still it deprived them of certain vital gains.

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<sup>391</sup> Press Release of the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers), London, 18 May 1995.

<sup>392</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 248.

<sup>393</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 241.

<sup>394</sup> See Lord Owen's speech to the United Kingdom Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee. Foreign Affairs Committee, *The Expanding Role of the United Nations and Its Implications for UK Policy*, Minutes of Evidence, HMSO, 1993, 105.

Bosnian Serb leaders (the famous triumvirate -Karadzic, Koljevic and Krajisnik) strongly opposed provisions that vested political sovereignty in a central Bosnian Governmental authority, and that would prevent the political association and territorial linkage of various areas under Serbian control.<sup>395</sup> It also required the Serbs to relinquish control over a considerable amount of territory they presently controlled. In view of their successes on the battlefield, and the consequences of ethnic cleansing policy employed in much of the area under their control, Bosnian Serb leaders thought themselves in a position to reject ideas put forward by the ICFY in Geneva.<sup>396</sup> Karadzic claimed that the plan was 'unacceptable to the Serbs' since 'it fragments the areas under Serbian control'. 'What we want,' Karadzic argued, 'is to preserve our people's unity... The Serbs do not want to accept being broken apart... We can not accept that'.<sup>397</sup>

The task of the co-chairmen was to obtain six signatures (in fact, it became nine, when the map came to be treated separately from the constitutional document) from what was considered to be the leaders of the 'warring factions'. Initially, only the Bosnian Croat leader Mate Boban signed the whole package. Indeed, the proposed map of provincial boundaries granted them control not only of areas they had then occupied but also of additional territory where Muslims had been in majority. Moreover, in view of their de facto sovereignty over most of Western Hercegovina, the Croats had

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<sup>395</sup> The primary strategic aim of the Bosnian Serbs was to expand and secure the land corridor linking Serbia via Bijeljina in the east to the Krajina via Banja Luka in the West. The corridor was cut by Bosnian Croat Province (number 3) and the finger of largely Muslim Province (number 5). To reconcile these two positions, ICFY developed the concept of a 'Northern Corridor', a 'super thoroughway' with a demilitarised zone to a depth of five kilometres on either side (See Map 4).

<sup>396</sup> Ian Traynor, "The Bottom Line for Bosnia," *The Guardian*, 6 January 1993.

<sup>397</sup> FBIS-EEU, 30 October 1992, 20.

already had very close links with Zagreb, so at that moment it mattered very little whether Bosnia was regionalised into ten provinces or was subject of a three way cantonisation. Boban publicly rejected the constitutional division of Bosnia and Hercegovina along ethnic lines but still claimed that ‘within it the Croatian people are to have their own rights in a cultural, economic, political, and any other sense, so they can be a people with all those trappings of sovereignty that every people have’.<sup>398</sup>

The Bosnian Government, having already lost political control over most of Bosnia and Hercegovina and having suffered terribly as the principal target of the Serbian ethnic cleansing campaign, found little to be enthusiastic about the Vance-Owen Plan. In Bosnian Presidency’s view, the plan offered very little prospect for the creation of a viable centrally governed Bosnian state. In an interview with *The Times* during his visit to London, Bosnian Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic complained about the stance adopted by Britain and its European partners saying that “had Lady Thatcher and not John Major been at the helm, the Belgrade government would not have been allowed to get away with ‘genocide’ against the Muslim Communities”.<sup>399</sup> However, being unsuccessful in their attempts to call international community, especially the US, to either militarily intervene in Bosnia or lift the arms embargo so that the Muslim side could acquire heavy weapons, Bosnian leadership also weighed the political advantages of accepting a flawed plan. It would, at least, prevent the establishment of para-states as the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats advocated.<sup>400</sup> In addition, the

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<sup>398</sup> FBIS-EEU, 27 October 1992, 26.

<sup>399</sup> Reported by Nicholas Wood, “West Told There Must Be No Let-up in Pressure on Belgrade,” *The Times*, 14 January 1993.

<sup>400</sup> Bosnian President Izetbegovic later remarked that ‘our goal during the negotiations was to eliminate the para-states, so we do not have states within a state. That’s why we went toward this compromise with the Provinces... even though we do not like the provinces.’ *SWB*, February 17, 1993, Eastern Europe, C.1 Special Supplement, EE/1615/C1.

Bosnian Presidency calculated that if the plan was rejected by the Serbian side, who viewed it as even more unacceptable than did the Muslims, the international anger was going to be focused upon the Serbs.<sup>401</sup>

After obtaining Croatian agreement to the peace settlement, and with the expectation that the Bosnian Government would eventually accept the plan, Vance and Owen turned to the more difficult problem of obtaining Serbian signature. From August to December 1992, during the negotiations, they had hoped, along with most Western leaders, for the emergence of more flexible and moderate government in Belgrade. It was believed that such a government might encourage a peaceful solution of both the Bosnian and broader Balkan crisis and also end Serbia's moral and materiel support for Bosnian Serbs. Optimism centred on Milan Panic who made a remarkable presence at the London Conference in August.<sup>402</sup> Nevertheless, hopes for leadership change in Belgrade were destroyed with the electoral victory of Sloodan Milosevic in the December 1992 Presidential elections.<sup>403</sup>

After spending several hours face to face with Radovan Karadzic, confronted by strong opposition to their plan by the Bosnian Serb leadership in Pale, Vance and Owen decided in early January 1993 to deal with realities at hand and asked for Milosevic's assistance.<sup>404</sup> Although Milosevic was considered as primarily responsible for all the

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<sup>401</sup> Vance-Owen had made it quite clear that whoever was perceived to be responsible for obstructing an agreement at Geneva would suffer the full consequences of their uncooperative behaviour. David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, Chapter 3; "The Vance-Owen Peace Plan (VOPP)," 94-159.

<sup>402</sup> During the London Conference, western states had introduced Milan Panic as Yugoslav Federal Minister who was ready to co-operate and the focus had turned to him. The baseless promises of Milan Panic were taken by the conference organisers as a cause for optimism and an example of what the concerted international pressure at the Conference could achieve.

<sup>403</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 263.

<sup>404</sup> Frances Williams, "Milosevic Seen as Key to Peace Talks," *Financial Times*, 8 January 1993.

bloodshed in Bosnia and Hercegovina, Vance had developed a good relationship with him after having secured his support for the cease-fire in Croatia one year earlier. For his part, Milosevic had become more flexible concerning the situation in Bosnia for a number of reasons. Although, he had exercised considerable manipulation of media during the December 1992 Serbian Presidential elections, his margin of victory over Panic was not that impressive.<sup>405</sup> Even more significant was the terrible state of Serbian economy as a result of international sanctions, isolating it from the rest of the world. Although Milosevic was successful in exploiting the resulting conditions of country's isolation and economic deterioration to legitimate his regime's survival by appealing to Serbia people for 'patriotic unity' and sacrifice, the anger and anxiety were growing considering the seemingly open-ended military struggle in the Balkans.

In addition, by January 1993 the Bosnian Serb military situation had become even more precarious than it had been a few months earlier.<sup>406</sup> Muslim and Croat forces were becoming stronger. Milosevic was also well aware that the soon-to-be installed Clinton administration in Washington was expected to take a more activist military

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<sup>405</sup> With considerable electoral manipulation and abuse of media, Milosevic took only fifty-six percent of the vote. Panic, with his slogan 'Now or Never', took thirty four percent. Of the 250-seat Parliament, Milosevic's Socialist Party won 101 seats, and together with their natural ally, the Serbian Radicals -ultranationlists- who took 73, they had a comfortable majority. The main opposition coalition DEPOS, headed by Vuk Draskovic, took 49 seats, the Centrist Democratic Party took 7, and the remaining went to smaller minority parties. Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 263-4.

<sup>406</sup> Although the Bosnian Serb forces had an overwhelming superiority in terms of equipment over the Bosnian government forces, it was constrained by lack of manpower. In late 1992 and early 1993, Muslim guerrillas, organised and operating independently of the Bosnian Army, captured Serbian weapons with a series of hit and run tactics. With these weapons they were able to push the Serbian forces back to the Drina, the river that marks the boundary between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. At the same time, units of the Bosnian Army in eastern Bosnia around Srebrenica had similar successes. See James Gow, "One Year of War in Bosnia and Herzegovina," 7-13, especially 9-10. Also see James Gow, "The Remains of the Yugoslav People's Army," *Jane's Intelligence Review* 8 (August 1992), 363.

stance against Serbia.<sup>407</sup> Consequently, Milosevic seemed prepared to adopt a more flexible approach when Vance and Owen went to Belgrade during the first week of January 1993 to seek help with the Geneva negotiations.

On 8 January, Bosnia's Deputy Prime Minister, Hakija Turajlic, was taken from the UN vehicle on its way from the Sarajevo airport to the city centre by Serbian paramilitaries and shot dead in front of UNPROFOR soldiers. The assassination occurred only one day after Izetbegovic had accepted the Vance-Owen plan in principle as the basis for further negotiations. This time Lord Owen made Karadzic aware of 'brutal truths' regarding a possible western military intervention 'if the peace plan is rejected'.<sup>408</sup> It was then reported that Milosevic warned Karadzic that 'if the Bosnian Serbs were prepared to fight the whole world they could not count on Serbia to provide supplies'.<sup>409</sup> Finally overwhelmed by the pressure of extended discussions, Karadzic had accepted the Plan with the provision that the plan would have to be

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<sup>407</sup> At the end of July 1992, during his campaign in the US Presidential elections against George Bush, Clinton had made a policy-statement on Bosnia-Herzegovina saying 'The United States should take the lead in seeking UN Security Council authorisation for air strikes against those who are attacking the relief effort. The United States should be prepared to lend appropriate military support to that operation. We should make clear that the economic blockade against Serbia will be tightened, not only on weapons but also on oil and other supplies that sustain that renegade regime of Slobodan Milosevic. European and US naval forces in the Adriatic should be given authority by the UN to stop and search ships that might be carrying contraband heading for Serbia, and her ally Montenegro'. Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 14. Later, in October 1992, Clinton told an interviewer: 'I support a strong American role in the United Nations and with the EC to end Serbian aggression and provide a peaceful solution to this tragic conflict. I have supported the use of multilateral military force, if necessary, to ensure that UN relief efforts are protected. We can not ignore the human agony of what has been taking place in the very heart of modern Europe'. *Europe*, October 1992, 7. And just days before the December 20 Serbian elections, US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, named Slobodan Milosevic with several other Serbian and Croatian military and political leaders as possible war criminals. *The New York Times*, 17 December 1992.

<sup>408</sup> Michael Sheridan, "Medicine Man Casts a Spell on Karadzic," *The Independent*, 17 January 1993.

<sup>409</sup> Alan Philips, "Karadzic Forced into Submission," *Daily Telegraph*, 13 January 1993.

ratified by the Bosnian Serb Parliament before detailed negotiations could begin on its implementation.<sup>410</sup>

On 20 January 1993, the same day Bill Clinton was inaugurated as President of the United States, the Bosnian Serbs legally ratified the agreement. However, Serbian leader Karadzic also announced that Bosnian Serb leaders had no intention of giving up any territory or of abandoning the vital corridor between Sarajevo and Serbia.<sup>411</sup> He also claimed that 'his ethnic constituency would never again tolerate being mixed with the Muslims or subjected to a central government that would impose Muslim domination': 'I don't think we can live with each other, but we can live beside each other... we are like oil and water. When you shake us we mix, when we are left alone we separate'.<sup>412</sup>

## 6.2. Anglo-American Rifts: The US Opposition to Vance-Owen Plan

The biggest opposition to the Vance-Owen Plan, surprisingly, came from the US. Despite all the European propaganda, the Vance-Owen Plan was considered as continuation of Lord Carrington's 'cantonisation' plan and it attracted sharp American criticism. As the US Ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright, stated in a press

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<sup>410</sup> Karadzic has presented the Vance-Owen Plan as a Serb triumph, even though he was rejecting the same document only a week ago. 'We are on the threshold of achieving our goal', he declared. 'This is the protection of our rights -that was our basic goal, to protect Serbian rights, Serbian territories, Serbian integrity and personality'. Reported by Tim Judah, "Karadzic will Push Peace Plan as Best Path to Final Victory," *The Times*, 15 January 1993.

<sup>411</sup> As Ian Traynor reported "Karadzic never tires of explaining, the militants' aim which is to unite 'the historic Serbian lands' in a new federation linking Serbia proper with tiny Montenegro, up to two thirds of Bosnia and the third of Croatia seized before". Ian Traynor, "The Bottom Line for Bosnia," *The Guardian*, 6 January 1993.

<sup>412</sup> Quoted in Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 260.



conference the plan amounted to 'rewarding aggression and punishing the victims'.<sup>413</sup> In fact, the new US Administration soon appeared to be questioning the whole basis of the Vance-Owen Plan:

"Mr. Clinton's main objection to the plan is that it rewards ethnic cleansing, and will involve the dissolution of the current Bosnian government, and its replacement by an arrangement that partitions Bosnia into 10 cantons...Clinton would like to see modification of the Bosnian peace plan...The modifications being cited by the White House staff call for an 'International War Crimes Tribunal', tightened economic sanctions against Serbia, and a US statement committing it to defend Macedonia and opposing any extension of Serbian ethnic cleansing to Kosovo".<sup>414</sup>

The new US Administration also appeared to be frustrated with the way the international mediators were handling the Serbs. President Clinton was reported as 'very concerned about the ethnic cleansing and abuses of human rights in Serbia and Bosnia and Hercegovina'.<sup>415</sup> While Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance was molly-coddling the Bosnian Serb leaders and President Milosevic as useful partners in the peace process, the Clinton Administration seemed determined to prosecute those responsible for the war crimes in former Yugoslavia.<sup>416</sup> In one of his first policy initiatives since

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<sup>413</sup> Quoted in Jan Willem Honig and Norbert North, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime* (London: Penguin, 1996), 109.

<sup>414</sup> Martin Walker, "Reluctant Clinton to Accept Bosnia Plan," *The Guardian*, 10 February 1993. It was also argued at that time that President Ozal's criticism of the Vance-Owen Plan, as ultimately not enforceable on the ground without a huge commitment of outside troops, might have sharpened President Clinton's own doubts about committing US prestige behind the Vance-Owen Plan.

<sup>415</sup> Simon Tisdall and Chris Stephen, "US Set on Prosecuting Yugoslav War Criminals," *The Guardian*, 28 January 1993.

<sup>416</sup> Seven men were listed by US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger as responsible for 'crimes against humanity' ranging from civilian deaths in Sarajevo to mass executions of Bosnian Muslims. These were Borislav Herak; Zeljko Raznjatovic -Arkan (accused of mass murder of up to 3000 civilians); Vojislav Seselj, the leader of the Serbian Chetniks (accused of atrocities at Brcko and other Muslim towns); Drago Pracac (Commander of the Serb-run Omarska detention camp); Adem Delic

taking office, the US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, instructed senior State Department advisers to investigate how to best organise an international war crimes tribunal.<sup>417</sup>

In its first foray into foreign policy crisis management, the Clinton administration was seeking ways to expand its consideration of potential offensive actions in the Balkans beyond the limited objectives pursued by the Bush Administration. The National Security Council had asked for an inter-agency study to assess what would happen in Bosnia and Hercegovina and other parts of the former Yugoslavia if the US policy remained unchanged. In fact, this study was 'a comprehensive, wall to wall approach' to every aspect of the Balkans conflict including taking a new look at ideas considered by the Bush administration.<sup>418</sup> These included such options as shooting down Serbian aircraft invading the air-exclusion zone that the UN had decreed over Bosnia and Hercegovina, bombing Serbian airfields and artillery positions, modifying the UN arms embargo to enable the Bosnian government to obtain more weapons and tightening economic sanctions on Serbia.<sup>419</sup>

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(Commander of the Croatian-run Celebici camp). Lawrence Eagleburger also declared that those with 'political and command responsibility' for these crimes should be tried under international law and named Serbia's President Slobodan Milosevic, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and the Commander of the Bosnian Serb Army Ratko Mladic. "US Names Seven as Criminals in Balkan War: Eagleburger also Wants Serb Political Leaders to be Held Accountable," *International Herald Tribune*, 17 December 1992.

<sup>417</sup> Warren Christopher submitted a report to the United Nations on human rights violations in Bosnia, based on information gathered by US intelligence agencies, to be used by the Tribunal in the future. Simon Tisdall and Chris Stephen, "US Set on Prosecuting Yugoslav War Criminals," *The Guardian*, 28 January 1992.

<sup>418</sup> John M. Goshko and Don Oberdorfer, "US Looks Closer At Taking Offensive to Halt Balkans War," *International Herald Tribune*, 29 January 1993.

<sup>419</sup> Reported by Robert Mauthner, "US May Reject Bosnia Proposals," *Financial Times*, 1 February 1993.

Washington's clear lack of support for Vance-Owen Plan had affected cross-Atlantic relations very badly.<sup>420</sup> Lord Owen was furious about Americans trying to subvert his peace plan and remarked that 'if only Americans put troops on the ground in Bosnia, they would have the right to veto or subvert the Vance-Owen Plan.'<sup>421</sup> Openly criticising the new Administration, he asked: 'It's all very well for the United States to criticise from the sidelines. Why don't they come in? It would give the peace settlement a bigger chance'.<sup>422</sup> He had been complaining that the Clinton Administration's reluctance to back his efforts threatened to 'scuttle the chances of ending the war' in Bosnia and Hercegovina:

"Against all the odds, even against my own expectations, we have more or less got a settlement but we have a problem. We can't get the Muslims on board. And that's largely the fault of Americans, because the Muslims won't budge while they think Washington may come into it on their side any day now. What do they want down there, a war that goes on and on? This is not just the best act in town, it is the only act in town, It's the best settlement you can get, and it's a bitter irony to see the Clinton people block it".<sup>423</sup>

British Government shared Lord Owen's anger and US ambivalence was severely criticised as having a negative effect on the peace efforts since it encouraged Bosnia's Muslims in their hope that the new US administration might exempt them from the

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<sup>420</sup> See F. Stephen Larrabee, "Implications for Transatlantic Relations," in *The Implications of The Yugoslav Crisis For Western Europe's Foreign Relations*, ed. Mathias Jopp, Institute For Security Studies, Western European Union, Challiot Papers, No. 17, October 1994, 17-34.

<sup>421</sup> Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 115.

<sup>422</sup> Reported in the *Chicago Tribune*, "US Balks at Backing Peace Plan for Bosnia," February 2, 1993. In Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 116.

overall arms embargo on former Yugoslavia'.<sup>424</sup> When the Americans and Germans expressed intention to lift the arms embargo as the only fair way of allowing the Bosnians to defend themselves, Douglas Hurd persuaded Germany repeating his the then famous phrase that 'it would escalate the fighting'.<sup>425</sup> After the Germans, who were effectively persuaded by Douglas Hurd 'not to lift the arms embargo', the US followed the line and announced that it would continue the embargo on arms shipments to the region. It was reported that 'Washington has been swayed by British and European criticism of any plan to ease the arms embargo. Insistence of the US government for the enforcement of the no-fly zone over Bosnia and Hercegovina had also been put to the back burner'.<sup>426</sup>

Finally, on 10 February 1993, Christopher announced that Washington supported the general approach of the Vance-Owen Plan on the condition of some modifications.<sup>427</sup> As Former Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger put it: "they (the Administration) feel that the Vance-Owen Plan has given too much to the Serbs and they would like to see it reduced".<sup>428</sup> Basically, some commentators put it as oscillating long between ideals and reality, 'the US Administration left the tough campaign talk and decided to

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<sup>423</sup> "Mediator is Upset at US Reluctance over Bosnia Talks," *The New York Times*, 3 February 1993. "Owen Prods US to Back Bosnia Plan as the 'Only Act in Town'," *International Herald Tribune*, 3 February 1993.

<sup>424</sup> Ian Traynor and Mark Tran, "US Impeding Bosnia Peace," *The Guardian*, 3 February 1993.

<sup>425</sup> Annika Savill, "Hurd to Press US Over Bosnia Plan," *The Independent*, 6 February 1993.

<sup>426</sup> Reported by Roger Boyes, "American Bluster Masks Qualified Approval for Peace Plan," *The Times*, 9 February 1993.

<sup>427</sup> For example, the Serbs required to give up some of the terrain allocated by the Geneva negotiators to Bosnian Muslims. The Clinton administration also wanted more robust guarantees for the Bosnian authorities, and for minorities in Serb or Croat dominated provinces. In addition, NATO should be brought in more actively to ensure that the Serb heavy guns were dismantled.

<sup>428</sup> The Vance-Owen Plan gave the Serbs only 43 per cent of territory in a unified state, whereas by 1994-5, the Contact Group were offering the Serbs 49 per cent in a state partitioned into two entities. Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 129.

back Bosnian Peace Process'.<sup>429</sup> The British were pleasantly surprised at the extent to which President Clinton had changed his policy since the election campaign, when he hinted at a more interventionist approach. One British official said that 'it is an evolution -diplomatic speak for a change of policy tantamount to U-turn'.<sup>430</sup> It was also argued that 'after days of brainstorming in Washington, it has become plain that the country can not have a policy in the Balkans without committing some ground troops'.<sup>431</sup>

While the British diplomats were congratulating themselves on their success on persuading President Clinton to back their non-interventionist approach on Bosnia, the US had sort of conceded defeat at the hands of other NATO allies and agreed to appoint an envoy to participate in the negotiations. It also promised that if a viable agreement containing enforcement provisions was reached, the US would be prepared to join with the UN, NATO and others in implementing and enforcing it, including possible US military action.<sup>432</sup>

### **6.3. The Breaking of the Muslim-Croat Alliance**

The January version of the Vance-Owen Plan, ethnically labelling the regions in Bosnia and Hercegovina, contributed to the suspicion and tension that had been mounting

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<sup>429</sup> Reported by Annika Savill, "UK Officials 'Convert' US on Bosnia Plan," *The Independent*, 12 February 1993. Also see Patrick Moore, "Bosnian Impasse Poses Dilemmas for Diplomacy," *RFE/RL Research Report* 2, no. 14 (2 April 1993), 29.

<sup>430</sup> Reported by Annika Savill, "UK Officials 'Convert' US on Bosnia Plan," *The Independent*, 12 February 1993.

<sup>431</sup> Roger Boyes, "American Bluster Marks Qualified Approval for Peace Plan," *The Times*, 9 February 1993.

<sup>432</sup> "US Backs Bosnian Peace Plan," *The New York Times*, 10 February 1993.

between the Bosnian Muslims and Croats for some time.<sup>433</sup> The Bosnian side had long been suspicious of the Croatian designs to carve out their own territories with an aim of creating their own 'Greater Croatia'; for example, Bosnian Croats refused to fight in certain areas such as Sarajevo and they had halted the arms supplies through Western Hercegovina, the principal route for imported weapons, to Bosnian Army units in central and northern Bosnia.<sup>434</sup>

After the unveiling of the January version of the Vance-Owen plan, the local HVO command gave the Bosnian Army an ultimatum to withdraw by 15 April from areas 'given' to the Croats under the Vance-Owen Plan. What followed was a sudden outburst of horrific clashes between HVO forces and the Bosnian Army in central Bosnia and Hercegovina including the 'cleansing' of Bosnian villages. By early April there were outbreaks of heavy fighting between Muslims and Croats in the *Travnik-Vitez-Zenica* area of central Bosnia.<sup>435</sup> On the other hand, while the pressure was growing on the Bosnian Serb side to accept the Vance-Owen plan, the Bosnian Serbs increased their efforts to accomplish the 'cleansing' of the Drina valley of the Muslims, creating a fait accompli before the Plan was signed. The UN investigator of atrocities in Bosnia and Hercegovina, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, issued a report in the following month saying that 'the Vance-Owen Plan had accelerated ethnic cleansing.'<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>433</sup> In October 1992, there were some clashes between Muslim and Croat militias in Travnik and Prozor, and they accused each other for the fall of Jajce to the Serbs. But, at that time, there was no large scale fighting between the Bosnian Muslims and Croats and the alliance still held. See Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 248.

<sup>434</sup> Gow, "One Year of War," 10.

<sup>435</sup> Patrick Moore, "Endgame in Bosnia and Herzegovina?," *RFE/RL Research Report* 2, no. 32 (13 August 1993), 20.

<sup>436</sup> See the Report by Michael Binyon, "Vance-Owen Plan Blamed for Ethnic Cleansing," *The Times*, 20 May 1993.

#### 6.4. The Fall of the Vance-Owen Plan

The combined effects of the arms embargo and the Vance-Owen plan resulting in the Muslim-Croat fighting had fatally weakened the Bosnian governments' military resistance to the Serbs. Although Bosnian Serbs were pushed back especially in Drina valley at the beginning of 1993, later on Serb forces stepped up their campaign against a number of Muslim enclaves which remained within the Serb conquered area of eastern Bosnia. Without a serious international commitment for protection of these enclaves, the Bosnian government moved during March and April towards an acceptance of Vance-Owen Plan.

Run out of patience, in mid-April, over two days of television and radio interviews and in remarks in the House of Lords, former prime minister, Baroness Thatcher sharply condemned allied leaders, including her successor in Britain, for lacking the resolve to take stronger action on behalf of Bosnia's embattled Muslims.<sup>437</sup> She urged Britain and her allies not only to help arm Bosnian Muslims, but also to support what she described as 'aggressive' air strikes against Serb positions. On British television she described the members of the European Community as behaving 'a little like accomplices to massacre', because, she said, they had done nothing to stop the killing, the 'ethnic cleansing' or the forcible displacement of Muslims from the territory the Serbs claimed.<sup>438</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> Baroness Thatcher's views on Bosnia were expressed in a BBC interview with Peter Sissons. The edited version appeared in *The Times*, "Europe Has Been Like an Accomplice to Massacre," 14 April 1993.

<sup>438</sup> Peter Sissons, "Europe Has Been Like an Accomplice to Massacre," *The Times*, 14 April 1993.

In Britain, her fierce attack touched off a political dispute, as members of the Prime Minister John Major's government moved quickly to the defensive to blunt the ferocity of their former leader's attack.<sup>439</sup> On her remarks, some Conservative Party members critical of Baroness Thatcher said that she appeared to be using Bosnia to attack Prime Minister Major, with whom she had been at odds in the previous months over his support for a ratification of the treaty on closer European political and economic cooperation, which she had opposed. She, obviously, had become disenchanted with John Major, whom she had picked for her successor in November 1990, when a rebellion in Conservative Party ranks had forced her resignation. Defence Minister Malcolm Rifkind described her remarks as 'emotional nonsense'. Before the House of Commons, he reiterated the British policy on Bosnia and Hercegovina, and rejected her plea that Britain and its allies lift an international arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims.<sup>440</sup> Baroness Thatcher challenged Britain's refusal to lift the arms embargo on the Muslims arguing that it left them 'defenceless in the path of a determined dictator aggressor'.<sup>441</sup> Backing Baroness Thatcher's call for western troops to halt the slaughter of civilians by the Bosnian Serbs, 14 Labour MPs signed a statement saying that;

"Sanctions alone will take too long to be effective. Serbian territorial aggression must be checked and the 'ethnic cleansing' stopped. If this can be achieved by the threat or use of air power alone, that would be preferable; but if it requires active engagement of troops on

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<sup>439</sup> William E. Schmidt, "The Flames Thacher Fuelled," *International Herald Tribune*, 15 April 1993.

<sup>440</sup> Ralph Atkins, "Tory Tensions Rise Over Bosnia," *Financial Times*, 15 April 1993.

<sup>441</sup> William E. Schmidt, "The Flames Thacher Fuelled," *International Herald Tribune*, 15 April 1993.



the ground, we believe the crisis in Bosnia merits that scale of commitment.”<sup>442</sup>

An opinion poll, carried out before Baroness Thatcher spoke, also suggested that there was widespread support among the British people for her views on the Bosnian conflict.<sup>443</sup> A Gallup survey for *The Daily Telegraph* showed that 61 per cent of Gallup’s respondents believed that ‘it would be desirable to send an international force to Bosnia to try to enforce a peace settlement’. If an international peace force were sent, 67 per cent of people said British troops should form part of any such force.<sup>444</sup>

Nevertheless, as pointed out by Noel Malcolm, the British government’s policy did not change:

“Even outspoken intervention by Lady Thatcher on British and American television in mid-April did not shake the policies of governments in those countries. The British government in particular was mesmerised by the Vance-Owen peace process, and would not contemplate any move that could be seen as jeopardising it -even though it required no clairvoyance at this stage to say that ‘a blind man can see that the Vance-Owen Plan is never going to be fulfilled’.”<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> The Labour MPs signing the statement were; Malcolm Wicks, Peter Mandelson (moderates); Tony Banks, Keith Vaz (Labour’s Front Bench); Peter Hain, Calum MacDonald, Chris Mullin, Angela Eagle, Max Madden, John Austin-Walker, Hugh Bayley, Mike Watson, John Gunnell and Frank Field. Patricia Wynn Davies, “Thatcher Right on Bosnia Say 14 Labour MPs,” *The Independent*, 17 April 1993.

<sup>443</sup> Anthony King, Telegraph Gallup, “61 Percent Would Back Use of Force to End the War,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 April 1995.

<sup>444</sup> The degree of resolution among the 61 per cent prepared to send force is considerable. Nearly half, 47 per cent, believe it would still be desirable even if the force ‘would be likely to suffer heavy casualties’. Anthony King, Telegraph Gallup, “61 Percent Would Back Use of Force to End the War,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 April 1995.

<sup>445</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 249.

The British view remained that any limited military response should not alter the basic aim of securing Serbian support for Vance-Owen plan. On 29 April 1993, Douglas Hurd, delivered a passionate rejection of calls to send ground forces to Bosnia and Hercegovina and lift the arms embargo in the House of Commons. He warned the MPs that ‘anger and horror’ were not the basis for armed intervention by ground troops.<sup>446</sup> Although Hurd squarely blamed Serbs for their aggression, stating that “we are witnessing a civil war in Bosnia which is encouraged and overwhelmingly fuelled by Belgrade”,<sup>447</sup> he added that no-one involved in the civil war had a monopoly of evil: and “this is not a war between the saints and heroes.”<sup>448</sup> He ruled out the case for intervention by troops stating that:

“If we accept as we have argued, that military intervention on the ground is not an option, we are faced with a choice of lesser options to achieve that objective.. We must keep in mind our overall objectives -to provide a framework for a political solution, to press the Serbs, in Bosnia and in Serbia, to abandon the pursuit of their aims by use of force, to relieve humanitarian suffering and to prevent the fighting from spreading -for example to Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia or, indeed, beyond.”<sup>449</sup>

Douglas Hurd told a hushed chamber that persuasion had to be matched by pressure. Rigorous implementation of sanctions would have an important impact on bringing the

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<sup>446</sup> House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 29 April 1993, cols. 1169-1170.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 1170.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 1169.

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 1170.

fighting to an end. The sanctions had pinned down the Serbs and limited their options, creating economic problems, soaring inflation, unemployment and shortages. There were signs that Serbian leaders in Belgrade were becoming increasingly impatient with the Bosnian Serbs.<sup>450</sup> Douglas Hurd also vehemently stated that the British Government had 'deep reservations' over calls to lift the arms embargo: "We believe we should be in business of trying to stop the war not equipping the parties to fight it out".<sup>451</sup> He stated that

"The idea is understandably presented as giving the Muslims a chance to defend themselves against the more heavily armed and better equipped Serbs. It is possible that in that way Muslims would get better access to weapons, but the impact on the military situation would be neither quick nor decisive. The Serbs and possibly the Croats, might decide to attack before the Muslims came too strong. Far from tilting the balance towards the Bosnian Muslims, lifting the embargo could lead to an increase in the supply of weapons to the Serbs and the Croats. Violence could escalate and the humanitarian relief operations would become increasingly difficult and dangerous. If that were to happen, far from ending the suffering, it would aggravate it."<sup>452</sup>

At each stage, Britain had urged caution, warning against any action which could endanger the aid effort. In fact, this approach had had the backing of most MPs. Labour leaders confined themselves to small criticisms, and the only dissenters were

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<sup>450</sup> "Hurd Rules Out Use of Troops in Bosnia Conflict," *The Times*, 30 April 1993.

<sup>451</sup> House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 29 April 1993, col. 1175.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*

Baroness Thatcher, Paddy Ashdown -Leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, a few independent minded Tories such as Patrick Cormack, and some Labour left-wingers.<sup>453</sup>

On the other hand, it was obvious that Serbs were unwilling to accept a plan that might require them to reduce the amount of territory they controlled from 70 per cent to 43 per cent and give up control of their heavy weapons.<sup>454</sup> Karadzic's Deputy, Koljevic pointed out, for instance, that the only way in which the Vance-Owen plan could gain even token acceptance among the Serbs was on the clear assumption that it would be a temporary resting place to consolidate their gains:

“Milosevic counted on the fact that the Vance-Owen plan couldn't be implemented in the way it was devised and that the Serbs got enough of a political chance, so to speak, for further autonomy, for the further development of that process. He rather looked at the Vance-Owen Plan as the first positive step, rather than the final form of it. And, of course, he wanted to get rid of these sanctions as soon as possible.”<sup>455</sup>

On that basis Radovan Karadzic was persuaded by Slobodan Milosevic to sign the Plan.<sup>456</sup> Since 25 March 1993, when the Bosnian Muslims finally agreed to all the

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<sup>453</sup> “Hurd Rules Out Use of Troops in Bosnia Conflict,” *The Times*, 30 April 1993.

<sup>454</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 278-9.

<sup>455</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 279. The basis of Serbian approach was also explained by Dragoslav Rancic, the confidant and spokesman of Dobrica Cosic. ‘It is just the first stage’, he said, ‘it is not going to last long. Not even Lord Owen believes in it’. He added that the Muslims would eventually be left with a ‘Balkan Lesotho’, and the Serbs would get everything they wanted. Report by Tim Judah, *The Times*, 3 May 1993.

<sup>456</sup> The centrepiece of Milosevic's argument was that the Vance-Owen Plan was consistent with the main Serbian war aims. First of all it provided the Serbs with a state of their own. As Ian Traynor reported ‘the double act sees Milosevic pose as peacemonger battling against the odds to talk sense into the recalcitrant Karadzic and his followers’. Although Vance and Owen warned Milosevic that the world was ready to seal off Serbia unless he persuaded Karadzic to back the plan, there was little

terms of the Vance-Owen proposal after receiving US assurances that the international community would seriously implement cease-fire enforcement measures if the peace plan was concluded, immense diplomatic pressure was directed at persuading the Serbian side.<sup>457</sup> But, it was not going to be easy; opposition on the Bosnian Serb side was quite strong from the beginning of negotiations and the Serbian Assembly meeting in Pale found acceptance of Vance-Owen proposals impossible.<sup>458</sup>

Finally, at a meeting organised by Greek Prime Minister Konstantin Mitsotakis in Athens on 2 May 1993, Bosnian leader Karadzic signed the plan. However, he insisted that his acceptance would only be final when confirmed by the Assembly of the 'Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina', scheduled to meet on 5 May 1993. At the end, the Bosnian Serb parliament rejected the plan.<sup>459</sup> Behind the scenes there was General Mladic, who appeared to have a strong disagreement with Milosevic over his tactics.<sup>460</sup> For the first time, Milosevic realised that he had lost control over the war in

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to suggest that that was the reason Milosevic wanted to put pressure on Karadzic. The embargo, imposed in May 1992 had little effect on stopping the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The analysts stated that 'there was going to be agreement because Milosevic had decided he had more to gain than to lose from a peace-settlement'. Ian Traynor, "Milosevic Warned of Tougher Sanctions," *The Guardian*, 12 March 1993. For Milosevic's concern about the Plan and his persuasion of Karadzic, Koljevic and Krajisnik, see Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, Chapter 21, "The Last Chance Café," 276-90.

<sup>457</sup> Robert Mauthner, "Clinton Steps up Pressure over Bosnia Peace Plan," *Financial Times*, 27-28 March, 1993. Within the Clinton Administration, a policy dispute persisted between those advocating continued diplomatic-economic measures to address the Bosnian crisis, and those favouring some sort of external military intervention.

<sup>458</sup> In fact, Serb Parliament had rejected the Vance-Owen Plan since the beginning. Mrs. Biljana Plavsic, Vice-President of the self-proclaimed Serbian Republic said in January, 'Dr. Karadzic would have to back down before the Parliament'. 'The Geneva Plan is unacceptable' she said, 'It is impossible to live with Croats and Muslims after what has happened. We don't need support. We will go to the end'. See for details, "Returning Leader will Face Fury of Serb Hard Liners," *The Daily Telegraph*, 13 January 1993.

<sup>459</sup> Karadzic told the Serbian radio that 'the deputies said that they would not be able to return their constituencies if they accepted the Vance-Owen Plan in its present shape. We hope that the entire Serbian nation will mobilise all its forces to survive'. Quoted in Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 281.

<sup>460</sup> The Bosnian Serb military commander had made a blustering speech at the Bosnian Serb parliament prior to the voting. He showed a series of maps to illustrate how much land would have to be handed over to their Bosnian Muslim and Croat 'enemies'. Exposing the dangers implicit in

Bosnia and Hercegovina. For a few days Milosevic insisted publicly that he would close the border between Serbia and Bosnia; but he refused to allow international observers to monitor the border, and within a couple of weeks the flow of supplies were resumed.<sup>461</sup>

### 6.5. Creation of the UN 'Safe Areas'

When Srebrenica was declared a 'safe area' on 16 April 1993 by the UN Security Council Resolution 819, it had been under siege for almost a year.<sup>462</sup> For months the local Muslim defenders had been fighting a losing battle as the Bosnian Serb army with heavy artillery had closed in. By mid-March 1993, they had run out of ammunition and it was apparent that they could not hold out much longer. At the beginning of April, the Serbs issued a surrender demand through the UNHCR: 'Either they surrender and you'll get all the Muslims out of Srebrenica' the Serb Commander Ilic told the most senior UNHCR official in former Yugoslavia, Jose Maria Mendiluce, 'or we take the town in two days'. Without a choice, Mendiluce started making plans for the evacuation of 60,000 people. He was aware of the fact that it was going to be the single biggest act of 'ethnic cleansing' since the war began, and it was to be carried out by the UN.<sup>463</sup>

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accepting the Vance-Owen Plan Mladic argued that 'not only would the Bosnian Serbs have to hand over huge chunks of territory, but part of the Serb population would have to be left in isolated and vulnerable areas. Ibid., 285.

<sup>461</sup> Ian Traynor and Yigal Chazan, "Milosevic was Outmanoeuvred by His Hand-Picked General," *The Guardian*, 7 May 1993.

<sup>462</sup> Srebrenica, in Drina Valley was like many Bosnian towns were surrounded by high mountains. Before the war, it had a population of 37,000, of whom seventy-percent were Muslim and twenty-five percent Serb. After the war had started it became an 'island of territory' in the heart of the 'Republica Srpska'.

<sup>463</sup> In the meantime, General Morillon 'advised' commander of the Bosnian Government forces, Halilovic to accept Mladic's terms, since the situation was hopeless and there was an urgent need for the evacuations. Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 268.

The idea of 'safe haven' was first implemented to protect the Kurds in Northern Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War. In October 1992, the President of the International Red Cross, Cornelio Sommaruga, proposed the establishment of similar zones to protect the Muslim civilians from further genocidal practices by the Serbs. Although some smaller European States supported the proposal, at the beginning, France, Britain and Spain - the main troop contributors to UNPROFOR - rejected it.<sup>464</sup> It was argued that there was a possibility that safe areas might increase the ethnic cleansing, since the Serbs might herd the Muslims into areas that the international community declared itself be obliged to protect. On the other hand, as Owen mentioned, the tough question remained 'who was going to provide sufficient troops to protect the 'safe areas'?'<sup>465</sup> Countries providing troops to UNPROFOR did not want to engage themselves into the protection of artificially created 'safe areas', because if the Serbs attacked a 'safe area' with ground troops, they might need to take a combatant role to defend the areas. The mandate for the humanitarian forces were carefully designed to avoid these kind of situations which might impair the impartiality of the UNPROFOR, and that was the main concern of the British government when opposing the idea of creating 'safe havens' in Bosnia and Hercegovina. However, in December 1992, at the EC Summit meeting in Edinburgh that marked the end of British presidency, Britain

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<sup>464</sup> In 1992, the Netherlands and Austria were the main supporters of the 'safe area' concept. In an interview with an Austrian newspaper on 3 December 1992, Austrian Foreign Minister Alois Mock argued that 'Sicherheitszonen' or 'security zones', should be created around Sarajevo, Bihac, Tuzla, Gorazde and Travnik. The job of protecting these zones, Mock said, would require perhaps 40,000 UN soldiers -far fewer than the 100,000 soldiers quoted by Western military sources as the minimum for a successful military intervention. Mock, however, admitted that, there was little support for the setting up of these secure zones. The French were cautious, the British remained aloof and the Germans were unable to commit themselves because of their constitution. Similarly, Joris Voorhoeve, who later became Minister of Defence and was the person politically responsible for the presence of Dutch troops in Srebrenica in 1995, said in an interview that '...I just think that with 50,000 to 100,000 well-trained and well-armed troops protected areas for the civilians have to be created to end the slaughter'. See Honig and North, *Srebrenica*, 101.

was condemned by the Germans for not carrying its fair share of the refugee burden. Participants at the meeting reported that John Major then began to sound more enthusiastic about the safe area concept as a way of keeping potential refugees in Bosnia rather than spilling them over into European Union countries'.<sup>466</sup>

Although the idea of safe areas seemed dead at the end of 1992, it was revived again in March 1993, when Mladic's forces, having blocked the aid convoys for months, began to attack the Muslim town Srebrenica. The ultimatum of the Bosnian Serbs and the imminence of the danger of ethnic cleansing of the Muslims in Srebrenica provided the consensus in the Security Council that something needed to be done. On 16 April 1993, when the Security Council adopted Resolution 819 and declared Srebrenica safe area, many, both in Bosnia and Hercegovina and elsewhere, believed that the UN from then on would protect the civilians in Srebrenica against the Serbs. In reality, however, the Resolution carefully avoided creating new military obligations for the UNPROFOR either to establish or protect the safe area. The Council firmly asked the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Muslims to make Srebrenica safe. UNPROFOR's role would simply be to 'monitor' the humanitarian situation.<sup>467</sup>

On 18 April, a day after Srebrenica was declared 'safe area', UN Commanders on the ground, Generals Philip Morillion and Lars Eric Wahlgren met General Mladic and the Bosnian commander, General Halilovic to negotiate a cease fire. The agreement provided for the freezing of 'all combat actions on the achieved lines of confrontation'. The Serbian forces were not required to pull back from their achieved lines. The

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<sup>465</sup> See Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 69-71.

<sup>466</sup> Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 26.



agreement disarmed the Bosnian Government forces and provided for the deployment of 140 Canadian troops to collect the weapons of the Muslim forces. When the Canadian troops arrived in Srebrenica, however, the local authorities were extremely worried since they did not look like capable of defending the city against Mladic's forces.<sup>468</sup> This situation had left Srebrenica virtually defenceless against the heavily armed Bosnian Serb forces and paved the way for the implementation of 'final solution' by the Serbs in July 1995.

### **6.6. The 'Joint Action Group' and the 'Joint Action Plan'**

Meanwhile, largely as a result of deep divisions within itself, the Clinton Administration was unable to develop a coherent policy for dealing with the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>469</sup> By mid-May, talking about the failed Vance-Owen Peace Plan, the American Secretary of State Warren Christopher had stated that a new peace process that took into account the 'reality on the ground' was needed.<sup>470</sup> When the Americans had withdrawn their support for the Vance-Owen Plan altogether, the British government felt that it had no choice but to abandon it as well. The implementation of Vance-Owen Plan required close Euro-American co-operation to

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<sup>467</sup> Honig and North, *Srebrenica*, 103-4.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-7.

<sup>469</sup> The US Ambassador to UN, Madeleine Albright, reflected a strongly moralistic strand in the American debate on Bosnia and, with her adherents, she advocated a tough interventionist policy. However, they were challenged by another group in the Clinton administration who regarded Bosnia and Herzegovina as an intractable Vietnam like quagmire. General Colin Powell, one member of the 'sceptics group', exploded in a policy-making meeting when Madeleine Albright asked him 'What is the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it'. Powell replied that 'American GIs are not toy soldiers to be moved around on some sort of global game board'. Colin Powell, *My American Journey* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), p. 561. Quoted in Honig and North, *Srebrenica*, 109.

<sup>470</sup> After the Vance-Owen Plan was rejected by the Bosnian Serb parliament, the US did not spend any time trying to back it. 'Europeans Adopt Action Plan for Bosnia', *European Wireless File*, News Alert, 25 May 1993.

impose it on the unwilling parties. That necessitated substantial troop contribution and Americans had ruled that out. Britain followed the suit. They did not want to impose it only with the French. With both the American and British support for it withdrawn, the Vance-Owen Plan was effectively dead.<sup>471</sup>

Relations between Britain and US had already become strained. Clinton Administration was pressuring British government to be tougher with the Serbs while the British were accusing the American Administration of 'not willing to put troops on the ground'. On the other hand, the proposals the US was prepared to back -such as 'lift and strike' policy- the British found irresponsible and dangerous. For some time after the rejection of Vance-Owen Plan by the Bosnian Serbs, Warren Christopher, was trying to sell Washington's policy of "lift and strike" to Europe.<sup>472</sup> In talks with the leaders of ten NATO countries and Russia, Christopher met a very cool response to a plan which called for the supply of arms (lifting of the arms embargo on Bosnia and Hercegovina) to the Muslims and the launching of strategic (surgical) air strikes at Bosnian Serb targets. This would be carried out in the hope that they would be able to achieve a stalemate on the battlefield which would then induce the Serbs to negotiate seriously.<sup>473</sup> The other element, the 'strike, was to hold out the threat of the use of air power against the Serbs, if they violated UN Resolutions. France and Britain vehemently objected to US proposals with the argument that they had troops on the ground who would be vulnerable in the face of possible retaliation by the Serbs. This would bring about military intervention by the Western powers, either by individually or by NATO in order to rescue the hostages taken and thereby sucking themselves into

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<sup>471</sup> Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, Chapter 4, "Ditching the VOPP," 160-97.

a full-scale war in Bosnia and Hercegovina.<sup>474</sup> From the beginning of war in ex-Yugoslavia, the main British concern was to prevent the prolongation of the conflict by limiting the amount of armaments available to the parties and therefore contain it.

The allied rejection of 'lift and strike' policy was a serious setback for President Clinton and served no other purpose than to illustrate the deep divergence in approach between the US and its European allies in general, and Britain in particular over Bosnia and Hercegovina. As a Former Assistant Secretary of State for Defense, Richard Perle, stated, "Warren Christopher went to Europe with an American policy and came back with a European one".<sup>475</sup>

#### **6.7. Beyond Vance-Owen Plan: Debating Partition and British Attitude**

After the Vance-Owen Plan collapsed in May 1993, the international community had given up trying to frame any scheme for an eventual settlement in Bosnia that would reflect either the integrity of the Bosnian state or the pre-war distribution of population. In view of the intensified Croat-Muslim fighting and realities on the ground, the new strategy of Lord Owen and Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg, who had replaced Cyrus Vance as UN Envoy after Vance's resignation, based on accommodating the long-standing preference of both Milosevic and Tudjman,

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<sup>472</sup> Marshall Freeman Harris, "Clinton's European Policies," *Paper presented to the International Conference on Bosnia and Herzegovina*, organised by Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey, 1995, 5.

<sup>473</sup> *CRS Report for the American Congress*, 28 July 1993, 5.

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>475</sup> Marshall Freeman Harris, "Clinton's Debacle in Bosnia", *Bosnia Report*, Newsletter of the Alliance to Defend Bosnia-Herzegovina, London, Issue 16, July-October 1996, 2.

for the partition of Bosnia and Hercegovina along ethnic lines, was launched.<sup>476</sup> For the Bosnian Serbs who expected partition all along; final victory appeared nearer than at any point in the war. Radovan Karadzic said 'the shift in western policy occurred when it became clear that the conflict was a civil war that could not be ended without separating the warring sides'.<sup>477</sup>

The 'Union of Republics' Plan was devised at a meeting in Geneva on 15-16 June between President Milosevic and President Tudjman and was further elaborated at a meeting between Karadzic and Boban, the Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat leaders, in Montenegro on 20 June.<sup>478</sup> After rejecting the Vance-Owen Plan, the Bosnian Serbs declared themselves the victors in the war and indicated that they would be willing to give up a portion of their gains for the sake of creating 'Republica Srpska'. Similarly, for Bosnian Croats, a Serbo-Croat accommodation was the key to achieving Greater Croatia.<sup>479</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and Croatian President Franjo Tudjman had discussed the partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina as early as in March 1991 at a meeting in Karadjordjevo. This political agreement was later supplemented by a military pact between Bosnian Croat leader Mate Boban and Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic which was settled in the town of Graz, Austria, on April 27<sup>th</sup> after the war in Bosnia begun. See Lee Bryant, *The Betrayal of Bosnia*, CDS Perspectives, Centre for the Study of Democracy Research Papers, No. 1 (London: University of Westminster Press, Autumn 1993). For the discussions of division of Bosnia and Hercegovina and population transfers discussed between Serbia and Croatia, see Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 306-8. Misha Glenny argues that 'the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina along the lines proposed by Serb and Croat Presidents, Milosevic and Tudjman are not new, but 54 years old. The contours of the Serb and Croat mini-states in Bosnia bears a striking resemblance to the maps created by the Sporazum (Agreement) of 1939. As Royal Yugoslavia was crumbling under pressure of the new forces in Europe, the Serb dominated government conceded considerable political powers leading to the formation of the Croatian Banovina'. Misha Glenny, "Muslims Bridle as Serbs and Croats Gloat Over Old Maps," *The Times*, 18 June, 1993.

<sup>477</sup> Michael Montgomery, "Serbs Celebrate Death of Muslim State," *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 June 1993.

<sup>478</sup> Robert Mauthner, "Croatia and Serbia Propose Bosnia Deal," *Financial Times*, 17 June 1993. The joint Serb-Croat proposals were first fully presented in Geneva on 28 June 1993 and published in the Secretary General's Report, UN Doc. S/26066.

<sup>479</sup> Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 285-6.

### 6.7.1. Owen-Stoltenberg Plan (Invincible Plan)

The new design outlined by Owen and Stoltenberg was essentially a return to 'cantonisation'.<sup>480</sup> It was envisaging a 'confederal republic' composed of three republics: a Serb Republic (Republica Srpska); a Croatian Republic (Herceg-Bosna) and a Muslim Republic (Map 5).<sup>481</sup> Owen conceded that owing to the circumstances of Serb and Croat military strength and Muslim weaknesses on the battlefield, the new strategy would not require the Serbian side to relinquish as much territory as the proportion envisaged by the Vance-Owen Plan, but still the Serbian rollback was to be fairly significant.<sup>482</sup> Whereas the Vance-Owen Plan focused on the regionalisation of Bosnia and Herzegovina into ten ethnically mixed provinces, under the new plan it would be constituted as a union of three constituent republics, each of which would have the character of an essentially semi-independent ethnically based state. Although Vance-Owen Plan provided the Muslim-led Bosnian government 43 percent of territory, new plan had given only 30 percent, while the Bosnian Serbs was allocated 53 percent, leaving 17 percent to the Bosnian Croats. Although the new Bosnian 'Union of Republics' was envisaged to become a member state in the UN, the three 'constituent republics' were organised to express the interests of their own people. In addition, since each republic was based on a constitutionally designated people, all

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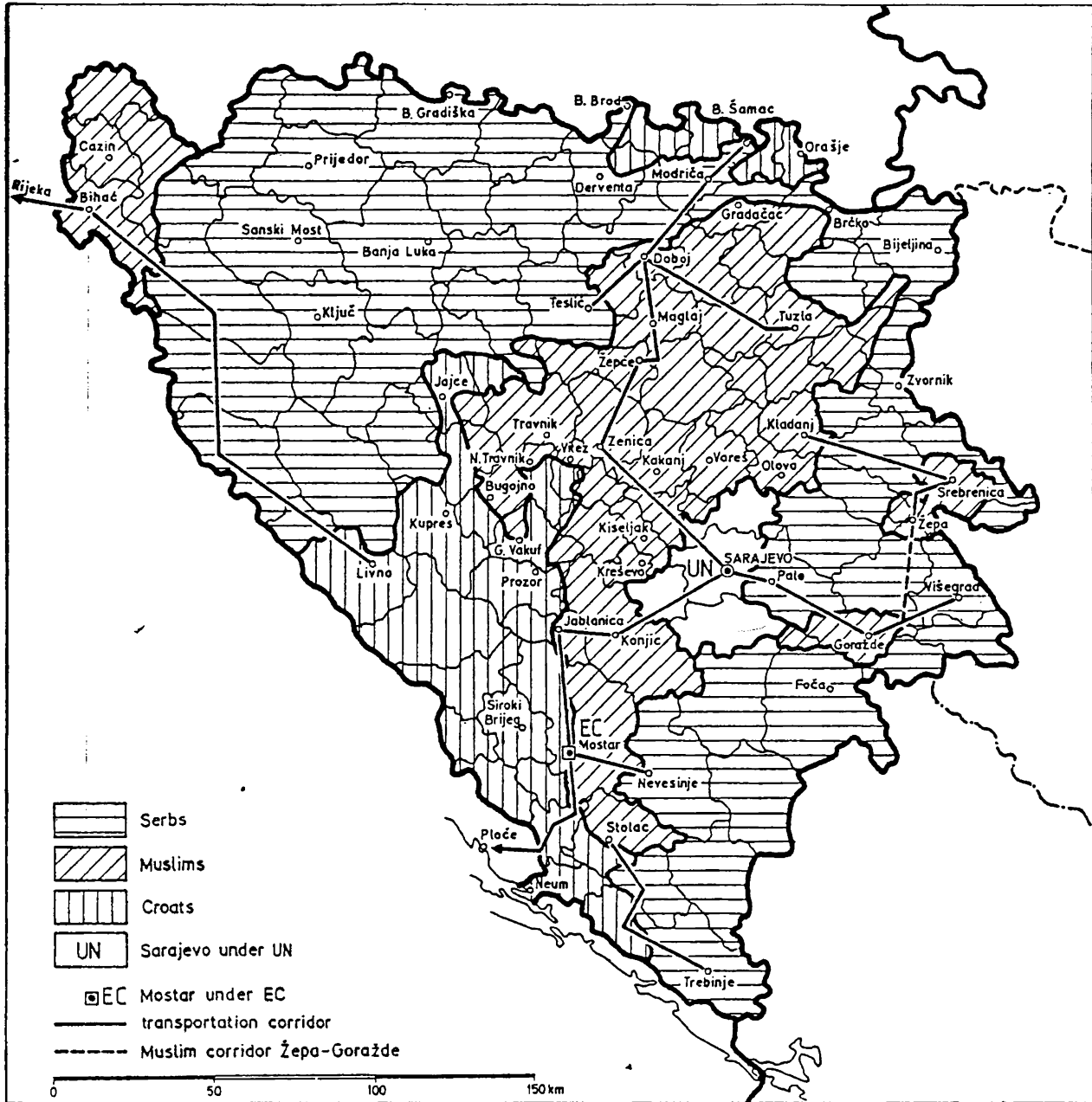
<sup>480</sup> The plan on the table was basically the Cutilheiro plan, which the Bosnian Government had rejected in March 1992, except that whereas in Lisbon the rump Bosnian Republic had been designated over 40 per cent of the territory, this time it was given just above 30 per cent.

<sup>481</sup> FBIS-EEU-93-118 (June 22, 1993), 1.

<sup>482</sup> However, Lord Owen admitted that it would be 'quite dishonest' to try to sell this as the Vance-Owen Plan which had provided for the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Robert Mauthner, "Reality Buries Vance-Owen Plan," *Financial Times*, 18 June 1993.

# The Owen-Stoltenberg proposal of August 1993

MAP 5



Sources: *Večernji list* 23/8/1993, *Politika* 24/8/1993

three constituent republics would have the implied right under international law to self-determination.<sup>483</sup>

Bosnian President Izetbegovic found the plan unacceptable and in conflict with the principles stated by the London Conference.<sup>484</sup> Alarmed with the new proposal, he immediately demanded an emergency meeting of the UN General Assembly 'to prevent the dismemberment of a UN member'.<sup>485</sup> Legal advisers to the Bosnian government argued that in view of the state-like competencies designated for each of the three constituent republics, it was extremely unlikely that such a weak union would endure as a unified state. Adding insult to injury, US President Clinton had signalled for the first time that "if the parties themselves agree, genuinely and honestly agree, the US would have to look very seriously 'at the three way partition plan proposed by the Presidents of Serbia and Croatia'".<sup>486</sup>

In order to exert some pressure on the Bosnian Presidency to accept the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan, Owen attempted to shake what he called Izetbegovic's 'intransigence' by insisting that some strong anti-Izetbegovic members of the ten-person Bosnian Presidency were involved in the Geneva negotiations. Owen expected that the Muslim-Croat schism in Bosnian Presidency would motivate the Croat members to adopt more favourable attitude with regard to the confederal plan. In fact, his plan worked and Bosnia's Collective Presidency gave President Alija Izetbegovic

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<sup>483</sup> Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 287-8.

<sup>484</sup> Roger Boyes and Tim Judah, "Bosnia Leader Calls on EC to Prevent Carve-Up of Republic," *The Times*, 18 June 1993.

<sup>485</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>486</sup> Thomas Friedman, "US Inches Towards Accepting Partition," *International Herald Tribune*, 19-20 June 1993.

an ultimatum telling him to choose between representing the state of Bosnia and Hercegovina or only its Muslim Community.<sup>487</sup>

Owen's other plan was to gain help of Izetbegovic's main challenger, Fikret Abdic, the Muslim leader of the Muslim enclave of Bihac (*Cazinska Krajina*) in north-western Bosnia to push through the new three-republic framework constituted along ethnic lines.<sup>488</sup> At a meeting of the Bosnian presidency held in Geneva at the end of June 1993, Owen's tactics seemed to be successful by creating a split within the Bosnian Presidency between those who supported a federal Bosnia, and those who supported a more confederal concept. However, at the end, the majority view in the Bosnian Presidency was that Bosnia and Hercegovina should remain a 'unitary state'.

In the meantime, the Bosnian government was fighting a two-front struggle against Serb and Croat forces in Bosnia, and the siege of Sarajevo had reached desperate proportions. Considering the humanitarian crisis in the city, particularly in view of the very little supply of water, food and electricity and also the fear that the city might not be able to survive another winter under siege, the Bosnian government was under enormous pressure to reach some kind of peace agreement. On 30 July, it was announced that Bosnian Government decided to back the constitutional agreement for

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<sup>487</sup> "Co-Rulers Pressure Bosnian President," *International Herald Tribune*, 30 June 1993.

<sup>488</sup> According to Mirza Hajric, London Correspondent of the Sarajevo Newspaper 'Oslobodenje'; 'Abdic is a Muslim, but not a religious Muslim and he did save a lot of lives by doing a deal with Croats over his home territory of Bihac. He was very popular there and he was a Communist man who led a very simple life'. Quoted in *The Times*, "Force of History Condemns Bosnia to a Hostile Peace," 23 June 1993. Fikret Abdic indeed kept very close ties with both the Serbs and Croats and he was adamantly opposed to the establishment of a strong central government administration in Sarajevo.



a 'Union of Republics' in Bosnia and Hercegovina.<sup>489</sup> Tired of calling international military intervention 'in the name of peace' and deprived of support, Izetbegovic reluctantly admitted that a tripartite partition of Bosnia was inevitable. It was so far apparent that international community did not have intention to take action. There were no lifting of the arms embargo or air strikes. Karadzic bluntly declared that "if a single bomb hits a Serb position there will be no more talks. We would have an all out war and catastrophe".<sup>490</sup> He easily played on the fears of countries, like Britain and France, with troops on the ground and vulnerable to any kind of escalation in fighting.<sup>491</sup> On the other hand President Clinton conceded that limited action to protect UN peace-keepers might not be enough "to deter aggression, to stop the shelling of Sarajevo, and bring the parties to peace table". He also stressed that any US action would only come in concert and agreement with its NATO allies.<sup>492</sup>

Different versions of Owen-Stoltenberg proposal were discussed during August and September 1993, both at Geneva and on the British warship *Invincible* in the Adriatic.<sup>493</sup> The Bosnian Government disagreed with the Croats over the question of access to the sea for their land-locked mini-republic, and the Serbs put forward more and more impossible demands for the division of Sarajevo.<sup>494</sup> No one, it seemed, could

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<sup>489</sup> Ian Traynor, "Bosnians Accept Partition: Muslims Forced Into Watershed Deal That Could End the War," *The Guardian*, 31 July 1993.

<sup>490</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 304-305.

<sup>491</sup> The NATO countries which had troops on Bosnia were: UK, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Spain, Canada and France.

<sup>492</sup> Rupert Cornwell, "Clinton Inclining Towards Greater Use of Air Power," *The Independent*, 30 July 1993.

<sup>493</sup> The Bosnian Croat leader Mate Boban, called the Plan '*The Invisible*'. Apparently, it was unclear whether he was misunderstood the name of the British aircraft carrier '*HMS Invincible*' or was referring to the disappearing Bosnia and Herzegovina. Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 303.

<sup>494</sup> The '*Invincible Acquis*' would have given the predominantly Muslim Republic 30 per cent of the country, with access to the port at Brcko on the River Sava in the north, a navigable port for container ships on the River Neretva which would be linked to the Adriatic through guaranteed access via the port of Ploce in Croatia with a 99 year lease from Croatia. Sarajevo would be placed under UN

be happy with the plan. Of course, the Serb leadership could be happier than the others, since it had gained 53 per cent of the country on behalf of the fewer than 25 per cent of its population.<sup>495</sup> Finally, on 29 September 1993, the Bosnia's Muslim dominated Parliament rejected the Plan, on the grounds that 30 per cent of Bosnia and Hercegovina was insufficient land for a viable Bosnian state. Surrounded by Serbia and Croatia, as one Serb delegate described it "the Turks (Bosnian Muslims) are going to be like walnuts in a Serbo-Croat nutcracker".<sup>496</sup>

However, the fact that the Owen-Stoltenberg plan had conceded the basic principle of rewarding aggression, together with the fact that the international negotiators seemed willing to make more and more concessions and alterations to satisfy Serb demands, ensured that the Serb leadership would not regard these proposals as a final settlement either.<sup>497</sup>

At that stage, the British Foreign Secretary defending Britain's policies on Bosnia and Hercegovina was still saying that wars such as that in Bosnia were usually "civil wars simmering with centuries of mutual hatred," and that it had been "unrealistic" to suppose that Europe could do anything to solve the problems from outside.<sup>498</sup>

Douglas Hurd noted that 'British soldiers were "simply at daily risk to themselves

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administration for a two year interim period and Mostar under provisional EU control. The agreement also called for the demilitarisation of the Union, but there was no plan to disarm Croatia and Serbia. See James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 255.

<sup>495</sup> The total number of the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina before the war had amounted to 31 per cent of the Bosnian population, but out of those, several hundred thousand had fled the territory controlled by Karadzic's forces and nearly 200,000 continued to live on Bosnian Government controlled land.

<sup>496</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 303.

<sup>497</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 253-4. Martin Wollacott described the peace plan as 'a pitiful peace for Bosnia'. The UN brokered deal, he wrote, known as the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan, aimed to punish those who were least responsible for the war and rewarded those who were the most responsible. Martin Wollacott, "A Pitiful Peace For Bosnia," *The Guardian*, 23 August 1993.

preventing massacres, escorting humanitarian supplies and saving Bosnian lives". Although Hurd argued that politicians should not be "seduced by the apparent lure of favourable press comment," and that they should be better equipped to think for the long term a here-today-gone-tomorrow commentators, the British governments own forward planning seemed quite limited.<sup>499</sup>

Previously, in a speech to the Travellers Club, replying to strong criticism the British government had faced in the British press over its policy in Bosnia, Hurd had accused the journalists of being selective in their coverage of tragedies, of concentrating on Bosnia to the exclusion of other wars and, of 'letting their hearts rule their heads' when it came to advocating a solution to the conflict.<sup>500</sup> "There are some foreign policy subjects where absolute secrecy is possible," Hurd said, pointing out that discretion had been crucial in Britain's negotiations with Argentina after the 1982 Falklands war, or the 'two plus four' discussions over the reunification of Germany.<sup>501</sup> Hurd admitted that ignoring the media as earlier British prime ministers had cheerfully done was no longer possible. His most direct criticism was specifically about coverage of the fighting in Bosnia and Hercegovina: "Most of those who report for the *BBC*, *The Times*, *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, have been all in different ways enthusiasts for pushing military intervention in Bosnia, whether by air or on the ground. They are founder members of the 'something must be done' school".<sup>502</sup>

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<sup>498</sup> Steve Crawshaw, "Hurd Answers Critics in Bosnia," *The Independent*, 11 September 1993.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

<sup>500</sup> Michael Leapman, "Do We Let Our Hearts Rule Our Headlines," *The Independent*. 15 September 1993.

<sup>501</sup> Key Points of a Speech by the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Douglas Hurd, At the Travellers Club, London, 9 September 1993, "The Power of Comment- Government and the Media," Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Verbatim Service VS18/93.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid.

It seemed that at that point in war in Bosnia, Britain's insistence on humanitarian aid had shifted international interest from a just settlement to just 'any settlement'. The Bosnian government was slowly forced to recognise the inevitable and accept partition on the basis of ethnic exclusivity. However, still the EC and the UN could not come up with a workable agreement for partition with space for Muslims. While it was clear that no cease-fire, let alone peace, was forthcoming, Britain adhered to its earlier opinion that the Muslims should not be encouraged into fighting. They should simply accept the verdict of the war: they were defeated and they should accept any solution. And, gradually this attitude led to war of words not only between British government and British public but also between British government and American and world public.

For instance, John Major continuing his transatlantic war of words over the West's approach to Bosnia and Hercegovina rejected demands from Washington for a lifting of the arms embargo. He dismissed the recent public criticism by the US of Britain's stance and denied that he had told President Clinton that he would find it impossible to sustain his government if he acceded to US requests to allow the resumption of arms sales to the Bosnian government. Instead, he had pointed out there was no political support for the idea in the United Kingdom.<sup>503</sup> He added that "I believe the policy we are adopting in Bosnia is the right one. I know it is controversial. That does not mean

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<sup>503</sup> Colin Brown, "Major Rejects US Claims on Bosnia Arms Embargo," *The Independent*, 25 October 1993.

it is wrong. We have done in Bosnia more than any other great nation and we will continue”.<sup>504</sup>

It soon reached a point where Bosnia’s United Nations Delegate Muhammed Sacirbey officially announced on 15 November that Bosnian Government decided to sue Britain before the World Court for ‘failing the prevent genocide’ through its Bosnia policy. Citing the 1948 Genocide Convention, Sacirbey asserted that the UK opposition to lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia and Hercegovina was responsible for massive loss of life.<sup>505</sup> John Major was accused of opposing lifting the arms ban for domestic political reasons. Sacirbey said that the other nations were not blameless but that Britain was accused because it was “at the forefront” in maintaining the embargo.<sup>506</sup> British Foreign Office reacted sharply to the Bosnian government charge: the Foreign Office spokesman said that Britain was saddened that the Bosnian Muslims did not appreciate the efforts of British forces and aid workers in saving thousands of lives.<sup>507</sup>

### **6.7.2 The European Union ‘Action Plan’**

The Foreign Ministers of France and Germany, Alain Juppe and Klaus Kinkel, tried to negotiate further revisions to the Owen-Stoltenberg proposals during November and December 1993. On 8 November 1993, they launched a fresh diplomatic initiative to end the war in Bosnia and Hercegovina with a plan to lift sanctions against Serbia gradually in return for their ceding more land to the Bosnian Muslims. The Franco-

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<sup>504</sup> Philip Stephens, “Major Rejects US View on Bosnia,” *Financial Times*, 25 October 1993.

<sup>505</sup> Michael Littlejohns and Rachel Johnson, “Moslems to Sue Britain Over Arms,” *Financial Times*, 16 November 1993.

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*

German plan suggested that the Bosnian Serbs should cede a further 3 % of the territory they controlled in central Bosnia to the Muslims. Thus, in the 'European Union Action Plan', it was suggested that the Muslims should be allowed 33.56 per cent of the land, and the Croats 17.5 per cent. The Serbs offered to give up their demand for the division of Sarajevo, but only in return for the eastern enclaves of Zepa, Srebrenica and Gorazde. Lord Owen greeted these proposals as a progressive move, saying: 'It is not surprising that part of the land is not where the Muslims would like it, but still it is a map which offers them 33.3 per cent.'<sup>508</sup>

The Franco-German plan marked the first evidence of a shift in European tactics away from the total isolation of Serbia and more towards incentives for Slobodan Milosevic to end the war. On 29 November 1993, the EU convened a meeting in Geneva, chaired by Lord Owen for the EU and Thorvald Stoltenberg for the UN. The negotiations were based on the Franco-German plan: the Bosnian Serbs were asked to cede territorial concessions to the Muslims so that the Bosnian government could create a viable state, as well as accept a modus vivendi with Croatia for the Krajina. This modus vivendi consisted of an effective cease-fire, the withdrawal of Croatian forces from territories occupied in January 1993 and certain confidence restoring measures. After these conditions were to be fulfilled, the EU would ask the UN Security Council for the gradual lifting of the economic sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro. The spirit of the European Action plan was to use the lever of sanctions. On 18 April, Malcolm Rifkind told the House of Commons: "...of course the imposition of economic sanctions is causing a great deal of economic hardship to the

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<sup>507</sup> Alan Philips, "UN Charge Puts Army Bosnia Role in Doubt," *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 November 1993.

Belgrade Government, as well as to the Serbs in general; it is therefore an important weapon, which must be used to its maximum extent.”<sup>509</sup>

The Bosnian Government was naturally reluctant to accept these plans and on 22-23 December at a meeting in Brussels between the three Bosnian ‘Parties’ and the foreign ministers of the Twelve, Izetbegovic rejected the 33 percent share. Karadzic also walked out, declaring that he would not agree to the UN administration of Sarajevo.

The international community was divided as ever and was “beginning to show its frustration” with the situation in Bosnia and Hercegovina.<sup>510</sup> While the chances of a just and lasting diplomatic solution were deteriorating in this way, the chances of political survival for the Bosnian state were also becoming weaker.

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<sup>508</sup> Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 239-73.

<sup>509</sup> House of Commons Debate, Hansard, 18 April 1994, col. 645.

<sup>510</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 257.

## CHAPTER VII: CHANGING OF THE TIDE IN WAR IN 1994 AND BRITISH POLICY

### 7.1. Situation at the Beginning of 1994

The beginning of year 1994 did not offer much ground for optimism about the situation in Bosnia and Hercegovina. The UN mediator, Thorvald Stoltenberg, summed up the situation by saying that “the atmosphere for peace talks is more negative than at any time,” since he accepted the post in the spring of 1993. The fighting between the Bosnian Government and Bosnian Croats were continuing. However, following some initial setbacks, the Bosnian government started to get some victories over the Bosnian Croat forces.<sup>511</sup> Towards the end of 1993, the Bosnian Croats’ defeat by the Bosnian Muslims had become almost a certainty; Croatian President Franjo Tudjman began to threaten the Bosnian government that Croatia would intervene in Bosnia to help the embattled Croat forces there.<sup>512</sup> Indeed, on 1 February 1994, when UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali maintained that there were between 3,000 and 5,000 Croatian troops fighting in Bosnia, the UN Security Council voted on 3 February to warn Croatia that it would face ‘serious measures’ if it did not withdraw its troops.<sup>513</sup>

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<sup>511</sup> The military position of the Bosnian Muslims at the beginning of 1994 was described as ‘they can not win but they can set the terms for peace’. Ian Traynor, “Izetbegovic Ready to Reject Carve-Up at Geneva Talks,” *The Guardian*, 3 January 1994.

<sup>512</sup> John Kifner, “Zagreb Threatens Bosnia Intervention,” *International Herald Tribune*, 4 January 1994.

<sup>513</sup> US Ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright had much earlier warned Tudjman that if Croatia intervened into the Bosnian conflict, it would immediately face economic sanctions. Laura Silber, “Croats are Warned They Face Economic Sanctions,” *Financial Times*, 6 January 1994.



Another key military development in the course of the year 1993 was the expansion and consolidation of the Serbs' position particularly in Eastern Bosnia. The Muslim presence there was left with little more than the enclaves of Srebrenica, Gorazde and Zepa; and the UN's efforts to make these and other embattled towns 'safe areas' did little to relieve the daily suffering of the inhabitants and refugees. The other key military development was the expansion of the Muslim's position to the north of Mostar and especially in Central Bosnia at the expense of the Croats, who were increasingly forced back into their West Hercegovinan heartland. When Douglas Hurd arrived in Bosnia and Hercegovina to visit British troops; it was confirmed by all the aid agencies perhaps to his dismay that the UN's humanitarian assistance had very little material effect.<sup>514</sup> Larry Hollingworth, the UN official in charge of the main Bosnian supply depot in Zanica gave a message for the visiting British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd saying that "come in very strong or get out". The UN official said that "the UN feeding operation was very much behind the minimum target, and the difference between withdrawing and staying is marginal"<sup>515</sup>

In Serbia, although President Milosevic had emerged from the 19 December 1993 general elections as the most powerful politician in former Yugoslavia, his room for manoeuvre was narrowing.<sup>516</sup> The rebel Serb minority leadership in Croatia had slipped out of his control.<sup>517</sup> It was doubtful whether he was still be able to strike a deal with Tadjman on the status of Serbs in Croatia. Likewise, in Bosnia and Hercegovina, it was not certain that he could get the Bosnian Serb leadership to make

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<sup>514</sup> David Fairhall, Mark Tran and Ian Black, "UN Officials Tells Foreign Secretary: 'Come in Very Strong or Get Out,'" *The Guardian*, 20 January 1994.

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>516</sup> Stan Markotich, "Post-Election Serbia," *RFE/RL Research Report* 3, no. 3 (21 January 1994), 8-12.

territorial concession as required by the West for a comprehensive peace settlement. Inside Serbia, hyper-inflation had reached the highest level in the world since the Weimar Republic and economic collapse was almost total.<sup>518</sup>

Western policies seemed as bleak as ever and the would-be peace makers, the US, the EU and the UN were all quarrelling about which action to take. Britain and the other states with troops on the ground in Bosnia were being driven towards a joint decision to pull out their troops by mounting evidence that the UN relief operation could no longer fulfil its mandate, and by the realisation that the Geneva peace process was going nowhere.<sup>519</sup>

By late August 1993, NATO had committed itself to bombing Serb forces if they continued to strangle and shell Sarajevo and block relief convoys elsewhere. But, since then, although the Serbs continued to shell Sarajevo and block the relief supplies, nothing had been done. UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali had ruled out the threat of using NATO planes to force Serbs to give the UN humanitarian agencies access to the 'safe area' of Srebrenica and open Tuzla airport to international aid flights.<sup>520</sup>

Meanwhile, world public anger at inaction by NATO was growing by leaps and bound. And general criticism of Britain for its foot dragging in Bosnia was becoming more visible and more vociferous than ever. For instance, at the beginning of 1994, a non-

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<sup>517</sup> Dusko Doder, "The Ringmaster is Losing Control," *The European*, 11-17 March 1994.

<sup>518</sup> Laura Silber, "Super Dinar Fails to Deliver," *Financial Times*, 25 January 1994.

<sup>519</sup> David Fairhall, Mark Tran and Ian Black, "UN Officials Tells Foreign Secretary: 'Come in Very Strong or Get Out'," *The Guardian*, 20 January 1994.

<sup>520</sup> Later on, Boutros-Ghali asked his official representative in Bosnia and Hercegovina, Yasushi Akashi, to prepare a report on the feasibility of deploying NATO planes to force the Serbs to co-

partisan Washington group of senior figures from politics and foreign policy in the Action Council for Peace in the Balkans, including Morton Abramowitz, a former US Ambassador who at that time headed the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, wrote President Clinton on the link between Bosnia and NATO's role.<sup>521</sup> The letter said:

The daily victimisation of Bosnia puts into sharp relief the failure of the United States and Europe to resist aggressive nationalism -a core test in post-Cold War Europe. NATO's continuing refusal to act effectively in Bosnia calls into serious question its relevance to the challenges of the new Europe and the value of your proposal for a new 'Partnership for Peace'.<sup>522</sup>

The group proposed a new Western policy for Bosnia and Hercegovina. It called for replacing the present UN force which had been frustrated in its attempts to keep the relief routes open. Instead, NATO and the US would supply air cover if Serbian or Croatian forces tried to block the routes. To give the Bosnians the necessary military strength, the letter called on NATO and the US to end the embargo on arms for Bosnia. It argued that the embargo, though voted by the UN Security Council, had in fact no legal basis.<sup>523</sup> The letter urged President Clinton that the US and NATO were therefore not bound by the UN embargo resolution. The letter basically suggested that

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operate with the UN aid efforts. Roger Cohen, "On Bosnia, Allies Agree Only to Bicker," *International Herald Tribune*, 22 January 1994.

<sup>521</sup> The other signers of the letter include Max Kampelman, another former ambassador; Senator Joseph Lieberman, Democrat of Connecticut; and Frank McCloskey, Democrat of Indiana.

<sup>522</sup> Anthony Lewis, "For Action on Bosnia: A Dual Test," *International Herald Tribune*, 8 January 1994.

<sup>523</sup> The legal argument was based on Article 51 of the UN Charter which says nothing shall 'impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an attack occurs against a member of the

UN forces go home as Bosnians were able to protect relief supplies. That would have disposed of John Major's argument that NATO military action would have exposed British and French troops in UNPROFOR to Serbian reprisals.

On the other hand, Washington's policy of 'benign neglect', adopted after the rejection of the 'lift and strike' proposal by the Allies in May 1993, had provoked new strains with both France and Britain who sought to get the US to play a more active diplomatic role in the process. The British were particularly annoyed by the US refusal to put greater pressure on the Bosnian Muslims to accept the plans for partition, which they viewed as the main obstacle to a settlement. In turn, the US believed that the Europeans, especially the British, were all too ready to accept the 'peace at any price' and appease the Serbs.<sup>524</sup>

By the time of the NATO summit in Brussels in January 1994, roles had become so utterly reversed that France was assuming leadership in NATO by calling for air strikes to halt the continuous Serbian attacks in Sarajevo.<sup>525</sup> The US administration followed France's lead. To Owen's view, as always throughout the conflict, 'France's motivation in seeking this threat was not to promote a just peace by reversing or even halting Serbian aggression, but rather to obtain a quick settlement'.<sup>526</sup> However, he dismissed the idea that the threat of air strikes could force the Bosnian Serbs to be more flexible in the partition talks.<sup>527</sup>

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United Nations' until the Security Council has taken the measures for peace and security. Bosnia was a UN member. It had been attacked, and the Security Council measures did not protect it.

<sup>524</sup> Larrabee, "Implications for Transatlantic Relations," 25.

<sup>525</sup> Roger Cohen, "Paris Presses NATO Allies to Relieve 2 Bosnia Towns," *International Herald Tribune*, 27 January 1994.

<sup>526</sup> Harris, "Clinton's 'Debacle in Bosnia,'" 2.

<sup>527</sup> Edward Luce, "Bosnian Peace Prospects at the Lowest Ebb," *The Guardian*, 19 January 1994.

## 7.2. The Market Square Bomb and British Opposition to Air Strikes

While the discussions on how to stop the war in Bosnia and Hercegovina were going on, on Saturday 5 February 1994, a mortar bomb fired on the Markale market place in Sarajevo killed 68 people and wounded 197. Although this was by no means the first such attack, it caused the largest death toll of any individual shelling to date and provoked another round of international indignation and outrage.<sup>528</sup> This time, however, the international community was galvanised into action. Even those, like the politicians in Britain, who had always had deep reservations about the usefulness of military intervention changed attitude. John Major called for a more “muscular” approach to end the siege of Sarajevo. Douglas Hurd maintained that the massacre had been a turning point in attitudes towards the war, and that now “...the benefit of proceeding outweighed the risk of proceeding”.<sup>529</sup>

During the House of Commons Debates on 7 February 1994, two days after the Sarajevo massacre, the British government was severely accused of its lack of sense of responsibility and appeasement of the Serbs. David Winnick of Walsall asked that:

“Is not it clear, even to this Government, that Saturday’s butchery, in which nearly 70 people were murdered, occurred because, as with the previous atrocities, the Serbian warlords believed, to a large extent, that they were secure from any form of western intervention and retaliation? Is the Minister (addressing to Alastair Goodlad, the

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<sup>528</sup> “Shell Kills 61 and Wounds 200 in Sarajevo Market,” *New York Times International*, 6 February 1994.

<sup>529</sup> House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 10 February 1994, cols. 449-450.

Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Office) aware of the feeling of deep betrayal that is felt by people in Bosnia, who believe that they have been let down by the United Nations and by western Governments and are the innocent victims of aggression? Unlike what happened with the Gulf war, in which action was rightly taken, the Bosnian people are being allowed to be murdered without any intervention from the Western community and international organisations".<sup>530</sup>

Andrew Faulds of Warley indicated that 'Britain is the leader of the "don't let's do anythings' and 'there is increasing concern and anger throughout all the Muslim communities in the world at the appalling lack of decision of the European Union governments' and that, more particularly, 'there is considerable dismay at Britain's craven conduct in these matters'.<sup>531</sup> The MPs also asked for the 'British Government to accept the moral and political responsibility to deal with the issues in the Balkans' and also to accept that 'Sarajevo is specifically under threat from the Serbs'.<sup>532</sup>

While the criticisms over government's inaction mounting in Britain, the European Union Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Brussels on 7 February issued a statement asserting that NATO and the United Nations should try to lift the siege of Sarajevo "using all means necessary, including the use of air power".<sup>533</sup> The focus of international action then shifted to the Atlantic Alliance; the EU Foreign Ministers insisting that there was no need for any decision about the use of force to be referred

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<sup>530</sup> House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 7 February 1994, cols. 21-2.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 22.

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 25.

<sup>533</sup> Only last Spring, the Europeans had rejected a US proposal including the use of air strikes against Bosnian Serb artillery positions, as well as the selective lifting of the arms embargo against the

back to the UN Security Council, since UNSC Resolution 836 already sanctioned the use of force.<sup>534</sup> A day before, Secretary General of the UN, Boutros Boutros-Ghali wrote to his NATO counterpart, Manfred Woerner, asking the North Atlantic Council to authorise its military command to launch air strikes on request from the UN.<sup>535</sup> The Atlantic Alliance had already taken the decision in August 1993 that it would be prepared to launch air strikes against Bosnian Serb artillery pounding Sarajevo and this commitment had been reaffirmed at the NATO summit meeting in Brussels on 10 and 11 January 1994.<sup>536</sup>

NATO governments had considered the possibility of air strikes since May 1993. However, several NATO members, particularly Britain and Canada, had expressed great reluctance to take strong action, fearing that air strikes would put UN troops in jeopardy and intensify the conflict. Canada agreed to the ultimatum after securing guarantees for the safety of Canadian troops in Srebrenica and the British government agreed to the NATO ultimatum only after military commanders on the ground decided that limited use of air power was feasible and that the risk to British troops could be contained. French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe, who took office with the new conservative government in March 1993 and who played a central role in assuring NATO assent to an ultimatum, favoured a tougher line and, indeed, had a certain amount of bargaining power, given the numbers of the French troops on the ground.

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Bosnian Government. Robert Mauthner, "Doubts Persists On Bosnia Air Strikes," *Financial Times*, 9 February 1994.

<sup>534</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 836 was adopted on 4 June 1993. The Security Council then decided to extend the mandate of UNPROFOR to enable it to protect the safe areas of Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zepa, Gorazde, Bihac and Srebrenica, and to use force in self-defence or in deterring attacks against the safe areas. The Council also authorised Member States to take all necessary measures, through the use of air power, to support UNPROFOR.

<sup>535</sup> "Boutros Ghali Calls On NATO to Step In," *Financial Times*, February 9, 1994.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*

Not only did France have the largest national UNPROFOR contingent in Bosnia, it had also suffered a great loss of life: 18 French servicemen had been killed and an estimated 280 injured, and yet public opinion was still in favour of air strikes against the Bosnian Serb positions.<sup>537</sup>

Following the Markale massacre, the US also decided to pursue a more active policy towards the war in Bosnia and Hercegovina and had become more involved in the efforts of international community in Bosnia and Hercegovina at two levels: militarily by supporting the French calls for air strikes and an ultimatum in the North Atlantic Council, and politically by becoming more involved in the Geneva peace process.<sup>538</sup>

The US had come to realise that its credibility as world leader was being affected by Western impotence in the Former Yugoslavia. President Clinton had surely had this in his mind when he said on 9 February that “NATO must remain a credible force on post-Cold War Europe”. It was also suggested that the visit to Sarajevo of Tansu Ciller and Benazir Butto, Prime Ministers of Turkey and Pakistan respectively, two large Muslim countries and important US allies, did not go unnoticed in Washington. It was perceived as demonstrating the resentment felt in the Muslim World towards the West, which was accused of double standards.<sup>539</sup>

In Britain, it was continuously argued that Britain had bowed to US and French pressure. The ministers said that the shift in the French stance in favour of air strikes

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<sup>537</sup> David Buchan, “French Public Pressing For Action,” *Financial Times*, 12-13 February 1994.

<sup>538</sup> Despite protestations in the past by Warren Christopher, that American foreign policy should not be formulated by the media, after the Markale massacre on 5 February, 60 per cent of Americans supported air strikes, as opposed to 65 per cent in December 1993 who thought the United Nations should not intervene in the Balkans. This turnaround has been widely attributed to the “CNN factor”. *Ibid.*



undercut British Prime Minister's position that air strikes posed too serious a threat to the troops on the ground since France had committed more troops than Britain to Bosnia and Hercegovina. Conservative MPs, however, repeated their deep concern that the threat of NATO air strikes might draw the West into greater military involvement in Bosnia and Hercegovina. After a meeting with senior ministers, the MPs said that they would push for an immediate withdrawal of the 2,500 troops in Bosnia if the 10-day ultimatum brought about an escalation in the conflict.<sup>540</sup> But, as the government temporarily suspended its aid convoys in Bosnia and Hercegovina for fear of retaliation by Serbian forces, ministers admitted that the choice had been between supporting the NATO plan and a damaging rift with the US. President Clinton made clear US determination to take action to end the siege of Sarajevo and senior ministers said that the President believed that the failure to act would strengthen the hand of those in Washington arguing for a much faster and bigger disengagement of US forces from Europe.<sup>541</sup>

One senior minister said that in such circumstances it would have been 'disastrous' for the future of the alliance to oppose the ultimatum. Already, John Major's government was seriously at odds with President Clinton over the admission to the US of Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein Leader. And, it was judged that Britain could not afford another damaging breach. At the end, the Cabinet had agreed to the ultimatum only after military commanders on the ground said that limited use of air power was feasible and that the risk to British troops could be contained. It was also agreed that if air strikes

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<sup>539</sup> About the growing uneasiness in Turkey about the situation in Bosnia and Hercegovina, see Hasan Unal, "Bosnia II: A Turkish Critique," *The World Today* 51, no. 7 (July 1995), 128-9.

<sup>540</sup> Philip Stephens, "Britain Bowed to US Pressure Over Bosnia Ultimatum," *Financial Times*, 11 February 1994.

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.*

failed in their objective, there would be no further escalation in British military involvement.<sup>542</sup>

In a statement to the House of Commons on 10 February 1994, Douglas Hurd alluded repeatedly to the tensions within the Western alliance when he said there was a need to preserve a united front within NATO;

“There is a strong British interest in maintaining the strength and solidarity of NATO. In Bosnia, our interest lies in preventing the war from spreading, in helping forward the work for a peace settlement and in relieving the suffering of the Bosnian people. We judged that these interests of ours are best sustained by supporting the NATO decision and working for its success.”<sup>543</sup>

During the debates in the House of Commons on the same day, several times, Douglas Hurd stressed the importance of the United Kingdom and its defence policy of the strength and solidarity of NATO.

“Anyone who has followed the discussions with our allies or is in the allied countries will know how many of us believe, especially the United States, that the action agreed yesterday was a crucial test for the Atlantic allies.”<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>542</sup> Ibid.

<sup>543</sup> House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 10 February 1994, col. 448.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid., cols. 451-2.

On 14 February, Baroness Chalker of Wallasay summed up the government's position:

“We have consistently supported the use of air power provided that it would support and not undermine the peace process and the aid effort. I believe that it was the whole question of the margin of balance that was so difficult for many countries to achieve. But together with our NATO allies, we accept that there is absolutely no doubt that the shelling of Sarajevo demands the strongest response. That's why the decision passed the test that to issue this ultimatum would do more good than harm.”<sup>545</sup>

When NATO decision was announced issuing an ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs that ‘they would face air strikes within ten days unless they removed their forces from around Sarajevo’, France and the US also confirmed the earlier NATO decision to help peace-keeping forces in Tuzla and Srebrenica and to examine other areas for similar action, like Mostar and Vitez. Furthermore, the threat of air strikes against Bosnian Serb positions around Sarajevo was being presented as the first component part of a wider strategy to secure a separate peace for Sarajevo, which it was hoped, would form a building block on which to construct a wider negotiated settlement. British government frequently stressed that the threat of air strikes did not signal a break with the international community's commitment to a negotiated settlement in Bosnia and Hercegovina.<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>545</sup> House of Lords Debates, *Hansard*, 14 February 1994, cc. 71-72.

<sup>546</sup> Indeed it was hoped that the threat of NATO air strikes would have moved the negotiations along. On 14 February 1994, Baroness Chalker of Wallasay told the House of Lords: “I believe that the NATO decision dovetails with the negotiating strategy being pursued by both co-chairmen in trying to secure an overall settlement”. *Ibid.*, col. 73.

NATO did not consult Russia before issuing the ultimatum. Using this opportunity, Moscow's nationalist and ultra-nationalist pro-Serb lobby, which had long thought that the Yeltsin regime had treated Belgrade and the Bosnian Serbs unfairly, exerted strong pressure on Yeltsin. The nationalist leader, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, perceived the value of using the Balkan context as a springboard for influencing Russian domestic politics. When Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev appeared ready to approve NATO air strikes, Zhirinovskiy blamed him for being anti-Serbian, anti-Slavic and anti-Russian.<sup>547</sup> It was at that time that Yeltsin and his foreign policy team took a bold initiative to assert Russia's role as a major international player to counter domestic nationalist criticism, to help the Serbs and to stop bombardment of Sarajevo. Russia's Balkan envoy Vitaly Churkin utilised what he called Moscow's 'special channel of communication' with the Serbs and suggested to the Serbs that if they withdraw their heavy weaponry as NATO demanded, Russia was prepared to deploy troops under UN auspices between the Serb forces and those of the Bosnian government. The Serbs accepted the Russian offer within the UN framework.<sup>548</sup>

Meanwhile, at Sarajevo airport on 9 February, the UNPROFOR commander in Bosnia, Lt. Gen. Sir Michael Rose brokered a verbal cease-fire agreement between the Bosnia Serb and Muslim military representatives, which was to come into effect at noon on 10 February.<sup>549</sup> Agreement was reached to place both Bosnian Serb and Muslim artillery under UNPROFOR control for the duration of the cease-fire, after which the UN forces were to be inter-positioned in sensitive places and key positions, which were to

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<sup>547</sup> Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 299-300.

<sup>548</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>549</sup> After resignation of Belgium's Lieutenant General Francis Briquemont, who criticised the UN for not providing enough troops to do the job, the British Lieutenant General, Sir Michael Rose took

be determined by a mixed commission to determine any violations of the cease-fire.<sup>550</sup> The Geneva peace talks reconvened on 10 February with the international mediators, Lord Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg hoping to move the negotiations on the issue of demilitarising Sarajevo and placing the city under UN administration.

At the end of the day, Russia appeared to have achieved a diplomatic triumph launching the first successful Russian foreign policy initiative of the post-Soviet period.<sup>551</sup> It was argued that the Russian initiative was driven more by the Kremlin's perception of Russia's status in international affairs and also the domestic power imperatives of the Yeltsin regime, than by any pro-Serb or pan-Slavic considerations.<sup>552</sup> The Russian mediation at Sarajevo moved Russia to the centre of international attention and secured it a prominent role considering the future crises in the region. For Yeltsin, the challenge following the Sarajevo initiative was to build upon success and to consolidate Russia's resurgent position as a putative 'great power'.<sup>553</sup>

### **7.3. The Washington Accords: Creation of the Bosniak-Croat Federation**

The other important development of this period which could also be considered as a new stage in the Bosnian conflict was the ending of Croat-Muslim war in central

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command of the United Nations forces in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Andrew Hogg, "Can This Man Answer Bosnia's Prayers?," *The Sunday Times*, 9 January 1994.

<sup>550</sup> John Palmer and Ian Traynor, "Serbs Bow to Air Raid Threat," *The Guardian*, 10 February 1994.

<sup>551</sup> FBIS-EEU-94-043 (March 4, 1994), 44.

<sup>552</sup> For the history of the Russian policy towards the Balkans, see Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements, 1806-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and Charles Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism: Russian Influence in the Internal Affairs of Bulgaria and Serbia, 1879-1886* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978).

<sup>553</sup> Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 302.

Bosnia. From the very beginning of the Yugoslav conflict, it seemed that the guiding principle of Serbian policy was to split the Croats and Muslims. Obviously, when the Muslim-Croat fighting began in Spring 1993, the main beneficiaries were the Serbs. Between the Spring 1993 and the beginning of 1994, the Croats of Bosnia and Hercegovina lost 40 per cent of their territory, most of it in central Bosnia, and most of it to the Muslims. Out of a pre-war Croatian population of 830,000 around 440,000 had become refugees.<sup>554</sup>

Such large losses and the fact that Krajina were still being under Serbian occupation inevitably led to political troubles for Tudjman, who was regarded as the ultimate architect of Croatian policy in Bosnia and Hercegovina, and for Mate Boban the president of the self proclaimed Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosna. The majority of the Croatian public, public officials, political opposition and even the centre and liberal wings of the HDZ believed that Tudjman had made a major strategic mistake in following the advice of the 'Hercegovinian lobby', led by Defence Minister Gojko Susak, and in effect ending the alliance with the Muslims in Bosnia and Hercegovina.<sup>555</sup>

First, there was ample historical evidence that the Muslims and Croats could be effective against the more numerous Serbs only if they combined their forces. Second, Milosevic had already deceived Tudjman several times in recent years, and there was no reason to believe that any deal with him would be lasting. In fact, Serbian attitude suggested that Belgrade's goal was to obtain a greater Serbia by dividing and

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<sup>554</sup> Patrick Moore, "Croatia and Bosnia: A Tale of Two Bridges," *RFE/RL Research Report* 3, no. 1 (7 January 1994), 112.

ethnically cleansing the Croats and Muslims. In fact, it would be foolish to collaborate with them to partition Bosnia and Hercegovina and give them large chunks of Western Bosnia that would provide a solid land link between Serbia proper and Krajina. Third and perhaps more important, Croatia could not join in the partition of a neighbouring sovereign state and expect its own territorial integrity to be respected, particularly where the Serbian occupied parts of Croatia was concerned.<sup>556</sup>

In the meantime, President Clinton's special envoy Charles Redman visited Zagreb several times and there was US pressure on the Croat government to sign a peace agreement with the Bosnian Muslims. It was apparent that the US had adopted a carrot and stick approach to Croatia: on the one hand it threatened economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation, on the other, the US officials held out the hope of loan from international financial institutions, access to European and international institutions and programmes, Western reconstruction aid and diplomatic support and political backing for Croatia's claims of sovereignty over Krajina. Given that Croatia wanted to improve its position in the eyes of the Western countries, in particular Germany, that was a good opportunity for President Tudjman to reverse its bad image in the West. On Croatian television, Tudjman stressed that the 'agreement would restore Croatia to western favour and bring it a number of concrete political and economic rewards'.<sup>557</sup>

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<sup>555</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>556</sup> Patrick Moore, "A New Stage in the Bosnian Conflict," *RFE/RL Research Report* 3, no. 9 (4 March 1994), 33-6.

<sup>557</sup> Patrick Moore, "The Croatian-Muslim Agreements," *RFE/RL Research Report* 3, no. 13 (1 April 1994), 20-21.

In establishing the Croat-Muslim alliance, a crucial role was played by the 'Council of Bosnian-Herzegovinan Croats' led by Ivo Komsic (a member of the Presidency and President of the newly formed Croat Peasant Party).<sup>558</sup> Meeting in Sarajevo on 6 February, the Council declared itself in favour of preserving the territorial integrity of Bosnia, but with a decentralised system of administrative 'cantons'. Under pressure from Tudjman, Mate Boban, the man associated with the partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, resigned on 8 February and was replaced by Mile Akmadzic.<sup>559</sup> Following this, discussions took place during the rest of February between Bosnian Government and Croatian Government ministers.<sup>560</sup> A general cease-fire between the Bosnian Croats and Muslims signed on February 23 was to go into effect on February 25, 1994.

With US assistance, a 'Framework Agreement' was worked out to create a Muslim (Bosniak)-Croat federation; it was signed in Washington on 1 March 1994. Further discussions, filling in matters of detail and setting out new relations between the Federation itself and the Republic of Croatia, took place during the month of March. On 18 March an agreement to enact a new constitution was signed by Alija Izetbegovic and Franjo Tudjman in Washington; and on 29 and 30 March the new constitution was ratified by the Bosnian Parliament.

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<sup>558</sup> Moore pointed out that "unlike 'Herzegovinian Croats' which are antagonistic toward Muslims and lived in closed communities contiguous to Croatia and prefer seceding from Bosnia and Herzegovina and join their lands in Western Herzegovina to Croatia, the Bosnian Croats, living in central Bosnia, tended to support co-operation with Muslims, to live in mixed communities and favoured a common Bosnian identity." See Moore, "The Croatian-Muslim Agreements," 21-2.

<sup>559</sup> Mile Akmadzic was Boban's foreign minister and in place of Boban, he had represented Herzeg-Bosna at the Tudjman-Izetbegovic talks in January in Bonn and Geneva. Since he had earlier served in the government of Izetbegovic's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina he was considered very suitable for opening of talks with the Muslims.

<sup>560</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 256.



The basic principle of the new federation was a system of federal units (cantons), covering all areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina which had had a Muslim or Croat majority population before the war.<sup>561</sup> While the central authority of the federation or 'Federation Government' would have exclusive authority over the conduct of foreign affairs, defence policy, citizenship, economic and commercial policy, finance, energy policy and international policing, the cantons would have responsibility for all other areas of policy either exclusively (police, education policy, cultural policy, and housing) or in joint jurisdiction (human rights, health, the environment) with the Federation Government. A federal legislature was created, with a House of Representatives of 140 members, and a House of Peoples of 30 Muslim and 30 Croat members. A prominent part of the constitution was protection of human rights: it granted wide powers to three 'Ombudsmen' (one Muslim, one Croat and one 'other') and to a Human Rights court similarly composed of three judges.<sup>562</sup>

The vital achievement of this agreement was to end the war between Muslims and Croats. It now became possible for the two forces to co-operate militarily against the Serb army, and for the supply of weapons to the Bosnian Army to be improved. Thus,

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<sup>561</sup> Ibid.

<sup>562</sup> 'Others'; Serbs, Jews and Gypsies were effectively ruled out. According to the unofficial analysis prepared by Professor Francis Boyle, the legal adviser to the Bosnian government, in the long run proposed constitution might be highly disadvantageous to the Bosnian Muslims and might pave the way for the de-facto absorption of the federation to the Republic of Croatia. Moreover, leaving the Serbs out of the agreement, Boyle argued that the proposed federation actually ratified the results of ethnic cleansing and effectively 'carved up Bosnia into two parts, i.e. the Bosniak-Croat Federation and the Bosnian Serb Republic. In Boyle's opinion, the proposed constitution of the federation combined the worst features of the Vance-Owen and Owen-Stoltenberg plans. It "partitions the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in accordance with the principles of ethnicity ... and then cantonises the so-called Federation in accordance with the principle of ethnicity... Perhaps the Washington agreements should most appropriately be called the Vance-Owen-Stoltenberg Plan". Francis Boyle, "Memorandum to the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina," 24 March 1994, Champaign, Illinois, p. 3. Quoted in Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 306.

the large Bosnian Muslim army could now turn its full attention to the Serbian side. In addition, the US, though not manifestly taking sides in the war, had effectively engineered the Bosniak-Croat agreement, and thereafter had a vested interest in its successful implementation. As Izetbegovic pointed out “of course, we Bosnians were told that Western forces would come and help out in the implementation of what has been agreed”.<sup>563</sup>

One negative aspect of Bosniak-Croat Federation, however, was that it left no political space for those Serbs who disliked the Pale Serb regime of Karadzic and Mladic, were loyal to the Izetbegovic government and wanted to remain in a multi-ethnic Bosnia and Hercegovina. Encouraging the close association of the newly established Federation with Croatia the agreement had also set an unfortunate precedent for Republica Srpska to claim similar association with Serbia.<sup>564</sup>

#### **7.4. The Gorazde Debacle**

At the beginning of March 1994, following the combination of diplomacy with credible military threat in Sarajevo (the ‘Sarajevo formula’) and securing a Muslim-Croat rapprochement in central Bosnia, hopes were high of exploiting this relative peace in the rest of Bosnia. The US and Russia between them took control of the peace process: the American envoy Charles Redman and his Russian counterpart, Deputy Foreign Minister Vitaly Churkin, were determined not to let Bosnia and Hercegovina

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<sup>563</sup> FBIS-EEU-94-047 (10 March 1994), 36.

<sup>564</sup> Moore, “The Croatian-Muslim Agreements,” 24.

to create a new east-west division of Europe. Both statesmen were convinced that a comprehensive peace settlement was within their grasp.<sup>565</sup>

These hopes receded on 29 March, however, when the Bosnian Serbs began a new offensive against the Muslim enclave of Gorazde in Eastern Bosnia which had been under siege since July 1992.<sup>566</sup> Since Gorazde became a 'safe area' on 6 May 1993 through United Nations Security Council Resolution 824, the UN had only succeeded in sending 14 observers to the town, despite a call from the UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in July 1993 for an additional 7,500 troops to patrol the safe areas. This lack of additional troops combined with Bosnian Serb obstruction in allowing any UNPROFOR troops to get through meant that Gorazde had been left without any significant UNPROFOR presence.<sup>567</sup>

When the Serb assault in Gorazde gathered pace during the first week in April, UN Headquarters in Sarajevo played it down, dismissing it as a diversionary tactic to pull Bosnian troops away from other more important battle areas. The UN commander in Bosnia and Hercegovina, General Rose, was due to visit Gorazde on 6 April to assess the seriousness of the situation, but this passage was blocked by Bosnian Serbs en

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<sup>565</sup> Judy Dempsey and Laura Silber, "Russia, US Say Bosnia Peace Deal is in Reach," *Financial Times*, 17 March 17 1994.

<sup>566</sup> Gorazde was strategically the most important of the three enclaves (the other two were Srebrenica and Zepa) in Eastern Bosnia. It straddled the main road between two large Serb-held towns in the Drina valley - Visegrad and Foca. Both had had the Muslim majorities before 1992, but had been cleansed. Gorazde where the local Muslims resisted were then separating the two chunks of Serb held territory, making communication between them impossible. Furthermore, Serbs wanted to cut Sarajevo's link with Sandjak, a Muslim populated region of Southern Serbia lest they combine their forces to form a land link with Turkey. The 'green transversal' as the ideologues of Greater Serbia called it, would be the land link through which the Muslims would push an Islamic arrowhead into the heart of Europe. Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 324-5.

<sup>567</sup> 800 Ukrainian troops were supposed to arrive in April from Croatia, but their deployment was overtaken by recent events. Indeed, the strategy behind the Bosnian Serb offensive may have been to gain key ground before the additional troops arrived.

route. Just as he did in Sarajevo in February, he still argued against the air strikes and played down reports of widespread death and destruction by Serb forces against Gorazde, whose pre-offensive population of 35,000 had been swollen by about 30,000 refugees from neighbouring villages recently occupied by the Bosnian Serbs.<sup>568</sup>

In line with his government's long-standing policy, British General Rose was against the air strikes. He thought them inconsistent with his role as Commander of the UN peacekeeping force. He argued that resorting to air strikes would push UNOROFOR from peacekeeping to the peace enforcement. Peace enforcement required aligning oneself with one side in the conflict. Peace-keeping required strict neutrality. It was not the job of a peace-keeping force to intervene to alter the course of the war in favour of one side. Use of air strikes would turn NATO into the Bosnian Air Force and fatally compromise UNPROFOR's neutrality. "You can not fight a war from white painted vehicles" he frequently asserted. In principle, he did not oppose military intervention but he insisted that if the international community opted to enter the war on the Bosnian side, it should pull UNPROFOR out and replace it with a force capable of fighting a war. He called the fine line between peace-keeping and peace-enforcement, the 'Mogadishu line,' after the disastrous consequences of US's efforts to impose a peace settlement in Somalia.<sup>569</sup>

When General Rose had played down the seriousness of the Serb attack on Gorazde saying that "our own judgement was that the Bosnian Serbs were putting pressure at the tactical level and had no intention of taking the pocket', he considered that a little

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<sup>568</sup> Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 33.

<sup>569</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 326.

local clash should not derail a peace plan which he believed was closer than ever to achieving a lasting solution. But his own military observers in Gorazde leaked a document on 7 April revealing that the accounts they had been sending to Rose's headquarters were presented to the public in a distorted way. In the report it was stated that:

“It is very disquieting to hear radio reports from the international media that the situation is not serious. From the BBC World Service News of April 5 we heard an ‘UNPROFOR assessment said that it was a minor attack into a limited area’...Saying that it is a minor attack into a limited area is a bad assessment, incorrect and shows absolutely no understanding of what is going on here”.<sup>570</sup>

The UN monitors sent an urgent appeal to Sarajevo saying that “the death toll continues to rise and serious losses of territory are occurring”. Later on, grasping the seriousness of the situation and changing tack, Rose warned Mladic by phone and by fax, to stop the attacks on Gorazde or face NATO action.<sup>571</sup> The attacks did not stop. After seeking and being granted approval from the UN Secretary General's envoy Yasushi Akashi, General Rose gave the order on 10 April that led to the first NATO ground assault in the forty seven year history of the organisation. Two NATO US F-16 aircraft bombed Bosnian Serb positions on the hills surrounding Gorazde.<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>570</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 327.

<sup>571</sup> “US Jets Hit Guns Firing on ‘Safe’ Area As UN Carries Out Warning to Serbs,” *International Herald Tribune*, 11 April 1994.

<sup>572</sup> The legal basis used to justify this NATO intervention in defence of UNPROFOR troops was UN Security Council Resolution 836 of 4 June 1993, which decides that states “...acting nationally or through regional organisations and arrangements, may take, under the authority of the Security Council and subject to close co-ordination with the Secretary-General and UNPROFOR, all necessary measures, through the use of air power, in and around safe areas ...to support UNPROFOR in the performance of its mandate...”. S/RES/836, 4 June 1993, paragraph. 10.

NATO made a second air strike in the early afternoon of 11 April after the bombardment had not ceased.<sup>573</sup> The air strikes were directed from the ground by eight British forward air controllers whom Rose had sent to Gorazde under the guise of UN military observers. They were, in fact, all men of the British Special Service (SAS).

Following the air strikes, Russia protested at not having been consulted and Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev declared that it had been a 'big mistake' to launch air attacks on the Serbs without prior consultation with Russia.<sup>574</sup> In response to Russian protests, Manfred Woerner asserted:

“...close air support has to be very rapid. We have troops under fire. If we want to protect them, we have to strike quickly. I did not see how we could protect the personnel of the United Nations with a delay of several hours... If we had to put in place a consultation procedure that lasted hours, it would never be triggered”.<sup>575</sup>

The Serb reaction to NATO intervention was that the international community had now unequivocally compromised its neutrality and entered the conflict on the side of

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<sup>573</sup> Shortly after the second air strike, NATO Secretary-General, Manfred Woerner, maintained: “For the second time in 24 hours, NATO air forces responded to a request from UNPROFOR commanders and provided close air support to protect UNPROFOR personnel in Gorazde area. Serbs had resumed shelling from the south and the UN personnel trapped in the town were in acute danger. Today’s strike was carried out by a single US FA-18A fighter attack jet”. *Atlantic News*, 13 April 1994.

<sup>574</sup> Edward Mortimer and Laura Silber, “NATO Raids Strain Links With Russia,” *Financial Times*, 12 April 1994.

<sup>575</sup> According to NATO sources, only 25 minutes elapsed between the request by air support by General Rose and approval by Yasushi Akashi, Boutros-Ghali’s special envoy to the former Yugoslavia. *Atlantic News*, 13 April 1994.

Muslims.<sup>576</sup> In a bid to drive a wedge between Russia and Western coalition, Serb leaders severed all relations with the UN, naming Vitaly Churkin, Russia's special envoy to former Yugoslavia, as the only 'channel of communication'.

At the end, NATO air strikes did little to slow the Bosnian Serb advance and by April 15 their tanks had occupied the high ground overlooking Gorazde, from where they continued the bombardment of the town. General Mladic sealed off Sarajevo and took 150 UN soldiers as hostages while his forces in the north of the republic launched a reprisal artillery and mortar attack against the government which held the city of Tuzla. Obviously, half-hearted air strikes which had no effect on the Serbs served only to confirm the arguments of those who had cautioned against the military intervention from the beginning. Under these circumstances, Rose declared the situation 'untenable' and said it was too late for US bombing raids to try to deter the Bosnian Serbs.<sup>577</sup> He also declared that he would withdraw all UN peace-keepers.

A cease-fire negotiated in Pale on 17 April which stipulated the cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of Bosnian Serb troops and artillery from Gorazde and its surroundings and the deployment of interposition force, was breached shortly after its negotiation. On 21 April Bosnian Serb infantry entered Gorazde despite threats of NATO air strikes to force them to withdraw.<sup>578</sup> Under intense pressure from the Americans and from NATO Secretary General Manfred Woerner, Boutros Boutros-Ghali asked

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<sup>576</sup> BBC, *SWB*, 13 April 1994.

<sup>577</sup> "Serb Troops Surge Into Gorazde as Defenses Fall," *International Herald Tribune*, April 16-17, 1994.

<sup>578</sup> It was reported that the hospital and the refugee centre were among the targets of the Bosnian Serbs. On 21 April UNHCR doctors in Gorazde said that 47 people had died and 143 were wounded in the past 24 hours, bringing the total dead to 436 and 1,467 wounded since the offensive began. *Daily Telegraph*, 22 April 1994.

NATO to use its air power to deter further attack. The NATO Council met in Brussels were almost paralysed by internal division, with the Americans pushing for air-strikes and the British arguing that this was incompatible with the existing UNPROFOR mandate.<sup>579</sup> US diplomats were contemptuous of the British position. But, the British blamed the Americans for lacking the courage to put troops on the ground. The North Atlantic Alliance- and the so-called 'Special Relationship' between Britain and the US was under strain as never before.

Finally, NATO reached a compromise, but one which exasperated the British, and delivered an ultimatum to the Serbs on 22 April threatening strikes unless the Bosnian Serb attacks against the safe area Gorazde immediately ceased, Bosnian Serb forces pulled back three kilometres from the centre of the city by 0001 GMT on 24 April 1994, and from 0001 GMT on 24 April 1994 United Nations forces, humanitarian relief convoys and medical assistance teams are free to enter Gorazde unimpeded and medical evacuations were permitted.<sup>580</sup>

On 23 April, although the Serbs had not met the 'condition one' of the ultimatum and continued to fire, General Rose and Secretary General's special representative in the former Yugoslavia, Yasushi Akashi again blocked NATO action by claiming falsely that the Serbs were beginning to pull back.<sup>581</sup> The UN Commander in Bosnia, General Sir Michael Rose was even filmed in Gorazde suggesting that the toll of 2000 injured and more than 700 dead claimed by the city authorities was deliberately exaggerated.

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<sup>579</sup> The British bowed to the pressure in the interests of the NATO unity. But to the British, who had from the beginning treated all sides equally, regardless of the role each side played in the war, this new ultimatum was, for the first time, singling the Serbs out as the enemy.

<sup>580</sup> Gillian Tett, "NATO Air Strike Ultimatum to Serbs," *Financial Times*, 23/24 April 1994. See also *NATO Press Release* (94) 31, 22 April 1994, 2.



He implied that the Muslims had not defended the enclave vigorously enough against the Serbs and said: 'The Muslim forces basically turned and ran and left the UN to try to pick up the bits'.<sup>582</sup> Meanwhile, the UNPROFOR dispatched a company of 150 Ukrainians to prevent further air strikes. When Chris Mullins MP, raised this issue in the House of Commons, the Tory Minister for the Armed Forces admitted there were "instances that we greatly regret".<sup>583</sup> The British and Ukrainians administered an agreement similar to that which had been carried out in Srebrenica the year before: demilitarisation of the pocket, cease-fire monitoring and the inter-positioning of UN troops between the Serb front line and the battered town. Once more General Mladic had achieved what he wanted; he encircled the town and could capture it whenever he wanted.

At the end, the Gorazde debacle left unresolved the dispute that had so nearly destroyed the NATO alliance. The British and French announced that if the Americans continued to push for the policy of 'lift and strike', they would withdraw their ground troops. They spent the months that followed persuading the Americans that they were serious, by drawing up detailed contingency plans for an emergency withdrawal. The Gorazde episode not only revealed divisions within the international community. It also isolated the Bosnian Serbs from their natural ally Belgrade and international supporter Russians. Milosevic, before the attacks on Gorazde believed that with the help of Russians he was about to have a deal that would have led to the lifting of the sanctions was furious with Karadzic. Lord Owen argues that the Gorazde crisis had driven Karadzic and Milosevic further apart than ever:

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<sup>581</sup> "Serbs Defying Ultimatum, Rain Shells on Gorazde," *The New York Times*, 24 April 1994.

<sup>582</sup> "Serbs Renew Threats as Alliance Fails to Heal the Rift," *The European*, 29 April-5 May 1994.

“I believe that relations between Karadzic and Milosevic were never the same after Gorazde. Bosnian Serbs were shown up to be bare-faced liars, all the time saying that they were not after Gorazde when they were... They lost the support of Russians for quite a while after that. Which they deserved”..<sup>584</sup>

Russian President Yeltsin, Foreign Minister Kozyrev and the Balkan envoy Vitaly Churkin were totally embarrassed when the Bosnian Serbs simply ignored their promise to implement a fresh Russian initiative designed to halt NATO air strikes against the Serbs forces advancing on the ‘safe haven’ of Gorazde in exchange for Serbian withdrawal from the city.<sup>585</sup> Churkin had given NATO his personal assurances of Serbian agreement to the plan. Churkin warned the Bosnian Serbs that they “should understand that Russia is a great power not a banana republic,” and he asserted;

“When the Serbs claimed that the whole world was against them we agreed to help on the condition they followed out instructions. Instead the Bosnian Serbs used the Russian policy as a shield... they only wasted our time... if someone plays with Russian policy, Russia will reply as a great power”..<sup>586</sup>

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<sup>583</sup> House of Commons Debates, *Hansard* (Oral Answers), 21 June 1994, col. 417.

<sup>584</sup> Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 260.

<sup>585</sup> “Russia Drops Its Objections to Air Strikes Against the Bosnian Serbs,” *New York Times International*, 24 April 1994.

<sup>586</sup> Quoted in Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 308.

## 7.5. Britain, Russia, the US and the Contact Group

Throughout the conflict in Former Yugoslavia, both Britain and Russia appeared to be more sympathetic towards the Serbs interests than either the US or Germany which also brought them closer. In settling the crises in Former Yugoslavia in general and Bosnia and Hercegovina in particular, Russian and British officials enjoyed increasingly good relations while the relations between Britain and US deteriorated rapidly. For instance, it was reported that in Geneva, several British officials mentioned that they had better relations with the well-informed and perceptive Russian delegate to International Conference on Former Yugoslavia (ICFY), Vitaly Churkin than with the US representative Reginald Bartholomew.<sup>587</sup>

Not only diplomats but also British commanders of UNPROFOR were often on better terms with the Russians and Serbs than with their NATO allies. In mid-August 1993, for example, when the US was urging for NATO airstrikes to force General Mladic to pull back from Mount Igman and break the siege of Sarajevo, deputy commander of UNPROFOR, British Brigadier Andrew Vere Hayes was openly critical of US policy, saying “What does President Clinton think he is up to? Air power won’t defeat the Serbs”.<sup>588</sup> Similarly, a month before that, Vere Hayes and UN Civil Affairs Boss in Sarajevo, Victor Andreyev had contacted Karadzic and Mladic with whom they had already very good relations and reached an agreement to station French UN peace-keepers around Mount Igman to prevent possible US air strikes.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>587</sup> Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 31.

<sup>588</sup> J Bone and M. Evans, “Washington Orders to Muzzle Commanders,” *The Times*, 19 August 1993. In mid-1993 Brigadier Vere Hayes also claimed that Sarajevo was not “really under siege by the Serbs”. Noel Malcolm, “The Whole Lot,” 16.

<sup>589</sup> David Rieff, *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1995), 176.

Another example of exceptionally good relations between the British and Russians was in early February 1994, after the Serb shelling of Sarajevo market place, British reaction was closer to the Russians than to Americans. Lieutenant General Sir Michael Rose, the new UNPROFOR commander in Sarajevo, was reluctant for NATO ultimatum to the Serbs. He preferred the Russian pressure on the Serbs to withdraw heavy weaponry rather than having to punish the Serbs with air strikes. He even claimed that the mortar shell had been fired by the Bosnian government troops to push for military intervention. Rose and many others welcomed the deployment of Russian troops to Sarajevo and British Defence Minister Malcolm Rifkind lost no time in pointing out that Russian troops were compensating for the absence of American troops on the ground.<sup>590</sup> Douglas Hurd appreciated the Russian involvement as helpful in buttressing the NATO ultimatum and in reinforcing General Rose's efforts to secure a cease-fire around Sarajevo.<sup>591</sup> Also lamenting the lack of international co-ordination to reach a political solution on Bosnia and Hercegovina, Douglas Hurd praised the Russian efforts and the need for the West to help Russia to accept new responsibilities in the post-Cold War World.<sup>592</sup>

With British politicians on the lead, nearly all European officials were criticising the lack of American support and international co-ordination for a political solution in Bosnia and Hercegovina. In a lecture to the Pescatore Foundation in Luxembourg on 11 March 1994, David Owen warned that a lasting peace-settlement would require the

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<sup>590</sup> J. Dempsey, J. Lloyd and J. Ridding, "NATO Holds Serbs to Strict Deadline," *Financial Times*, 19-20 February 1994.

<sup>591</sup> Douglas Hurd, "A World Role For a Great Power," *The Independent*, 20 April 1994.

<sup>592</sup> *Ibid.*

co-operation of the EU, US and Russia.<sup>593</sup> In mid-April, at the EU Foreign Ministers meeting in Luxembourg, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe, said that three separate European, Russian and American diplomatic tracks on Bosnia made it easier for the Serbs to play 'double games' and urged "that all the little bits of diplomatic process should be pieced together".<sup>594</sup> Douglas Hurd agreed with Juppe that it made no sense to have three separate diplomatic efforts, and that more co-ordination was needed with Russia and the US.<sup>595</sup>

Similarly, the US did not want to have to deal with 12 different EU governments. In the eyes of the Americans, the EU Troika had been thoroughly discredited from the beginning of the crisis and was especially undesirable in 1994 because Greece which held the EU presidency in the first half of the year was totally at odds with Washington over its Balkan policy.

David Owen thought that one solution to make international efforts more effective would be to make Charles Redman and Vitaly Churkin the co-chairman of the ICFY, but the Americans were not content with the work of the ICFY and found it too clumsy to operate. A small group would be a better mechanism and Russia, increasingly exasperated with Bosnian Serbs, was ready for closer co-operation. Owen was convinced that 'Contact Group' would be worth pursuing because he had experienced similar mechanism worked well to resolve crisis in Namibia in the 1977.<sup>596</sup>

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<sup>593</sup> Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 35.

<sup>594</sup> *Atlantic News*, No. 2606, 16 March 1994, 1.

<sup>595</sup> L. Barber, "EU Tries to Patch Up Its Bosnia Policy," *Financial Times*, 19 April 1994, and J. Palmer, "EU Seek Russian and US Backing for Peace Push," *The Guardian*, 19 April 1994.

<sup>596</sup> David Owen considered the Contact Group mechanism which was used in 1977 over Namibia comprising Germany, Canada, US, UK and France as very effective in maintaining unity around the negotiating table. David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 298.

The Contact Group, established in the early part of 1994, comprised of representatives of the US and Russia, who had been providing the main motive for international diplomacy, as well as three from ICFY representing the EU, the UN and the ICFY itself. The three representatives were being nominated by Germany, France, and Britain.

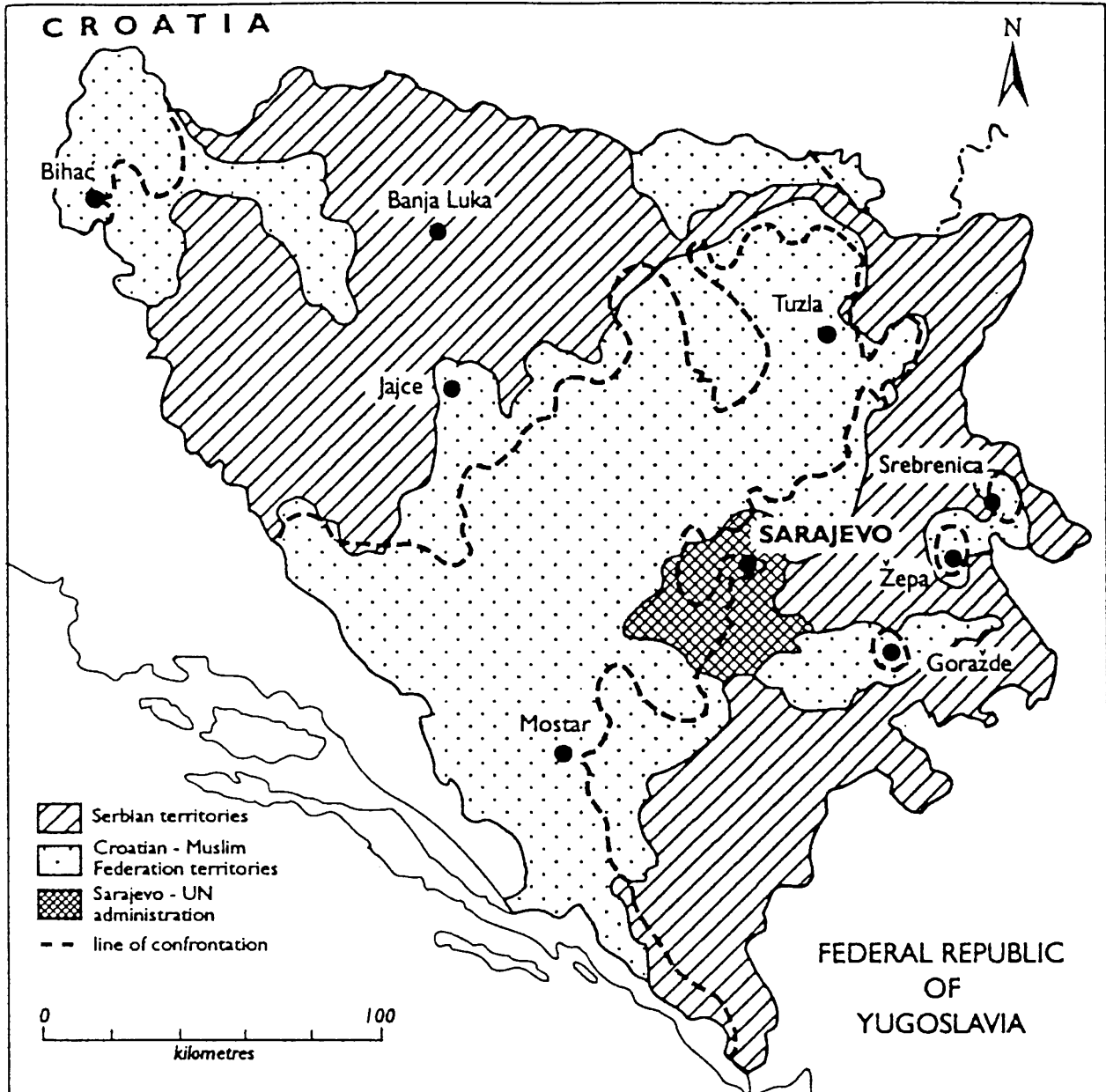
#### **7.5.1. The Contact Group Plan: 'Take It or Leave It'**

The first meeting of the Contact Group officials was fixed to take place in London on 26 April 1994. It was later agreed that the EU Troika would be invited to ministerial meetings. On 13 May, the Contact Group met at ministerial level for the first time and developed a two track approach; easing of sanctions on Belgrade depending on a peace settlement acceptable to all parties. Building directly on the EU Action Plan, the Contact Group agreed to propose a 51-49 per cent division of Bosnia and Hercegovina between the Bosniak-Croat Federation (the Muslims 34 per cent and Croats 17 per cent) and Bosnian Serbs (Map 6). There were serious differences among the group, however, about the details of the map and on when and whether to ease sanctions on the Serbs and the arms embargo on the Bosnians. In general, though not on every specific issue, the US and Germany defended the interests of the Bosniak-Croat Federation, while Russia, France and Britain remained more sensitive to Serb interests.<sup>597</sup> For example, an early rift in the Contact Group came in May 1994 when

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<sup>597</sup> Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 36-7.

MAP 6



The Contact Group plan

Russia accused the US of undermining the territorial plan by encouraging Bosnia to hold out for 58 per cent rather than the offered 51 per cent.<sup>598</sup>

Most British and Russian observers thought that it would be difficult to persuade Karadzic and Mladic to give up 20 per cent of the territory they had taken by force of arms to meet the 51:49 partition. To their opinion encouraging Bosnian Government to ask for more territory was likely to further jeopardise the entire package. Tensions underlined this difference in views: Russia, Britain and France were saying that it was time to acknowledge that the Bosnian government had lost the war, and that it was also time to push through a compromise settlement. On the contrary American officials suggested lifting the embargo on arms so that the Bosnian Muslims could defend themselves against the Serbian attacks; otherwise the British and French suggestion about imposing a plan on Bosnia's Muslim-led government, the victim of Serbian aggression, would be morally wrong.

The Contact Group presented its territorial plan to the relevant parties in Bosnia and Hercegovina in the form of a 'take it or leave it' offer in late June 1994 [Map 6].<sup>599</sup> The Muslim-led parliament in Sarajevo reluctantly voted to accept what Izetbegovic called "an unjust and unfair peace offer". President Izetbegovic maintained, "we think

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<sup>598</sup> Roger Cohen, "US-Russia Shift Shakes Unity on Bosnia," *International Herald Tribune*, 19 May 1994.

<sup>599</sup> The main territorial points of the plan were:

- In the north, the divided town of Brcko would be demilitarised;
- The strategic Posavina corridor - which links eastern Serb territories to mainly Serb populated Banja Luka and to the Serb populated part of Croatia (Krajina) in the west - would be narrowed to three kilometres;
- The Serbs, in exchange, would get territory in Muslim controlled Bihac;
- Sarajevo would have special status under UN administration for two years;
- In the east, the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde would be connected to each other and to Sarajevo in a link which will be under EU protection;
- In the south west, Mostar would come under EU administration for two years.



it is a bad plan, but all our options are worse... we realised that time is working against us, that war is destroying all the prospects of such a multinational Bosnia that peace could save".<sup>600</sup> Croats also accepted the plan.

The Bosnian Serbs dithered, no doubt encouraged by the comments of General Rose and others that the plan was impractical.<sup>601</sup> The Bosnian Serbs laid down several conditions that must be met before they could sign: a sovereign Bosnian Serb state fully independent of the Bosniak-Croat Federation (with a seat at the UN); access to the Adriatic, partition of Sarajevo, and the lifting of sanctions against all Serbs.<sup>602</sup>

Although the Contact Group had presented the package as a 'take-it-or-leave-it' offer, they started to amend the proposal to meet the Bosnian Serb demands. Because of the differences between the US and Germany, on the one hand, and Russia, Britain and France, on the other, reaching an agreement within the Contact Group on how to sweeten the package was very difficult. Initially, in their rhetoric at least, Bonn and Washington took a high moral tone in the Contact Group, calling for a policy that should punish the war crimes of the Serbs and protect the multi-ethnic character of Bosnia and Hercegovina. American and German views, however, tended to carry less weight than those of the three states with troops on the ground in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Since, Britain, France and Russia were unwilling to use force against General Mladic's forces that might trigger off retaliation and put their troops at risk,

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<sup>600</sup> Some commentators interpreted this endorsement as a tactical manoeuvre rather than acceptance of the plan itself, hoping to achieve diplomatic gains should the Bosnian Serbs turn the plan down. Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 340.

<sup>601</sup> J. Bran, "Partition Plan Puts NATO on Collision Course With Serbs," *The Times*, 19 July 1994; Roger Cohen, "British Officers Voice Serb Fears Over Territorial Map," *International Herald Tribune*, November 8, 1994.

by late 1994, Germany and the US had backed away from pressuring the Bosnian Serbs to accept a settlement which would be favourable to the Bosnian Muslims.

In August 1994, after Karadzic repeatedly refused to accept the 51:49 territorial map and peace plan<sup>603</sup>, Slobodan Milosevic carried out his threat to impose a blockade on trade with the Bosnian Serbs.<sup>604</sup> Without mentioning the Bosnian Serb leader by name, the Serbian president slammed “the mad political ambitions and greed of [the Bosnian Serb] leadership.. which includes war profiteers... and people whose conscience is not clear and who are afraid of peace, in the event of which all their wrong doings would come to light”.<sup>605</sup> Although Milosevic’s sincerity was still in doubt and his intentions in going public with what was presented in the state controlled Belgrade media as a long-standing feud between a peace-loving Milosevic and warmongering Karadzic were not clear, the Contact Group claimed this as a victory for their strategy of separating Belgrade from Pale. Given the Serbian president’s central role in the destruction of both Yugoslavia and of Bosnia and Hercegovina, the Contact Group rewarded him for his break with Pale by pressing the UN to lighten the sanctions imposed on Belgrade in 1992. The ICFY assigned a team of 135 observers to monitor the blockade although it appeared that that amount would not be sufficient for the

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<sup>602</sup> Patrick Moore, “Bosnian Partition Plan Rejected,” *RFE/RL Research Report* 3, no. 33 (26 August 1994), 1-5.

<sup>603</sup> On August 3 the Bosnian Serb Assembly rejected the Contact Group plan for the third time and called for a referendum to be held three weeks later. In the referendum held on August 27-28, the 90 per cent of the Bosnian Serbs rejected the Contact Group plan. See Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 335-44.

<sup>604</sup> J Brand and E Prentice, “Belgrade Bows to Moscow and Cuts Its Protégé Adrift,” *The Times*, 5 August 1994; G. Graham and M. Kaminski, “Belgrade to Cut Ties With Bosnia Serbs Over Peace Plan,” *Financial Times*, 5 August 1994.

<sup>605</sup> Quoted in Moore, “Bosnian Partition Plan,” 3.

task.<sup>606</sup> Despite a number of reports that war material continued to flow from Serbia to Bosnia, on 23 September the UN Security Council voted 11 to 2 to ease sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro for a 100 day trial period.<sup>607</sup> In fact, “the sanctions were not effective anyway”.<sup>608</sup>

## **7.6. “Lift and Strike”: The Big Line of Confrontation between the US and Britain**

During the rest of 1994, it became more apparent that the most severe rifts in the Contact Group were between London and Washington and had revolved around two issues; US pressure to lift the arms embargo against the Bosnian government and to use NATO air power to pressure the Serbs to the negotiating table. Moreover, the refusal of the Clinton Administration to deploy ground troops in Bosnia and Hercegovina was the biggest bone of contention as the alliance relations deteriorated steadily through the war. As a well known British journalist put it:

“As on the territorial issue the West Europeans and Russians are at odds with Washington on every other key point of Bosnia policy. The Americans want to lift the UN arms embargo on the Bosnian government. The others do not. The Americans want to keep up UN sanctions on the Serbs. The others want to relax them. The Americans periodically argue for air strikes. The others resist. The

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<sup>606</sup> P. Adams, “Observer Team Moves on to Serbia’s Borders,” *Financial Times*, 16 September 1994; “Serbian Words Are Not Enough,” Editorial, *The Independent*, 8 August 1994 and “Is Milosevic Serious,” *The Economist*, 13 August 1994.

<sup>607</sup> UN SCR 943 adopted on September 23, 1994 reopened the Belgrade airport to civilian passenger flights, allowed Yugoslavia to participate in international sporting events and allowed ferry traffic between Montenegro and Italy. A second resolution reinforced sanctions on the Bosnian Serbs and a third one condemned the renewed ethnic cleansing by Bosnian Serbs in Banja Luka, Bijeljina and other areas of Bosnia and Hercegovina.

<sup>608</sup> Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 289-94.

Americans refuse to send ground troops to Bosnia, to the exasperation of the British, the French and the Russians, all with forces in Bosnia.”<sup>609</sup>

There was a substantial debate in this context between the US, on the one side, and Canada and major European troop contributors, on the other. According to the private comments of many alliance officials, the view prevalent in the alliance was that;

“The Americans were run out of Haiti by a gang of thugs on the dock because they did not want to soil their hands. They were run out of Somalia because they took casualties and could not stand the heat. Now they want to bomb Bosnia to the last Canadian, British and French peace-keeper”.<sup>610</sup>

In this context, the ensuing events showed that this difference in views influenced the outcome of the war in Bosnia and Hercegovina. The Bosnian Serbs had quickly learned how to exploit the differences between the UN and NATO. Without a clear, efficient and rapid decision-making chain, backed by political commitment to the approach adopted, all the efforts went into drain.

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<sup>609</sup> Ian Traynor, “International ‘Community’ Finds Little in Common Over Bosnia,” *The Guardian*, 20 May 1994.

<sup>610</sup> Anne Swardson cited Alex Morrison (Executive Director of the Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies) in “Canada, With Troops in Bosnia, Stands Firm Against Airstrikes,” *Washington Post*, 14 January 1994.

### 7.6.1. The US Opposition to the Arms Embargo

In the face of continuing tough talk from the Bosnian Serb leadership and refusal of the Contact Group plan, the US Defence Secretary William Perry said that the international community had reached “a fork in the road” and ‘the US and NATO can be expected to deepen their involvement in the Bosnian crisis regardless of the fate of the peace plan.’<sup>611</sup> Under congressional pressure, the US President Bill Clinton endorsed, to some extent, lifting the arms embargo on the Muslims when he said: “It had been my long held view that the arms embargo had unfairly and unintentionally penalised the victim in the conflict, and the Security Council should act to remedy this injustice”.<sup>612</sup> In a letter to the Senate Armed Services Committee chairman, Clinton said that if the separatist Bosnian Serbs failed to accept the internationally brokered peace plan for Bosnia by October 15, he would go to the UN before the end of October to ask that the embargo against the Muslims be lifted.

Countries with UNPROFOR forces on the ground, however, continued to view the lifting of the arms embargo in favour of the Bosnian Government as the policy of last resort. Both Britain and France argued that, in addition to fears for their troops on the ground, if the Bosnian government were to receive heavy artillery, this material would go to Croatia, thus persuading President Tudjman to fight rather than negotiate with the Serbs in Krajina.<sup>613</sup> Not in close touch with reality, their view was that ‘arming the

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<sup>611</sup> Bruce Clark, “US and NATO Likely to Expand Role in Bosnia,” *Financial Times*, 19 July 1994.

<sup>612</sup> Ruth Marcus and Daniel Williams, “Clinton Sets October 15 Deadline to Act on Bosnia Embargo,” *International Herald Tribune*, August 12, 1994.

<sup>613</sup> In fact, according to articles in various issues of Jane’s Intelligence Review, Croatia had been conducting a major covert arms buying campaign, purchasing mainly former Soviet military equipment from sympathetic eastern European countries, Iran and corrupt elements in the Russian

Muslims would be to take sides in a civil war',<sup>614</sup> in which NATO and the UN had all along insisted that they were neutral. In fact, by imposing the arms embargo, international actors decisively intervened in the war on the side of the Serbs leaving the victim totally defenceless. This was in a sense a policy called 'Genocide by Embargo,' because "since June 1991, the US has used its own diplomacy and the UN Security Council in a grim charade of 'neutral mediation' between a Serbian genocidal aggressor and his victims. France and Britain have done likewise using the Security Council and the European Community/Union".<sup>615</sup>

As the latest fightings had illustrated, Bosnian Government forces had both the strengths and the weaknesses. In manpower and morale they were superior to the Serb army; if they were fully supported by the Croat heavy weaponry, they could make significant gains against Serbs.<sup>616</sup> Paul Beaver, who was analysing the Balkan military matters for the *Jane's Defence Weekly*, agreed that "the Bosnians have changed from a ragtag collection of militias at the start of the war onto a proper army".<sup>617</sup> There was also a growing confidence, born of better arms and fuel supplies and new uniforms. The Bosnian Army's strength mainly lied in infantry, estimated at 110,000 men against the Serbs' 80,000, and in motivation, since many were refugees fighting to go home. They could operate from within compact territory and defeat the Serbs with hit-and-run tactics. The Bosnian Serbs, by contrast were over-stretched, covering 1,000 miles

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and Ukranian armed forces. *Jane's Intelligence Review* 7, no. 1, 29-31 and *Jane's Intelligence Review* 6, no. 9, 404-409.

<sup>614</sup> Both Britain's shadow foreign secretary Robin Cook and the Conservative MP who chaired the foreign affairs select committee, David Howell, however had long challenged the view that the conflict was a kind of civil war. See "Peace Moves in Bosnia," Editorial, *The Guardian*, May 15, 1994.

<sup>615</sup> Albert Wholstetter, "Genocide by Embargo," *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, 10 May 1994.

<sup>616</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 260.

<sup>617</sup> Ian Traynor, "Thick Red Line Holds in War of Attrition," *The Guardian*, 1 September 1994.

of front line. But the overall superiority of the Serbs in tanks and artillery was still very great.<sup>618</sup> Paul Beaver estimated also that in the two years to April 1994, military equipment worth more than £ 6.7 billion was smuggled through the UN arms embargo into former Yugoslavia. The Croats got more than half of it, the Serbs about a third, and the Bosnian government, already outgunned, only about a ninth.<sup>619</sup>

Although the Muslim-Croat peace since March 1994 had shifted the balance, opening up supply routes for the land-locked Bosnian Muslims allowing them plenty of assault rifles, ammunition and anti-tank missiles, the truth was that the embargo was very effective in the crucial area of heavy weaponry.

From the very beginning of the war, despite the calls for surrender since there was no prospect of an international military intervention and the Bosnian government forces were too weak to counter the Bosnian Serbs, Izetbegovic refused and instead called on the international community to adopt a policy of 'lift and strike'.<sup>620</sup> Responding to Izetbegovic's calls, President Clinton decided to support the 'lift and strike' option in April 1993. Yet, Secretary of State Warren Christopher's attempts to sell the idea were resisted and stopped throughout 1993 by strenuous British and French objections and Clinton facing a dilemma 'to do something' but not to get 'too involved in Bosnia' spent not a lot of effort to counter these objections.

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<sup>618</sup> They were estimated to have nine times as many tanks as the government. For example, the Croatian General Karl Gorinsek estimated in October 1994 that the Bosnian Army had 45 tanks, while Bosnian Serbs had 400. Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 260.

<sup>619</sup> Ian Traynor, "Thick Red Line Holds in War of Attrition", *The Guardian*, 1 September 1994.

<sup>620</sup> Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 40-1.

From May 1994 onwards, the relations between the President and the Congress became strained on US policy in Bosnia and Hercegovina. On 12 May, the Senate demanded that the President breaks the UN embargo on arms supplies to Bosnian government, even if it meant taking action alone. Though many of those who backed this change had been vocal opponents of sending US ground troops and even of authorising US air strikes, they supported lifting the embargo so that the Bosnians themselves rather than the Americans could defend Bosnia and Hercegovina.

When, on 1 July 1994, the US Senate narrowly defeated an amendment that would have forced the unilateral lifting of the embargo, France, Britain and Russia again viewed this prospect of the Senate forcing an arms lift to the Bosnians with alarm.<sup>621</sup> British officials were quick to emphasise that even if it was accepted, the Senate decision would not be binding on the President. But, President Clinton had long realised that his powers to stick to his 'European-led policy' on Bosnia had eroded, and that he had run out of explanations why he still bowed to the European, especially British, pressure not to take appropriate measures to stop the carnage when the European implication in the whole war had already been revealed. Confronted with that, the President said that he favoured lifting the arms embargo but he did not want to act unilaterally in defiance of the wishes of the European countries which provided the bulk of the UN peace-keeping force in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Finally, President Clinton announced that 'unless the Bosnian Serbs accepted the Contact Group's 6 July proposal by October 15, he would formally introduce and support a resolution in the UN Security Council to terminate the international arms embargo. 'If he fails to win

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<sup>621</sup> Helen Dewar, "Senate Keeps Weapons Ban on Muslims in Bosnia," *International Herald Tribune*, July 2-3, 1994.



worldwide support by November 15", he had told the Congress, he would break the embargo on his own.<sup>622</sup> All the hopes for unilateral US action were dashed, however, when in September, President Izetbegovic had announced at the UN that he was not seeking an immediate lifting of the arms embargo: he feared that a sudden change of policy on this issue would bring with it the abandonment by the UN forces of the eastern enclaves, and a new heavy offensive by the Serbs.<sup>623</sup>

#### **7.6.2. British Opposition to NATO Air Strikes**

During the second half of 1994 it was evident for the Bosnian Government that real progress would only be made on the battlefield, not in the negotiating chamber. During August, a strong offensive by the Fifth Corps of the Bosnian Army succeeded in defeating the forces of Fikret Abdic and driving them out of the Bihac pocket, into neighbouring Serb-held areas of the Croatian 'Krajina'.<sup>624</sup> This was a blow to the Serb military leaders, who had thereby lost their proxy forces in the Bihac area. Responding to this, angry with the Muslims attacking from the safe area, General Michael Rose said "these attacks certainly aren't very helpful to the peace process,". He added that "they are one of the reasons why the Serbs feel quite justified in closing off Sarajevo".<sup>625</sup>

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<sup>622</sup> Douglas Jehl, "Bosnian Crisis Hangs Over Clinton Like a Darkening Cloud," *International Herald Tribune*, September 9, 1994.

<sup>623</sup> See Dilek Eryilmaz, *The US and the Bosnian War: An Analytical Survey on the Formulation of US Policy From the Yugoslav Dissolution to the Dayton Accords, 1991-1995*. Unpublished Master's Thesis, Bilkent University (Ankara, March 1997).

<sup>624</sup> John Pomfret, "Bosnian Muslims Rout Rebel Force," *International Herald Tribune*, August 10, 1994.

<sup>625</sup> John Pomfret, "Bosnia Muslims Launch a New Offensive," *International Herald Tribune*, August 9, 1994.

In September, General Mladic began his own offensive against the Bihac pocket, using not only Bosnian Serb forces but also Croatian Serbs. Although the town of Bihac had been declared a 'safe area' by the UN in May 1993, it now appeared that Mladic intended eventually to capture the town, with its important road and rail links. A massive blockade of the Bihac pocket was also operated by the Serbs, with the aim of starving the civilian population into submission: between May and November, 131 convoys were turned back by Serb roadblocks even though the UN forces had a mandate to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid, if necessary by force.

At the end of October 1994, when the Bosnian Fifth Corps began an offensive from its position near Bihac and seized back more than hundred square kilometres, a new joint offensive of the Bosnian Army Seventh Corps and Croat forces against the Serbs in central Bosnia led to the capture of town Kupres on 4 November. The Serb forces seemed to be suffering from logistical problems, and lacked the fuel supplies for rapid re-deployments of their forces. However, during the rest of November they mounted an increasingly strong counter-attack against the Bihac pocket, using not only their own forces with their still large stocks of heavy weaponry, but also so-called 'volunteers' from Serbia, re-equipped members of Fikret Abdic's force, and roughly 10,000 well-armed Krajina Serbs from the occupied area of Croatia, an area which the UN was, theoretically, in the process of 'demilitarising'.

During the attack, Serbian fighter jets on a bombing raid through a NATO patrolled no-fly-zone, dropped napalm and cluster bombs on the 'safe area' of Bihac.<sup>626</sup> In Washington the Clinton administration responded by proposing a kind of heavy

weapons exclusion zone around Bihac that was imposed around Sarajevo in February 1994. The US also urged NATO air strikes on Serb missile sites around Bihac. Britain and France refused, as usual, to go along with this proposal; Both General Sir Michael Rose and General Bertrand de Lapresle, then Commander of UNPROFOR in Zagreb, were against the air strikes. Although previous UN Security Council Resolutions authorised member states to 'take the necessary measures, including the use of force' to deter attacks against the safe areas' and to ensure compliance with the no-fly zone (Resolutions 836 and 816 respectively), while Serb artillery bombarded the 'safe area' of Bihac, General Rose declared that it was impossible to do anything about it.<sup>627</sup> Senator Dole, the Republican leader in Congress expressed frustration with UN's response: "the UN should get off NATO's back and let NATO take care of Serbian aggression".<sup>628</sup>

On November 21, NATO aircraft carried out an attack on Udbina airfield in the Serb held area of Croatia from where the Serbs had launched their assaults against Bihac.<sup>629</sup> However, NATO attack and the threats for further attacks did little to stop Serbian

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<sup>626</sup> Ian Traynor, "Serbs Mock West With Bomb Raids," *The Guardian*, 19 November 1994.

<sup>627</sup> The UN Security Council established a ban on military flights on Bosnian airspace in resolution 781 of 9 October 1992, although with no enforcement provisions. The idea of enforcing the no-fly zone came into force when Security Council adopted Resolution 816 after 465 violations to the no-fly-zone were detected. Resolution 816 authorises UN members 'acting nationally or through regional organisations or arrangements, to take, under the authority of the Security Council and subject to close co-ordination with the Secretary General and the UN Protection Force, all necessary measures in the airspace of Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina, in the event of further violations, to ensure compliance with the ban on flights'. Operation 'Deny Flight' came into force on 12 April 1993. Participating countries were France, the Netherlands, the United States and the United Kingdom. The operation is run by NATO's Fifth Allied Tactical Airforce HQ in Vicenza in northern Italy and co-ordinated NATO AWACS high flying radar aircraft, already monitoring the airspace in the former Yugoslavia.

<sup>628</sup> Bruce Clark, Laura Silber and Nancy Dunne, "UN Force High Alert As Serbs Near Safe Area," *Financial Times*, 21 November 1994.

<sup>629</sup> The planes attacked the air base from which they had flown, causing a certain amount of damage to the runway. Of 39 aircraft which took part in the sortie, four were from United Kingdom: two RAF Jaguar aircraft took part in reconnaissance and two further aircraft attacked the runway. The other

forces moving towards Bihac. In retaliation, Bosnian Serbs took more than 250 peace-keepers from Canada, France, Russia and Ukraine hostages in Sarajevo at weapons collection sites.<sup>630</sup>

In response, as one NATO official put it “the US wanted to be able to hit the Serbs much, much harder without warning and in many places at once. They believe this is the only way that the Bosnian Serbs can be persuaded to back off from the complete occupation of Bihac”.<sup>631</sup> But Britain again expressed its fear that such a huge expansion of NATO airpower might be seen by the Serbs as full scale participation in the war on the Bosnian government side which could leave the UN peace-keeping forces open to the danger of Serb retaliation. Senator Dole, the Republican Leader in the Senate, then blamed Britain and France for “a complete breakdown” of the Atlantic Alliance and called on the UN to withdraw their forces from Bosnia and Hercegovina since the European states always cited the safety of their troops in Bosnia as an argument against tougher military intervention.<sup>632</sup> On the other hand, Britain and France argued that if the US wanted to find a solution to the problem, instead of arguing for lifting of the arms embargo or futile air strikes, it should be ready to commit its ground troops to fight for Bosnian Muslims. At this point, the US-British relations reached the lowest ebb since the Suez crisis of 1956.

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aircraft involved in the attack were from the United States, the Netherlands and France. Laura Silber and Bruce Clark, “NATO Bombs Serb Held Airfield,” *Financial Times*, 22 November 1994.

<sup>630</sup> Laura Silber and Bruce Clark, “Squabbling NATO Fails to Contain Serb Thrust,” *Financial Times*, 25 November 1994.

<sup>631</sup> John Palmer, “NATO Crisis Over US Plan For Bihac,” *The Guardian*, 25 November 1994.

<sup>632</sup> George Graham, “Dole Blames UK and France For NATO Bosnia Rift,” *Financial Times*, 28 November 1994.

Behind the scenes the UN manipulation of NATO actions were on full-swing. When the Serb tanks were heading for Bihac, the US Ambassador in Sarajevo, Viktor Rackovic, asked Rose for further air strikes. After Rose's refusal, Rackovic called Washington and this time Rose appeared to agree. CIA interceptions of SAS communications were later revealed, however, as NATO planes took off from Aviano airbase in Italy, Rose was ordering his SAS spotters on the field not to identify any Serb targets for the planes to bomb.<sup>633</sup> Similarly, during NATO bombing attacks on Udbina airbase on November 21, General Lapresle instructed NATO forces to avoid hitting approximately 15 Serbian planes kept there.<sup>634</sup> Even worse was the fact that, after Bihac fell to the Serbs, upon requests from General Mladic, with whom General Sir Michael Rose had been a good drinking partner, Rose and Lapresle managed to halt NATO flights for a week.<sup>635</sup>

### **7.7. Converging Different Approaches to Peace in Bosnia and Hercegovina**

For months, Anthony Lake, President Clinton's National Security Adviser, had been talking about the need to combine the threat of force with diplomacy to protect towns designated by the UN as 'safe areas' in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Then, when Bihac was on the verge of falling to the Serbs, in his three page note to the President, he admitted that 'Washington had failed to persuade Britain and France to support NATO air strikes to try to save the town'. Instead of pressuring for further bombings, Lake

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<sup>633</sup> Ed Vulliamy. "How the CIA Intercepted SAS Signals," *The Guardian*, 29 January 1996.

<sup>634</sup> Article by Michael Gordon, Douglas Jehl and Elaine Sciolino, "US and Bosnia: How a Policy Changed," *The New York Times*, 4 December 1994.

<sup>635</sup> J Pomfret, "UN General Blocks Strikes on Serbian Missile Sites," *International Herald Tribune*, December 3-4, 1994.

recommended that the US concentrate on trying to secure a cease-fire and on stepping up its diplomacy:

“Bihac’s fall has exposed the inherent contradictions in trying to use NATO air power coercively against the Bosnian Serbs when our allies have troops on the ground attempting to maintain impartiality in performing a humanitarian mission... The stick of military pressure seems no longer viable”.<sup>636</sup>

After a meeting of President’s top advisers, American policy on the 32-month old war in Bosnia reached an important milestone. Finally deciding that the Atlantic Alliance takes precedence over the fate of Bosnia and Hercegovina, the Clinton Administration radically altered its Bosnia policy to fall into line with France and Britain. The change was driven by the US Defence Department which took the initiative, as Jane Sharp argues, ‘to move US policy in the direction of what they called ‘the pragmatic peace’ rather than ‘peace with honour’.<sup>637</sup> William Perry made it clear that the Pentagon had washed its hands over the fate of Bihac and of Bosnia when he said that “it seems that the Serbs have demonstrated military superiority on the ground and that the Bosnian government had no prospect of winning back any of the 70 per cent of territory held by Serb forces”.<sup>638</sup> Obviously, this was a dead end actually reached by policies of the US and the EU which rewarded aggression and ethnic cleansing.

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<sup>636</sup> Article by Michael Gordon, Douglas Jehl and Elaine Sciolino, “US and Bosnia: How a Policy Changed,” *The New York Times*, 4 December 1994.

<sup>637</sup> Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 47.

<sup>638</sup> “The End of Cruel Illusions,” *Review and Outlook, The Wall Street Journal Europe*, 29 November 1994.

The major shift in the American policy in Bosnia and Hercegovina upset many Americans and some people in Britain. Professor Stanley Hoffman, Director of the Centre for European Studies at Harvard, condemned the American capitulation to the Anglo-French sacrificing spirit of Munich and compared the UN policy towards Bosnia to the League of Nation's inaction over the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in the 1930s.<sup>639</sup> Similarly, well-known British experts, Adrian Hastings, Norman Stone, Mark Almond, Noel Malcolm and Branka Magas expressed their disappointment by the new US stance: "it is time that the US government ceased to allow either its own policy or that of the United Nations to be hijacked by London and Paris, and more to serve a strategy wholly inconsistent with the ideals of democracy and pluralism on which the United States itself was built".<sup>640</sup>

Following the American turnover, Germany also agreed to toe line on Bosnia and Hercegovina. Chancellor Helmut Kohl announced that he would continue to restrain his 'moral' sympathy for the Bosnian Muslims in the interest of maintaining a show of European unity for the arms embargo and support for new peace efforts.<sup>641</sup> Content to bring back the Americans to their line, at the meeting of NATO foreign ministers on 1 December 1994, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe, reiterated Malcolm Rifkind's views that deterring the Serb campaign in Bihac by air strikes was an "inoperable and impossible strategy". On 7 December, Douglas Hurd told the House of Commons that there was a long history of over-optimism about air power. Although he admitted that

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<sup>639</sup> Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 48. See Stanley Hoffmann, "Yugoslavia: Implications for Europe and for European Institutions," in *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars*, ed. Richard H. Ullman (New York: A Council on Foreign Relations Book, 1996), 97-121.

<sup>640</sup> Adrian Hastings, Norman Stone, Mark Almond, Noel Malcolm, Branka Magas, "On Bosnia, Washington Should Stop Deferring to London and Paris," *International Herald Tribune*, November 29, 1994.

air power had its role, emphasising that NATO and the UN had worked out together ways in which NATO air power could be used to protect UN forces, to deal with heavy weapons in and around the safe areas and to enforce the no-fly zone, he maintained “the idea, however, that one can use air power to alter the policy of a Government to bring recalcitrant people to the conference table is misguided”.<sup>642</sup> Malcolm Rifkind also struck a similar tone in his statement to the House of Commons on 21 November 1994 after the NATO air strikes over Bihac “Breaching the no-fly zone was an important part of the justification for today’s attack.”<sup>643</sup> However, he repeated his opposition to air attacks saying that “the events of the past few days have shown how improbable is a military solution to this conflict.”<sup>644</sup>

In Brussels, Warren Christopher joined the other Foreign Ministers of the Contact Group in an endorsement of the equal treatment of all three warring factions in Former Yugoslavia, putting aggressors and victims in the same category and essentially accepting ethnic cleansing and territorial gains by the aggressor as the starting point for a settlement. The outcome was a shift from the military back to the political sphere and two ‘clarifications’ were made to the Contact Group’s peace proposals which had been presented at the beginning as final and unalterable:

“The territorial proposal of the Contact Group with its 51/49 parameter and its commitment to the integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Hercegovina remains the basis for a settlement. This territorial proposal can be adjusted by mutual agreement between the

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<sup>641</sup> David Buchan and Michael Lindemann, “Germany Agrees to Toe Line on Bosnia,” *Financial Times*, 1 December 1994.

<sup>642</sup> House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 7 December 1994, col. 316.

<sup>643</sup> House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 21 November 1994, col. 343

<sup>644</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 346



parties. Constitutional arrangements agreeable to the parties will need to be drawn up which preserve the integrity of Bosnia and Hercegovina and allow equitable and balanced arrangements for the Bosnian-Croat and Bosnian Serb entities. The Contact Group will facilitate discussion between the parties looking toward a settlement.”<sup>645</sup>

other words, the Contact Group was allowing ‘land swaps’ as long as these were to be agreed by all the parties and retained the 51-49 ratio. Secondly, it was allowing the possibility of constitutional arrangements for the Bosnian Serbs similar to those provided for the Muslims and Croats. There had been various press reports which interpreted ‘constitutional arrangements’ as permission for the Bosnian Serbs to form confederal links with Serbia proper. In his statement to the House of Commons on 7 December 1994, however, Douglas Hurd attempted to dispel this assumption:

“As for the constitutional arrangements ...it has already been agreed in principle that the... Muslims and Croats could have a special link with Croatia. We are saying that it may be possible for the parties to agree that there should be a fair, balanced and equal relationship between the Bosnian Serbs and Serbia... . We are talking not about a confederation but about constitutional arrangements within the integrity of Bosnia and Hercegovina.”<sup>646</sup>

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Contact Group Ministerial Communique, Brussels, 2 December 1994.  
House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 7 December 1994, col. 315.

As the year 1994 was approaching to the end, the appeasement of the Serbs by the international community were more clear than ever. As a well known British journalist put it:

“It is 56 years since Britain and France took the initiative in Munich to allow Germany to carve up Czechoslovakia in an attempt to appease Hitler. Four months later, when the Nazi forces occupied Poland, they recognised the paradox- that peace can only be secured through war”.<sup>647</sup>

Similarly, in the Bosnian case, under increasing pressure to accept defeat and settle quietly for peace, Bosnian Government’s hopes for a just peace were razed to the ground. In his address to the CSCE summit in Budapest on 5 December, President Izetbegovic bitterly castigated Britain and France for appeasement in the face of Serbian aggression: “Paris and London from the very beginning have taken the role of Serbia’s protectors; they have blocked the Security Council and NATO and prevented all attempts at stopping Serbia’s aggressive war”.<sup>648</sup>

On the other hand, around 350 UN personnel were still hostages at the hands of the Serbs and some of them were used as ‘human shields’ against expected air strikes in certain areas. Some others were trapped in so-called ‘safe areas’ and could not be reached. Acknowledging the apparent uselessness of the aid mission, the policy debate had become dominated by arguments over withdrawing UN troops under these circumstances. First, Douglas Hurd, warned his colleagues at the EU summit in Essen

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<sup>647</sup> Maggie O’Kane, “When the Talking Has to Stop,” *The Guardian*, 5 December 1994.

that the 23,000 strong UN peace-keeping force could be forced to withdraw in ‘a matter of weeks’ unless the Bosnian Serbs accepted the UN-EU plan. President Clinton even agreed in principle to send US troops to help evacuate UN peace-keepers from Bosnia and Hercegovina. That decision was a turnaround in policy for the US, which had so far been reluctant to commit ground forces in Bosnia. Then, Britain held back from the idea of withdrawing the troops and insisted that a diplomatic solution be found in Bosnia.<sup>649</sup>

When everything was in a deadlock; neither the UN, NATO, nor any of the major powers showed any overall vision for solving the Bosnian crisis, the surprise came with the Carter Peace initiative in the last week of 1994 upon the invitation of Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic. The former US president Jimmy Carter quickly brokered a deal between Bosnian government and Bosnian Serbs for a four month cessation of hostilities beginning January 1, 1995.<sup>650</sup>

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<sup>648</sup> “Alija Izetbegovic Addresses the CSCE Summit,” *Bosnia Report*, Issue 8, January 1995, 5.

<sup>649</sup> Lionel Barber, “Britain and France Firm on Bosnia,” *Financial Times*, 10-11 December 1994.

<sup>650</sup> Laura Silber, “Bosnia Signs Interim Cease-Fire,” *Financial Times*, 24 December 1994.

## CHAPTER VIII: TOWARDS THE ENDGAME: BRITISH POLICY

### ON THE ROAD TO DAYTON

#### 8.1. Reversal of the Tide: Bosnia and Croatia on the Offensive

By the beginning of 1995, it was obvious that international diplomacy towards former Yugoslavia had been stripped of all credibility. Lacking an overall vision, the international community did not muster a credible threat of force that would bring the Serbs to serious negotiations. The main problem was that the Serbs continued to set the agenda and neither the UN, NATO, nor any of the major powers had shown overall vision for solving the Bosnian crisis. As even the US officials admitted, there were only few months, at best, before resumption and probably worsening of the fighting. The problem remained: the Serbs were still setting the agenda and the West had run out of ideas”.<sup>651</sup>

The EU negotiator Lord Owen approached 1995 with trepidation since there was no Contact Group peacemaking to match the UN peacemaking, and the UNPROFOR's authority was running out.<sup>652</sup> The Serbs had refused to accept the Contact Group plan and it was obvious that no one would force them to sign it unless the situation changed radically. However, the year 1995 was going to bring forward all the changes necessary to force the Bosnian Serbs to sign a settlement that would end the four years of war.

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<sup>651</sup> Roger Cohen, “No Trace of Peace in Bosnia’s Cease-Fire,” *International Herald Tribune*, 20 January 1995.

<sup>652</sup> Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 336.

### 8.1.1. Tudjman's Decision to Expel UNPROFOR

From the beginning of 1995, attention increasingly focused on the situation in Croatia, when President Tudjman sent a letter to the UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali on 12 January, saying that "Croatia would not renew the mandate of the 14,000 strong UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) when it expired on 31 March and the peace-keepers would leave by late June 1995".<sup>653</sup>

Calculating that there was no prospect of Milosevic and his proxies in Serb-held Croatia negotiating seriously a settlement while the UN provided a shield, behind which the Serbs could build their mini-state, President Tudjman had decided to get rid of the UN presence in Croatia.<sup>654</sup> As one observer writing from the regions at the time put it:

"In fact, the UN mission in Croatia has had effectively frozen the territorial outcome of the 1991 war, patrolling the frontlines and enabling the 12 per cent Serb rebel minority, with Belgrade's backing, to entrench its hold on a quarter of the country with a view to merging with "Greater Serbia". The UN mission has had in practice helped the Serbs".<sup>655</sup>

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<sup>653</sup> In the letter, Tudjman praised the original January 1992 decision to station UN forces all along the front lines separating the Croatian army from the Krajina Serb rebels, who controlled between 25 to 30 per cent of Croatia's territory. He also uttered kind words for the foreign soldiers and the sacrifices many of them had made in keeping the often fragile peace. But he argued that the UNPROFOR had not managed to fulfil any of its original objectives and that the only purpose it had served was to preserve the status-quo, which was helping the Serbs to consolidate their 'conquests'.

<sup>654</sup> The peacekeeping force had been unable to disarm the UNPAs; to establish an ethnically mixed local police force; to enable refugees to return or to ensure control of the Croat-Bosnian border. See Alan James, "The UN in Croatia: An Exercise in Futility?," *The World Today* 49, no. 5 (May 1993), 93-5.

<sup>655</sup> Ian Traynor, "Croats Give UN Marching Orders on a Dangerous Battle of Wits," *The Guardian*, 14 January 1995.

The fear that the UNPROFOR's continued presence supported the partition of Croatia was the domestic political reason for Tudjman's decision. Tudjman's governing Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ) had lost most of its popularity and its parliamentary majority had been weakened by defections. The HDZ could not have afforded to be seen as tolerating the *de facto* partition of Croatia, and there was a hard line element within the party which never approved the Vance Plan.<sup>656</sup> As one Croatian official put it, "Tudjman had to end UNPROFOR's mandate in order to stay in power; it is as simple as that".<sup>657</sup>

In fact, several additional factors aggravated domestic opposition to the peace keeping operation. First, 300,000 Croatian refugees were unable to return their homes in Serb-held areas. The Vance Plan had promised that they could go back, but in practice that never happened and the refugees were growing increasingly impatient. The funding for refugees from Krajina and Bosnia was the second largest item in the state budget, after defence. Second, the unintegrated territories put a heavy burden on Croatian economy. Krajina's capital Knin, as a major railway junction, now, in rebel Serb hands, was blocking the rail traffic between Zagreb and Split. Third, the UNPROFOR itself had been unpopular; it appeared to protect the Serb conquests and it became known among the Croats as SERB-PROFOR (i.e. protecting the Serbs). The government-controlled media also promoted the negative image of the peace-keepers often showing them in company with the Serbs.<sup>658</sup>

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<sup>656</sup> Patrick Moore, "The Winds of War Return," *Transition* 1, no. 5 (14 April 1995), 33.

<sup>657</sup> *Reuters*, January 15, 1995.

<sup>658</sup> Moore, "The Winds of War Return," 33.

last but not the least, recent developments in the international mediation on Bosnia had persuaded the Croats of the urgency of taking immediate action. In December 1994, when the US fell in with Britain, France and Russia on Bosnia, opting a “peace at all costs” strategy and recognising the Serbs as the military victors, the alarm bells were sounded in Zagreb.<sup>659</sup>

### **3.1.2. International Reaction to Tudjman’s Decision and The Zagreb-4 Project**

Tudjman’s determination to get rid of UN presence in Croatia led the international community to re-launch diplomatic efforts to head off a conflict. Especially the troop-contributing states, mainly Britain and France were concerned that the departure of the UNPROFOR from Croatia would increase the tension in the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) and could lead to a renewal of the war in Croatia, which in turn could provoke a wider war.<sup>660</sup> The question also arose whether the UNPROFOR could maintain its presence in Bosnia without strong UN presence in Croatia to guarantee supplies and logistical support; on 6 March, Bosnian Serb commander General Ratko Mladic warned that the UNPROFOR would also have to leave Bosnia if Tudjman evicted it from Croatia.<sup>661</sup>

The co-chairmen of the ICFY, Lord Owen and Stoltenberg, and the Ambassadors of the US and Russia- the Zagreb Four (Z-4)- began in late January to seek a lasting solution to the Krajina issue. The goal was to give the Krajina Serbs a broad measure

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<sup>659</sup> Ian Traynor, “Croats Give UN Marching Orders on a Dangerous Battle of Wits,” *The Guardian*, 14 January 1995.

of self-rule while maintaining the formal unity of Croatia and permitting the refugees to return home.<sup>662</sup> On 30 January 1995, the Z-4 Ambassadors presented a 'Draft Agreement on the Krajina, Slavonia, Southern Baranja and Western Sirmium' but was rejected by both sides.<sup>663</sup> Zagreb rejected the package because it created a 'state within a state' and thus violated the Croatian constitution. The Croatian Serbs also rejected the plan arguing that 'Krajina Serbs could not accept to turn to Croatian sovereignty, and Milosevic apparently did not wish to recognise Croatian frontiers and leave his long-standing project for creating a 'Greater Serbia'.

The Z-4 project was not the only plan on the table on the wake of Tudjman's announcement to expel the UNPROFOR. French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe, in an interview with *Le Monde* on 31 January, offered a 'last chance scenario' by calling for an international conference on the former Yugoslavia. This conference was to have included Tudjman, Milosevic and their Bosnian counterpart Alija Izetbegovic, but Karadjic would not be invited unless he accepted the Contact Group division plan. Juppe's proposal stipulated that all former Yugoslav republics must recognise each other and endorse both the Contact Group and Z-4 plans, and that sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro would be suspended. The plan was later amended to include implementation in stages as well as at one time. Similarly, Andrei Kozyrev stated that

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<sup>660</sup> House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 2 March 1995, col. 651w.

<sup>661</sup> *Reuters*, 7 March 1995.

<sup>662</sup> Moore, "The Winds of War Return," 36.

<sup>663</sup> Z-4 Plan was seeking a compromise by emphasising Croatia's territorial integrity, while seeking to assure the Serbian minority of its rights. It offered the rebel Serbs a broad measure of autonomy in two parts of the territory where they form a majority. Serbs living in other parts of the self-declared Republic of Serbian Krajina would be expected to reintegrate into Croatia and the government in Zagreb would be forced to observe strict human rights legislation to protect the Serbian minority. In the autonomous Serbian region, the Serbs would have control over taxation, the police, education, tourism, housing and public services and Zagreb would act for foreign affairs, defence, trade, transport and communications. Krajina would be demilitarised and the border with Bosnia monitored. *Reuters*, 1 February 1995 and 9 February 1995.



“if we recognise Milosevic as a key factor, we must help him” by ending sanctions.<sup>664</sup> Nevertheless, all the proposals were given a cold shoulder by Belgrade. The prevalent view was that ‘sanctions must first be lifted and the constitutional relationship between Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia regulated locally before Milosevic will consider recognition of Bosnia and Croatia’. Extending ‘early’ recognition to Croatia would be a very difficult step for Milosevic, who would be seen as leaving his Serbian brethren and their dream of Greater Serbia, which would provoke a politically dangerous backlash from ultra-nationalists within Serbia.<sup>665</sup>

Despite all the efforts, by early March, Croatia’s position on the UNPROFOR did not change much; President Tudjman proposed to negotiate a new mandate which would put the peace-keepers not on the frontlines partitioning Croatia, but on Croatia’s internationally recognised borders,<sup>666</sup> as the Croatian Defence and National Security Council announced:

“... The mandate will not be extended. As proof of its determination to achieve a peaceful solution and the reintegration of occupied areas, Croatia is willing to accept the presence of international monitors on its internationally recognised borders with Serbia and Bosnia and Hercegovina. Croatia will not accept a new UNPROFOR or the deployment of any forces in the disengagement zone along the battle lines in Krajina”.<sup>667</sup>

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<sup>664</sup> *Reuters*, 20 February 1995.

<sup>665</sup> Stan Markotich, “Milosevic’s New Strategy,” *Transition* 1, no. 19 (20 October 1995), 60-62.

<sup>666</sup> Drozdiak W., “Croatia Chief Drops Plan to Push Out UN Troops,” *International Herald Tribune*, 13 March 1995.

<sup>667</sup> The declaration was made on 1 March 1995. Quoted in Moore, “The Winds of War Return.” 37.

On 6 March 1995, Croatia also announced the formation of a military alliance with the Muslim-Croat front of Bosnia which further strengthened the already recovered Muslim-Croat forces. Generals Janko Bobetko, Rasim Delic, and Tihomir Blaskic, the commanders of the Croat and Bosnian government armies and the Bosnian Croat militia respectively, agreed in Zagreb to set up joint military headquarters.<sup>668</sup> "I have been waiting for this moment for two years -uniting our forces for the anti-fascist battle," said Rasim Delic, commander of the Bosnian government. The support from Croatia added muscle to the anti-Serb front which resulted in a stronger position for the Federation both on the battlefield as well as on the negotiation table. According to General Bobetko, the pact was to strengthen the Croat-Muslim federation in Bosnia forged with the encouragement of the US in 1994 and to which both parties had by then paid little more than lip service.<sup>669</sup> In the meantime, Bosnia's Foreign Minister, on a visit to London, again called for a lifting of the arms embargo, and in Washington Senator Dole was still searching for a majority for such a move.<sup>670</sup>

### **8.1.3. Croatia's Recapture of Western Slavonia and Its Implications**

On May 1, Croatian forces launched 'Operation Flush', ostensibly a limited police operation in retaliation to the latest Serb attack on the highway E-70, but it turned out to be the beginning of a sustained effort to claim territory lost to the Serbs since the 1991 war.<sup>671</sup> By 2 May, the Croatian army units had seized all strategic points in the Serb held areas of Western Slavonia, and the fall of Okucani restored Croatian control

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<sup>668</sup> The move was interpreted as a response to a military pact formed a month ago by the leaders of the Bosnian-Croatian Serbs, who had established a joint defence council in the Bosnian town of Banja Luka.

<sup>669</sup> Julian Borger, "Pact Increases Balkan Tension," *The Guardian*, 7 March 1995.

<sup>670</sup> "Running Out of Ideas," Leading Article, *The Guardian*, 8 March 1995.

over segments of the economically vital Zagreb-Belgrade highway (E-70 motorway) and parallel railway.<sup>672</sup> By 6 May the entire area was fully restored to the Croatian Government control. The majority of the Serb inhabitants had already fled to Bosnia and Hercegovina and some of them to Serbia. The Croatian Serbs retaliated by firing missiles armed with cluster bombs on Zagreb, killing five and wounding 121.<sup>673</sup> In addition, Croatian Serbs took over 100 UN peace-keepers in the area hostage to use as human shields against Croatian bombardments. All this indicated that the tide in the war was certainly tilting towards Croatia.

The significance of the recapture of Western Slavonia was threefold: it demonstrated the new strength and tactical skills of the Croatian army; it revealed the underlying weaknesses of the Serb forces; and it showed that neither Serbian and Montenegrin army nor even the Bosnian Serb military was prepared to come to the rescue of the Croatian Serbs.<sup>674</sup> Although in the past, Milosevic pledged to defend the Serbs everywhere, he sought to distance himself from the fighting in Croatia since his primary concern at that time was to secure the lifting of the sanctions.<sup>675</sup> He only condemned the Croatian attack in spite of the mounting pressure within Serbia's military and political establishment.<sup>676</sup>

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<sup>671</sup> Sharp, "*Honest Broker*," 49.

<sup>672</sup> Patrick Moore, "Waiting and Watching in the Wake of Western Slavonia," *Transition* 1, no. 10 (23 June 1995), 28.

<sup>673</sup> *Reuters*, May 2, 1995.

<sup>674</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 261.

<sup>675</sup> Stan Markotich, "New Image, Same Old Goals," *Transition* 1, no. 12 (14 July 1995), 7.

<sup>676</sup> For example, Vojislav Seselj, leader of the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party, accused Serbian President Milosevic of betraying the Croatian Serbs in Western Slavonia and warned Radovan Karadzic that Milosevic was similarly planning to betray the Bosnian Serbs.

Tudjman's military offensives changed the regional balance of power. It was argued that, in Washington's view, this provided a useful substitute for Western action against the Serbs, which in turn more than justified covert military assistance to Tudjman.<sup>677</sup> Croatian President announced that "after this lesson the Serbs will accept a peaceful solution at the end...If not...they had a lesson from Okucani".<sup>678</sup>

After such radical changes on the ground in Croatia, alarmed that renewed fighting could spread to other areas of former Yugoslavia, the House of Commons debated the situation in former Yugoslavia on 9 May 1995.<sup>679</sup> Still, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs, Douglas Hurd was arguing in favour of peacekeeping operation which in his view had saved many lives and prevented a wider war. The Foreign Secretary also clearly put that Britain had no intention of imposing a settlement from outside by force meaning abandoning its 'neutrality'.<sup>680</sup> He repeated, what he had earlier said constantly to the House, that he still regarded the war in Bosnia in terms of a civil war: 'the main responsibility for starting the war rests with the Serbs, but in essence these have always been civil wars'.<sup>681</sup> Therefore, no military intervention on behalf of one side or lifting of the arms embargo which, in his view, would escalate the fighting could and should be considered seriously. He took the view that both options would likely to create dangerous situations because they might range the US and Russia on different sides. Obviously, British policy had not changed much from the beginning of the war: it still had three objectives: containing the fighting with the arms embargo; softening the war's effect on civilians with peacekeeping

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<sup>677</sup> Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 50.

<sup>678</sup> Quoted in Patrick Moore, "Waiting and Watching," 56.

<sup>679</sup> House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 9 May 1995, cols. 582-650.

<sup>680</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 583.

<sup>681</sup> *Ibid.*

operations and creating the conditions for peace which involved soldiers on the ground mediating local disputes, brokering local cease fires.

Meanwhile, the UN's confusion as to what to do was increasing on a daily basis. For instance, the soldiers were trying to do the politicians' job by negotiating with both sides local ceasefires, and the UN civil officials were deciding about the military actions. When the UN Commander in Bosnia, General Rupert Smith requested air strikes to protect the safe area in Sarajevo from further shelling, he was overruled by the UN at the political level. That showed that something was really wrong with the UN chain of command, which was oddly partly military, partly civilian and operated with the dual key system. As Sir Patrick Cormack stated, until Yasushi Akashi was removed, there would be little credibility for the UN operations in Bosnia.<sup>682</sup>

#### **8.1.4. End of the Carter Cease-Fire and the Bosnian Offensive**

Another important issue which complicated the Contact Group's diplomatic efforts in the first half of the 1995 was the refusal of both the Bosnian government and the Bosnian Serbs to renew the four month cease fire that was to expire on 1 May. Many signs had already indicated that the parties involved regarded the December cease-fire simply as a welcome opportunity to prepare for more war in the spring.<sup>683</sup> The cease-fire itself was never fully effective; in the Bihac pocket, Abdic and Krajina Serbs had refused to sign the documents.<sup>684</sup> On 18 January, Serbs flew 20 helicopter sorties to resupply positions just west of Bihac, where the Bosnian government's mainly Muslim

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<sup>682</sup> Ibid.

<sup>683</sup> Patrick Moore, "January in Bosnia: Bizarre Diplomacy," *Transition* 1, no. 3 (15 March 1995), 20.

Fifth Corps had retaken the strategically important villages of Vedro Polje and Klokot in a counter offensive begun after the cease-fire took effect on January 1.<sup>685</sup>

Neither Yasushi Akashi nor the members of the Contact Group were able to persuade either Bosnian government forces, or the Pale Serbs, to extend the four month cease-fire that ran out at the end of April.<sup>686</sup> Obviously, in the absence of any diplomatic breakthrough, the Bosnian government did not want to prolong a truce that allowed the Serbs to tighten their grip on the 70 per cent of Bosnia they held. In his speech to the House of Commons, Robin Cook, the new shadow Foreign Secretary pointed out that the Bosnian government made it perfectly clear to him when he visited them that 'they had no intention of extending the ceasefire, if there were no agreement on the Contact Group peace plan by the time that the ceasefire came to an end' and he considered this position as 'understandable'.<sup>687</sup>

Elements in the Bosnian political and military leadership wanted to fight, having long since concluded that might was the determining factor in present situation.<sup>688</sup> The Contact Group's failure to put any pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to accept the terms of the Contact Group Plan was annoying. It seemed to everyone that the European Powers were no longer interested in what was happening inside Bosnia, and that they were congratulating each other because the war had not spread outside Bosnia and

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<sup>684</sup> Adrian Brown, "Bihac Action Puts Cease-Fire at Risk," *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 January 1995.

<sup>685</sup> The Serbian sorties were 'a clear violation of the no-fly zone over Bosnia'. The helicopters took off from the Udbina airfield in the Krajina. NATO had bombed the runways at the Udbina airfield in November 1994, but spared the Serbian aircraft at the insistence of the UN Commander Sir Michael Rose. Roger Cohen, "No Trace of Peace in Bosnia's Cease-Fire," *International Herald Tribune*, 20 January 1995.

<sup>686</sup> Emma Daly, "Bosnians and the Serbs Refuse to Renew Truce," *The Independent*, 1 May 1995.

<sup>687</sup> House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 9 May 1995, col. 591.

<sup>688</sup> Laura Silber, "Bosnian Rivals See No Alternative to War," *Financial Times*, 22 March 1995.

Hercegovina. As Bosnian foreign minister Haris Slajdzic noted, the only concern of the Contact Group was that the war did not spill out of Bosnia, "Whatever spills into Bosnia seems to be OK".<sup>689</sup>

Prepared during the winter truce, the Bosnian government troops launched a twin offensive on Serb-held strategic heights in the third week of March. The sudden assaults on the Majevica peak above the government stronghold of Tuzla and on Vlastic mountain across the front line in Travnik failed to dislodge the entrenched Serbs, but triggered statements of alarm in Western capitals.<sup>690</sup> Prime Minister John Major was quick to urge the Bosnian government and Bosnian Serbs to stop violating the ceasefire, and said that 'the Bosnian parties were quite literally playing with fire. If they rekindle all out war' he said 'I don't believe any of the participants will be able to make lasting gains'.<sup>691</sup>

## **8.2. The Changing Phase of the International Involvement**

### **8.2.1. General Rupert Smith and the Rapid Reaction Force**

Following the upsurge in Serb attacks, which forced the closure of Sarajevo airport to humanitarian aid flights, The UN commander in Bosnia, British Lieutenant-General Rupert Smith warned the Bosnian Serbs that they risked NATO air strikes if they continued to shell civilian targets and violate the heavy weapons exclusion zone around Sarajevo.<sup>692</sup> However, the UN had refused to authorise NATO air strikes against

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<sup>689</sup> Julian Borger, "UN Appeals on Truce Fail," *The Guardian*, 1 May 1995.

<sup>690</sup> Ian Traynor, "Peace Moves On Ice As Melting Snows Herald Return to Fighting in Bosnia," *The Guardian*, 23 March 1995.

<sup>691</sup> Laura Silber and Bruce Clark, "Major Appeal for Bosnia Truce," *Financial Times*, 11 April 1995.

<sup>692</sup> Ibid.

Serbian artillery around Sarajevo which had then completed its third year under siege. The French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe was furious over the lack of response to Serbian shelling of Sarajevo and the UN's failure to prevent increasing casualties among the 4,800 French peace keepers.<sup>693</sup> All this cautious approach had prompted a steady build-up of pressure for the UN to toughen its stance -particularly after May 8, when the UN headquarters in Zagreb irritated the US and other western governments by deciding against punitive air raids even after a mortar attack in Sarajevo which killed eleven people.<sup>694</sup> However, the British government remained unmoved. It simply held to its much criticised line of policy that outside military intervention or lifting of the arms embargo on the Bosnians would not advance matter. If anything, according to British officials, either option would make things worse. But in the House of Commons there were critical voices coming up. For instance, sharing the feelings of quite a few British MPs, in his speech to the House of Commons Menzies-Campbell of Fife pointed out that:

“The whole sorry episode is perhaps illustrated by the quotation ascribed to a United Nations spokesman, who is widely reported as having said, ‘We’ll do nothing’. If this is the response of the United Nations to a gross and severe provocation, it is hardly surprising that the deterrent effect of threats made by the United Nations had been rather less forceful than many of us in the House would have preferred”.<sup>695</sup>

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<sup>693</sup> Michael Sheridan, “Pressure on UN for Tougher Bosnia Role,” *The Independent*, 17 May 1995.

<sup>694</sup> Bruce Clark, “West Shows Frustration With Serbs,” *Financial Times*, 26 May 1995. The request for air strikes went up the UN chain of command and finally it reached Boutros Ghali in Moscow. He said no to the air strikes because, as David Owen argues ‘what had been requested was not close air support but wider air strikes’. The US protested the decision and even Britain expressed disagreement, and Douglas Hurd wrote to Boutros Ghali challenging the decision. See Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, 346-7.

<sup>695</sup> House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 9 May 1995, col. 609.



On the other hand, the UN had always been reluctant to exercise the option of calling NATO air power mainly because of the vulnerability of its scattered and lightly armed UNPROFOR to Serb retaliation.<sup>696</sup> Since Rupert Smith succeeded Michael Rose as UNPROFOR Commander in Sarajevo in January 1995, however, he urged the deployment of UN troops out of vulnerable areas so that NATO air strikes would not be opposed by any troop contributing countries. As a result, when the international community decided to take more robust action against the Bosnian Serbs, they found a willing ally at the head of the UNPROFOR forces. In fact, Smith was one of the five men who made difference in international response to Bosnia in the second half of 1995.<sup>697</sup>

The whole episode began on 22 May, when Bosnian Serbs seized heavy weapons from a UN depot near Sarajevo and a day later they began to fire on the city. On 24 May, General Rupert Smith issued an ultimatum to both the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian government to cease firing heavy weapons by noon on 25 May. He also ordered the Bosnian Serbs to return the seized weapons within the same deadline and to remove all heavy artillery from a 20 km exclusion zone by noon, 26 May. The Serbs complied with the cease-fire by noon on 25 May, but did not return the heavy weapons. They were convinced that there would not be any air strikes, even if there were, they would only be pinprick attacks here and there without seriously damaging Bosnian Serbs' fighting capability. Then, however, they were immediately attacked from the air; NATO planes struck an ammunition depot near the Bosnian Serb capital of Pale. The

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<sup>696</sup> In his briefing to the Security Council, Boutros-Ghali on 16 May said that to date 162 peacekeepers had been killed and 1,412 injured.

<sup>697</sup> See Bruce Clark, "Five Key Men Who Helped to Break the Deadlock," *The Financial Times*, 17 December 1995. The other four were Jacques Chirac, Robert Dole, Franjo Tudjman and Richard Holbrooke.

Bosnian Serb reaction to the NATO air strikes was swift and severe; that evening, they shelled civilians in all the UN-declared safe areas except Zepa, killing 71 in Tuzla. They surrounded about 200 peace-keepers as potential hostages. Then followed the second round of air strikes. The Serb response was to shell Sarajevo and to seize more hostages.

As it became clearer later, NATO strikes were more than just response to Bosnian Serb violations. Air strikes came to be seen as the litmus test of the UN's and NATO's willingness to get totally involved in this war.<sup>698</sup> Two weeks before, when Rupert Smith had applied to Yasushi Akashi, the UN envoy in Zagreb with a request for NATO raids, he was turned down. To the outside world, this was an admission that the Serbs could get away with anything. NATO's deterrence capability was dealt a serious blow. The raid on 25 May was aimed to restore NATO's pride, despite the retaliatory Serb shelling of five 'safe areas', including Sarajevo. As a senior American diplomat said:

“The warring parties in Bosnia have to believe that a threat to launch air strikes will lead to an attack. Otherwise the policy of deterrence has no credibility. There has to be a place for the application of military force. The trouble with the policy towards Bosnia is that we have never been able to apply enough military pressure, political pressure or economic pressure to stop the fighting”.<sup>699</sup>

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<sup>698</sup> Michael Evans, “Airstrike Gamble Meant as Warning to Warring Sides,” *The Times*, 26 May 1995.

<sup>699</sup> *Ibid.*

Two days later, however, NATO and UN commanders called off further air strikes in Bosnia after the Serbs began showing television pictures of UN peace-keeping soldiers in chains at an ammunition bunker which had been the target of previous bombing raids. The Bosnian Serbs held prisoner nearly 300 UN soldiers and military observers, threatening to shoot them if NATO were to launch further air attacks.<sup>700</sup> It seemed that, once more, the international community was hostage to Bosnian Serb leadership's tactics.

For the British Government, the chief concern was Gorazde where 336 members of the Royal Welch Fusiliers, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Jonathan Riley, were based.<sup>701</sup> In the other 'safe areas' there were, 1,250 Norwegian, Danish and Swedish soldiers in Tuzla; 4,900 French, Russian, Egyptian, Ukrainians in Sarajevo in addition to General Smith's headquarters staff; 780 Dutch troops in Srebrenica; and 1240 Bangladeshis in Bihac.<sup>702</sup>

General Smith realised that the Serbs did not know what to do next. They were unlikely to kill the hostages because that would lead to stiffening of the resolve of the international community to such an extent that massive military response might be contemplated. If the UN and NATO continued to escalate, General Smith believed that the Serbs might just be forced to back down and the deterrent effect of the air power saved. But Smith also realised that there was an element of bluff in his threat.

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<sup>700</sup> Robert Fox and Jim Muir, "Bosnia Serbs Take UN Hostages as Human Shield," *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 May 1995.

<sup>701</sup> First Battalion of Royal Welch Fusiliers, *White Dragon, The Royal Welch Fusiliers in Bosnia* (Wrexham, 1995). Also see the article by former Commander of UNPROFOR in Bosnia and Hercegovina Lieutenant General Sir Michael Rose, "The British Army in Bosnia: Facing up to New Challenges," *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal* 125, no. 2 (Spring 1995), 134-7.

<sup>702</sup> Michael Evans, "Fears for British Troops in Gorazde," *The Times*, 27 May 1995.

The international community might lack the will to escalate to success. In that case, though, he would break the machine and force the international community to end the pretence that the UNPROFOR was a peace-keeping force.<sup>703</sup>

At the moment, it was important for the troop contributing countries to remain united in standing up to the defiance of the Serbs. There was no question of withdrawing the soldiers from the dangerous Muslim enclaves, since that would have been seen by the Serbs as an example of weakness which would have been exploited. Already, with the latest events, the UN had lost credibility, making unavoidable a choice between toughening its stance or scaling down its mission.

All this meant that Britain's policy of molly-coddling the Serbs had clearly failed to the extent of endangering the credibility of the United Nations and Atlantic Alliance. Then, the British government had made it clear that it would fully support a get-tough policy by General Smith. John Major warned the Bosnian Serbs to 'drop their hostage tactics in Bosnia': "I hope there are no more attacks against the UN personnel either direct, or with the intention of taking hostages".<sup>704</sup>

On 28 May John Major convened the Overseas Policy and Defence Committee of the Cabinet with the Chief of Defence Staff in attendance and, with a decisive move in the direction of former option, Britain announced to send up to 6,000 extra troops (more than doubling its military presence) to Bosnia in a dramatic get-tough policy with the Bosnian Serbs after they had taken hostage 33 members of Royal Welch Fusiliers in

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<sup>703</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 265-71.

<sup>704</sup> Roger Boyes, "Crisis Call to Russia by Major and Kohl," *The Times*, 27 May 1995.

Gorazde earlier that day.<sup>705</sup> With the number of UNPROFOR soldiers taken hostage by the Bosnian Serbs, Britain and France agreed to seek to change the rules of engagement in Bosnia to allow their troops to fire first in self-defence.<sup>706</sup> David Howell MP, the Tory chairman of the Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, said, “the Bosnian Serbs should be in no doubt that Britain and her allies mean business in the most intensive way”<sup>707</sup>.

“As the Serbs think about their next step they may have reason to wonder whether a short-term tactical advantage may come at the expense of a strategic catastrophe. They have, in effect, declared war on the UN. The UN slogans of neutrality, impartiality and avoidance of combat have been stripped of whatever meaning they had. For Britain and France, the issue is no longer whether the humanitarian mission is working but the direct threat to their own personnel.”<sup>708</sup>

Under these circumstances, the British Parliament was immediately recalled from national holiday for an extraordinary session, suggesting a level of national emergency not seen in Britain since the Gulf War. In one of the longest debates which the House experienced for many years, Major’s plea for the work of the UN peace keepers in Bosnia to continue without the threat of hostage taking or a full-scale war won the overwhelming support of MPs.

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<sup>705</sup> Robert Peston, “UK Poised to Double Troops Levels in Bosnia,” *Financial Times*, 29 May 1995.

<sup>706</sup> Julian Borger, “Major Pledges 6,000 More Bosnia Troops,” *The Guardian*, 29 May 1995.

<sup>707</sup> Robert Peston, “UK Poised to Double Troops Levels in Bosnia,” *Financial Times*, 29 May 1995.

<sup>708</sup> Lawrence Freedman, “Perils of Rising the Stakes,” *The Times*, 30 May 1995.

Opening the emergency debate on the Bosnian crisis on 31 May, John Major told a House of Commons that the taking of UN peace keepers as hostages was a despicable and outrageous breach of international law.<sup>709</sup> He outlined the new British forces and material being sent or put on stand by for Bosnia and made clear that they had two objectives: to protect British troops already on the ground and provide support for a possible withdrawal. “Our troops have not gone to Bosnia to wage war”, he said. “But even on humanitarian duties we have seen they need protection. If they are attacked they must be able to defend themselves robustly”.<sup>710</sup> He also said that the situation in Bosnia had reached the ‘turning point’. For the opposition, Tony Blair said that the Labour fully supported the Government’s line, but he emphasised that there should be a clear chain of command with clear rules of engagement: “I believe that talk of withdrawal in Bosnia in response to the taking of hostages is deeply unhelpful at this time,” he said. “It is hardly a message of firm resolve in what is effectively an act of coercive blackmail”.<sup>711</sup> At the end of the debate, the Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind announced that British troops would be taking part in a new, mobile ‘theatre reserve force’ set up at the instigation of Rupert Smith, the UN Commander in Bosnia, to counter potential attacks on UNPROFOR troops.<sup>712</sup>

In the meantime, General Smith was in touch both with the UN and the British Joint Commander, General Sir John Wilsey, at his headquarters at Wilton, Wiltshire. General Wilsey was in command of the ‘Operation Grapple’- the British contribution

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<sup>709</sup> House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 31 May 1995, col. 1002.

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 1004

<sup>711</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 1007.

<sup>712</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 1097-1100.

in Bosnia, and although General Smith reported to the UN, he was also talking to General Wilsey about twice a day.<sup>713</sup>

What eventually came out of weeks of discussions was the NATO and West European Union (WEU) Defence Ministers' decision on 3 June to set up a Rapid Reaction Force (RRF), consisting of one self-supporting British brigade and one French-led multinational brigade operating under the existing mandate.<sup>714</sup> This meant that the two senior UN commanders to be in charge of the two brigades, Lieutenant-General Bernard Janvier in Zagreb and Lieutenant-General Rupert Smith in Sarajevo could dispatch elements of the RRF to protect the six 'safe areas' against attack; counter any attempt to stop the flow of supplies to UN troops, and rescue peace-keepers held hostage. The RRF would consist of Britain's 24 Airmobile Brigade -at least 5,500 men- and a multinational brigade that would include 1,500 French troops equipped with armoured personnel carriers and combat helicopters, and the new British Theatre Reserve Force, also known as 'Task Force Alpha'.<sup>715</sup> Both forces would be under UN control but with green vehicles. Malcolm Rifkind, the British Defence Minister, stressed that tough "this is the first time in the history of the UN that such a Rapid Reaction Force had been created... It would not change the nature of the UN presence... since the force's creation would not bring the UN any closer to being a combatant in a crisis which still requires a political solution".<sup>716</sup> Trying to show that

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<sup>713</sup> Patricia Wynn Davies, "Downing Street," *The Independent*, 29 May 1995. However, it appears that General Rupert Smith had disconnected the direct phone line to London. See Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 51.

<sup>714</sup> The decision was then approved by the UNSCR 998 on 15 June 1995. Michael Evans, "Extra Firepower Will Allow UN to Take Initiative," *The Times*, 5 June 1995.

<sup>715</sup> David Rodhe, "Europe's Enforcers in Bosnia Brace for Battle," *Christian Science Monitor*, 5 June 1995.

<sup>716</sup> Bruce Clark, David Buchan and Harriet Martin, "West Sets Tough Military Goals in Bosnia," *Financial Times*, 5 June 1995.

Britain still keeps its neutrality in the war, Douglas Hurd said that the 'Rapid Reaction Force is certainly giving the UN force greater clout than they have had before for their own protection... and so that they can have a better chance of carrying out their mandate. It is not turning them into a force which is going to fight on one side or another...'<sup>717</sup>

Despite British insistence on preserving its neutrality towards what British officials called the 'warring parties', it was argued that, the decision at the end of May 1995 to strengthen UNPROFOR by providing a combat-capable Rapid Reaction Force represented an important breakthrough. It was always likely that General Smith, described as an individual of great character, intuition and intellect, would seek ways to make the force more effective.<sup>718</sup> At least, at the end, it was apparent that UNPROFOR was placed in a position to be more effective and less vulnerable to possible air strikes. With the new re-configuration, the troops gave a crucial element of credibility to any international diplomatic initiatives to coerce the Serbs into upholding the agreements already made or even into making new agreements.<sup>719</sup>

While Britain and other Western countries were debating policy options for Bosnia and trying to figure out what the nature of Rapid Reaction Force would be, the Serb siege of the Bosnian capital, which included preventing any food or medical aid from arriving by air, had been in effect for months. Left without choice, the Bosnian Army moved in mid-June to relieve the strangulation of Sarajevo, forcing the Serbs to fight in fifteen different places and the Serbs retaliated by shelling civilian areas, including

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<sup>717</sup> Ian Black and David Fairhall, "Britain Confirms It Will not Take Sides in the Conflict," *The Guardian*, 5 June 1995.



the main hospital.<sup>720</sup> Although, some new territory was taken by the Bosnian army, including high ground overlooking important Serb supply routes to the north east and south of Sarajevo, the situation remained largely unchanged on the ground. However, the offensive was a sign of the way in which the tide of the Bosnian war had turned. As a result, the Bosnian Serb leadership in Pale found itself not only diplomatically but also militarily in a weak position, as well as under pressure from Belgrade.<sup>721</sup>

Not surprisingly, new Bosnian government offensive worsened the policy differences between the US and its European allies, particularly, Britain. “The problem today is that the United States backs military action by the Bosnians (referring to Bosnian government), whereas we are neutral . If the Europeans are on one side and the Americans are on the other, it would be like an earthquake in the Atlantic Alliance” one British official said.<sup>722</sup> He also warned that if President Bill Clinton was unable to stop Congress from lifting an arms embargo on the Bosnian government, French and British peace-keeping forces might pull out of the region. On the other hand, the US believed that the European neutrality in the war had had the effect of consolidating Bosnian Serb gains, while the Europeans, especially Britain criticised the US for advocating support for the Muslims without regard to the possibility that this could spark a wider war.<sup>723</sup>

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<sup>718</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 265.

<sup>719</sup> Ibid., 266-68.

<sup>720</sup> Bruce Clark and Bernard Gray, “At the Mercy of Military Logic,” *Financial Times*, 17-18 June 1995.

<sup>721</sup> On 3 June, Montenegro announced that it recognised Bosnia and Hercegovina within its international frontiers. An essential part of Belgrade’s economic and diplomatic strategy since January was the removal of sanctions by the summer of 1995. Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 269.

<sup>722</sup> Barry James, “US and Allies Set on Collision Course Over Bosnia Policy,” *International Herald Tribune*, 1-2 July 1995.

<sup>723</sup> Tony Barber and David Osborne, “France Accuses US of Arming the Muslims,” *The Independent*, 1 July 1995.

### 8.3. The Fall of the UN 'Safe Areas': Srebrenica Massacre

On 11 July Bosnian Serb forces overran the safe area of Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia. Strategically located in the Drina valley running along the border with Serbia, Srebrenica was the first 'safe area' established by the United Nations in April 1993.<sup>724</sup>

The reasons for this attack, and for the similar move against the enclave of Zepa later that month, were several; the Pale leadership no doubt wished to weaken the morale of the Bosnian Government, pushing it more rapidly towards a diplomatic acceptance of defeat; it probably also wanted to free several thousands of its troops, who had been encircling these enclaves, in order to supplement its depleted manpower elsewhere. Its calculations about UN intentions must also have played an important part. On the one hand, the impending arrival of the 'Reaction Force' was a reason for moving against Srebrenica and Zepa before that force was actually deployed.<sup>725</sup> But, the crucial element in the Serb's leadership's decision-making must have been the report presented to the Security Council by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali on 31 May, in which he had recommended pulling back from positions which could not be properly defended, such as the eastern enclaves. This public display of a lack of will to protect those 'safe areas', coming on top of so many earlier demonstrations of the UN's reluctance to carry out its mandate, may well have been the deciding factor.<sup>726</sup>

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<sup>724</sup> UNSCR 819, 16 April 1993. Resolution demanded that '...all parties and others concerned treat Srebrenica and its surroundings as a safe area which should be free from any armed attack or any other hostile act'. Resolution also demanded the free passage for the wounded and permission from Serbs to allow 150 Canadian peace-keepers into the town to monitor a cease-fire. Shortly after the passage of Resolution 819, agreement was reached between the Bosnian Serb and government commanders to demilitarise Srebrenica.

<sup>725</sup> It was announced that Rapid Reaction Force's 3,500 strong Anglo-French-Dutch Brigade was going to be fully operational in the area by July 13. Julian Borger, "Waiting Alone to Test the Mettle of West and the Serbs," *The Guardian*, 22 July 1995.

<sup>726</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 263-4.

On 9 July Serb tanks entered the 'defenceless' Srebrenica 'safe area' overrunning several UN outposts manned by Dutch soldiers and taking 32 of them hostage. According to several later reports, the Dutch commanding officer in Srebrenica had urgently requested NATO air strikes; this request was transmitted to Zagreb, where senior UN officials spent several days considering it. On 11 July NATO planes were finally authorised to take action; but after hitting two Serb tanks they were ordered to cease their attack, because the Serbs were now threatening to kill the 32 Dutch soldiers. The original policy of placing small units of UN forces in these enclaves had been based on the idea that, while they themselves would not be able to defend the safe areas on the ground, they would act as a 'tripwire' for the use of air power. It now became clear that the reality was the precise opposite: instead of being a tripwire for attacks on the Serb army, they had become a human shield that rendered it vulnerable.<sup>727</sup>

Within a fortnight, the Muslim population of Srebrenica area had been virtually eliminated, in circumstances of unimaginable savagery. Between 11-13 July 1995, while blue-helmeted Dutch soldiers looked on, the Serbs had separated-out all male inhabitants of the town from their families and taken them away.<sup>728</sup> Most of the Dutch knew that they were being forced to witness and even co-operate in an 'ethnic cleansing' operation. Later, the Dutch Army Doctor, Colonel Kremer described the situation as a 'combination of *Schindler's List* and *Sophie's Choice*'.<sup>729</sup> Women, children, the aged and the sick were expelled from the region: more than 13,000 of them eventually gathered in a makeshift refugee camp at Tuzla airport. The majority

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<sup>727</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>728</sup> Honig and North, *Srebrenica*, 28-47.

of the Muslim men met a gruesome fate; they were executed and buried in mass graves at the nearby town of Bratunac, many were tortured before being killed, a small number were put in prisons and only very few managed to escape.<sup>730</sup> Srebrenica was a scene “from hell written on the darkest pages of human history”.<sup>731</sup> Aerial photographs later released by the US indicated that four mass graves had been dug near Srebrenica; these were estimated to hold the bodies of at least 2,700, and possibly as many as 4,000 men and boys.<sup>732</sup>

The fall of Srebrenica on 11 July 1995 has been described by many as the darkest moment in the history of the UN’s involvement in Bosnia.<sup>733</sup> Others count the massacre following the take-over of Srebrenica as the largest single war crime in Europe since the Second World War.<sup>734</sup> UN Human Rights Rapporteur Tadeusz Mazowiecki called the Serb action ‘a very serious violation of human rights on an enormous scale that can be described only as barbarous: attacks on the civilian population, killings and rapes’ and he resigned from his job in protest soon after filling his report.<sup>735</sup> In his letter of resignation he severely accused international community and its leaders of lack of consistency and courage.<sup>736</sup>

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<sup>729</sup> Ibid., xvii.

<sup>730</sup> Ibid., 48-67.

<sup>731</sup> Words of Judge Fouad Riad, ‘The Prosecutor vs. Radovan Karadzic, Ratko Mladic, Review of the Indictment’, International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia, quoted on the front page of book by Jan Willem Honig and Norbert Both, *Srebrenica: The Record of A War Crime* (London: 1996).

<sup>732</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 264. By 16 August 1996, however, the Red Cross had registered 6,546 tracing requests for people missing from Srebrenica 6,513 of them were men. Honig and North, *Srebrenica*, xviii.

<sup>733</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 264.

<sup>734</sup> Honig and North, *Srebrenica*, xix.

<sup>735</sup> Tadeusz Mazowiecki’s Letter of Resignation reprinted in *The New York Review of Books* 42, no. 14 (September 21, 1995), 39.

<sup>736</sup> A Letter of Resignation, *The New York Review of Books* 42, no. 14 (September 21, 1995), 39.

The new British Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, who replaced Douglas Hurd when the latter resigned from his post, was still at pains to apportion the blame equally to the ones who massacred and those who were brutally massacred. He identified the failure of both sides to comply with the demilitarisation agreement as the root of recent events in Srebrenica. According to him, the failure of the UN member states to contribute troops to ensure implementation of the safe areas concept was another root cause. Rifkind told the House of Commons:

“In June 1993, the UN suggested that up to 36,000 troops could be necessary to implement the safe areas concept. The United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands responded well, but many others did not. The total committed amounted to only 7,500 -a significant shortfall. This has had substantial implications for the safe areas policy”.<sup>737</sup>

In fact, this was not true. The Resolution adopted by Security Council on 16 April 1993 declaring Srebrenica a safe area was dangerously inconsistent.<sup>738</sup> In fact, the Council agreed on creating a safe area without specifying how its safety could be ensured. Although some members of the Security Council, in particular Venezuela, Pakistan and Morocco proposed the Resolution to lead to UN military intervention on the side of the Bosnian Muslims, the member states whose troops were most likely to implement such a decision such as Britain, France and Spain remained nervous. As a result, the Resolution carefully avoided creating new military obligations for UNPROFOR either to establish or even to protect the safe area. The Council firmly

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<sup>737</sup> House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 12 July 1995, col. 947.

<sup>738</sup> UNSCR 819, 16 April 1993.

placed the burden on the Serbs and the Muslims to make Srebrenica safe. UNPROFOR's role would simply be to 'monitor' the humanitarian situation.<sup>739</sup>

With a striking difference in approach, on the eve of the Bastille Day speech, on 13 July, French President Jacques Chirac accused Western allies of abandoning the Bosnian 'safe haven' of Srebrenica to a Serb incursion as they had Czechoslovakia to Hitler in 1938, and he warned Britain and the US against becoming 'passive witnesses or accomplices in the unacceptable'.<sup>740</sup> However, it later appeared that British 'realism' again persuaded the French government to abandon President Jacques Chirac's talk of recapturing Srebrenica. In the meantime, Senator Dole in Washington said that the UN mission had failed and that the protection force should be withdrawn and the arms embargo lifted so that the Bosnian government could get the weapons: 'it is a little late to strengthen UNPROFOR. I'd tell them to get out'.<sup>741</sup>

Immediately after Srebrenica, the 'safe area' of Zepa, meanwhile, which was protected by 79 Ukrainian soldiers, was attacked by overconfident Serb forces on 14 July and fell eleven days later. Assault was led by the Bosnian Serb military leader General Mladic and anticipating London Conference's warning by Western governments of NATO strikes to protect Gorazde, he said: "The West must come to realise that it can not continue bombing the Serbs without punishment, that it can not draw maps for us

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<sup>739</sup> Britain and France made sure that Srebrenica was turned into a 'safe area', as opposed to a 'safe haven', the latter being what was created for the Kurds in Iraq. The difference under international law was that safe havens need not depend on consent of warring parties and their safety could be enforced, while safe areas were based on consent.

<sup>740</sup> Alex Duval Smith, "Chirac Rhetoric on 'New Holocaust' Plays to Neo-Gaullist Patriots," *The Guardian*, 17 July 1995.

<sup>741</sup> On the other hand, US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher insisted that lifting the arms embargo would be 'a serious mistake' and that it is an easy gesture which would eventually force the

which will carve up the ancient land of the Serbs'.<sup>742</sup> At the same time, a heavy attack on the Bihac pocket suggested that the Serb strategy now was to take all the most vulnerable 'safe areas' as quickly as possible. In stark contrast to the determination of Mladic the international community was still in the midst of a chaos.<sup>743</sup>

Even under these circumstances, the British government's response was to convene another conference in London. The subtext of the scene had all the echoes of 28 February 1992, when John Major, with the world threatening to get tough on the Serbs, had said: "Let's talk about it". "What's new Mr. Rifkind," asked a journalist from CNN.<sup>744</sup> With the UNPROFOR's credibility reached the lowest ebb, both John Major and Warren Christopher said that Bosnia was 'at a turning point' and that Gorazde marked a limit to Bosnian Serb aggression'.<sup>745</sup> In fact, the contrasts between detailed American aspirations and adaptable British pragmatism were tried to be solved before the Conference, when the British Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind visited Washington a week earlier. The questions of cohesion and will had effectively become alternatives: it was either international cohesion that included the Russians, or the will of the West. Although at the London meeting, the Russian Federation blocked the issuing of a clear ultimatum, and for a few days it appeared to many sceptics that the apparent Western will and cohesion emerging in the run-up to the meeting would be neutralised by Russian reservations, France, Britain and the US had decided to give a

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US to supply arms to the Bosnian government, effectively forcing the US to take sides in the war. Bernard Gray, "Reinforce or Pull Out, US Urges," *Financial Times*, 17 July 1995.

<sup>742</sup> Peter Beaumont and John Sweeney, "Serbs Scorn Warning With New Zepa Attack," *The Observer*, 23 July 1995.

<sup>743</sup> Bernard Osser and Patrick de Saint Exupery, "The UN's Failure: An Interview with Tadeusz Mazowiecki," *The New York Review of Books* 42, no. 14 (September 21, 1995), 39.

<sup>744</sup> Maggie O'Kane, "Fine Words Deft Delivery But the Song Remains the Same," *The Guardian*, 22 July 1995.

<sup>745</sup> Michael Sheridan, "US Clarity Eclipses Britain's Caution," *The Independent*, 22 July 1995.

visible demonstration of will at an early opportunity to ensure the credibility of the threats made. As a result, within days, elements of the RRF were deployed to secure the Igman route overlooking Sarajevo, while a senior officer from each of the three key Western countries was present in Belgrade to deliver a joint ultimatum on the use of massive air power, specifically in response to any attack on Gorazde and generally to protect other 'safe areas'.

The Islamic Conference's own 'Contact Group' meeting, held in Geneva on the same day with the London meeting, was also a serious blow to Britain and France which had resisted the arming of the Bosnian Muslims depriving them its right of self-defence. They issued a Declaration calling for a lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia and promising military help, should UNPROFOR withdraw. In their declaration, the OIC Member States also warned that 'the policy of appeasement, on the part of the certain Security Council members, of the Serbian policy of aggression and genocide will have serious consequences, further endangering international peace and security, and will also be counterproductive in the efforts to bring about a negotiated settlement'.<sup>746</sup>

Nevertheless, Britain's new Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo's words, saying that the 'deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force near Sarajevo did not signal a change in the UN mission' proved the ongoing confusion: "There is no shift in any sense from peace-keeping to war fighting," he said. "We wish to provide protection to peace-

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<sup>746</sup> Declaration of the Ministerial Meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference Contact Group on Bosnia and Hercegovina, Geneva, 21 July 1995, was reprinted in *Bosnia Report*, Issue 11, June-August 1995, p. 5. On 23 July, Turkish Grand National Assembly also issued a declaration calling for the embargo imposed on Bosnia to be immediately lifted and saying that in case it was not done Turkey would not comply with it. Declaration of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, was reprinted in *Bosnia Report*, Issue 11 (June-August 1995), 8.



keepers who are trying to save lives".<sup>747</sup> It was obvious that, rather than a combat force to fight against the Serbs, the Rapid Reaction Force was considered as UNPROFOR-PROFOR by British politicians. While, however, the British officials were still talking about the 'warring factions', most Britons, at the time, favoured decisive military action to protect the Bosnian Muslims, including the use of the ground troops and air attacks, even if the lives of British troops were put at risk. The poll for ITV found that 65 per cent were dissatisfied with the Government's handling of the crisis and 67 per cent were unhappy with the UN's performance. Fifty-nine per cent supported the air strikes against the Serbs.<sup>748</sup> Clearly, on the political front, while the British wavering was still going on, the US was beginning to reassess its role.

#### **8.4. Croatian August Offensive and the Fall of Serb Krajina**

While the Bosnian Serb offensives against the safe areas were in full-swing, on 22 July the Presidents of Bosnia and Croatia met at Split and signed a new agreement on military co-operation.<sup>749</sup> The US ambassador to Croatia, Peter Galbraith was present as a private guest in the signing of the 'Split Declaration', demonstrating the clear support of the US administration.<sup>750</sup> Since the fall of the Bihac enclave would enormously strengthen the position of the rebel Serb forces in the Croatian Krajina,

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<sup>747</sup> Edward Mortimer, "Serbs are the Enemy," *Financial Times*, 26 July 1995.

<sup>748</sup> The survey of 1,104 adults in 54 constituencies, carried out by Mori on 20 July 1995, showed 59 per cent of Britons favouring air strikes against the Serbs, with 52 per cent supporting the involvement of British troops. The results contrast sharply with those from a poll conducted in the United States for CNN and Newsweek, in which two thirds of Americans opposed the deployment of US ground troops except to rescue the UN mission, while almost the same number felt that America had done enough to stop the war. Peter Beamont and John Sweeney, "Serbs Scorn Warning With New Zepa Attack," *The Observer*, 23 July 1995.

<sup>749</sup> The 'Split Declaration' was also signed by the Prime Minister of Bosnia and Hercegovina, Haris Silajdic and the President of the Federation of Bosnia and Hercegovina, Kresimir Zubak. The Declaration was reprinted in *Bosnia Report*, Issue 11 (June-August 1995), 5.

<sup>750</sup> Patrick Moore, "An End Game in Croatia and Bosnia," *Transition* 1, no. 20 (3 November 1995), 6.

President Tudjman had a clear interest in aiding the Bosnian forces there. On 28 July, with support from the Croatian Army, Bosnian Croat forces quickly pushed northwards from Livno along the Bosnian side of the Bosnian-Croatian border, seizing the town of Bosansko Grahovo and thereby cutting off an important supply-route to the rebel stronghold of Knin. President Tudjman now had the opportunity to fulfil one of the most important of his own strategic goals: the recapture of the entire 'Krajina' region.<sup>751</sup>

A well-planned Croatian Army offensive 'Operation Storm', beginning on 4 August, achieved this aim with extraordinary speed. The capital of the self-styled Republic of Serbian Krajina, Knin, was taken on 5 August, and within 72 hours the Croatian forces were in almost complete control of the entire territory. The myth of Serbian military invincibility had been shattered.<sup>752</sup> Even before the arrival of the Croatian troops, the local Serb population was instructed by its own political and military leaders to withdraw into Bosnia. At least 150,000 of these people moved into Serb-held northern Bosnia, and some of them continued their flight all the way into Serbia itself.<sup>753</sup> While not on the same scale as the butchery directed by Mladic in Srebrenica, Croatian troops were also reported guilty of appalling acts of murder against unarmed elderly civilians in Krajina.<sup>754</sup>

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<sup>751</sup> According to Jane's Intelligence Review, over the last two and half years, the Croatian armed forces (HV) had been systematically reorganising and strengthening their forces with the eventual ambition of fielding forces capable of regaining Krajina from the Serbs. See *Jane's Intelligence Review* 7, no. 1, (January 1995), 29.

<sup>752</sup> Hasan Unal, "Hrvatlar Krajina'da Hangi Efsaneleri Yikti?" *Milliyet*, 22 August 1995.

<sup>753</sup> Tony Barber, "Alliance Shatters Pan-Serb Dream," *The Independent*, 1 September 1995.

<sup>754</sup> Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 57. Also see Moore, "An End Game," 6.

Recapture of whole Krajina region by Croat forces only within three days shattered the myth of Serbian invincibility which was one of the main arguments of the British Conservative government not to intervene into the war in Bosnia. The case against militarily intervening into Bosnian war was supported by the British argument that the defeat of Serbian militias in Bosnia and the subsequent military occupation of Bosnia and Hercegovina would require something in the order of 500,000 men, still without any prospect of victory.<sup>755</sup> The first UNPROFOR commander in Sarajevo Lewis MacKenzie, famous of misunderstanding the nature and origins of the Serb attack in Bosnia, uttered the famous words that western countries should deploy as much force as had been deployed in Iraq during the Gulf War and up to 800,000 forces would be needed for a successful operation. Since it was obvious that none of the countries would be willing to deploy so many number of soldiers just to defend Bosnian Muslims, the British government's suggestion seemed the most logical one: concluding an agreement on Serbian terms as soon as possible. In addition, all kinds of historically misrepresented data were used to prove the British inactivity against the Serbian atrocities. The British media were constantly told by Douglas Hurd and his assistant Douglas Hogg, that the Serbs had pinned down some 'twenty one' (or more) first class German divisions during the Second World War. This was quite untrue: there were only seven divisions in the whole Yugoslav area, and only one of these were first class.<sup>756</sup> Therefore, the swift Croat victory not only changed the military balance in the region, but is strengthened the hands of those who has all along favoured air strikes against Serb targets coupled with the lifting of the arms embargo on the Bosnian government.

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<sup>755</sup> Michael Dewar, "Intervention in Bosnia: the Case Against," *The World Today* 49, no. 2 (February 1993), 33.

Indeed, more than turning a blind eye to Croatian offensive, Bill Clinton said, he was “hopeful that the Croatian offensive will turn out to be something that will give us an avenue to quicker diplomatic resolution”.<sup>757</sup> Warren Christopher struck a similar note, though at the same time denied that Washington had even tacitly encouraged the Croatian offensive.

### **8.5. US Diplomatic Engagement: the ‘Holbrooke Plan’**

Although very careful, from the very beginning, not to be involved militarily, the US had been politically engaged in the crisis in former Yugoslavia. Charles Redman, Charles Thomas and Robert Frasure all made serious contributions as US representatives on the Contact Group during 1994-1995, and the US Ambassador in Zagreb, Peter Galbraith played a proactive role in arming and training the Croatian army as well as the Croat-Muslim Federation from April 1994.<sup>758</sup> However, it was not until late spring 1995 that the US seemed truly engaged and took over the principal role in co-ordinating Western policy.<sup>759</sup>

The events occurred as part of a series of developments which made UNPROFOR’s position untenable within little more than a month were the main motors driving US policy in mid-1995. Britain and France had repeatedly warned, in 1995, that a policy

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<sup>756</sup> Stone, “British Policy,” 5-6.

<sup>757</sup> Martin Fletcher, “Washington Gives Tacit Support to Croat Attack,” *The Times*, 4 August 1995.

<sup>758</sup> For example, a photograph printed in the government-controlled press showed that the US ambassador to Croatia, Peter Galbraith was present as a private guest in the signing of the ‘Split Declaration’ on 22 July 1995, see Moore, “An End Game,” 6.

of lifting the arms embargo and air-strikes, without any corresponding commitment by the US administration to work towards a political solution, would lead to the withdrawal of their troops.<sup>760</sup> The US Congress had just voted by large majorities for Senator Dole's bill to lift the arms embargo on the Bosnian Government.<sup>761</sup> Following the imposition of President Clinton's veto and amid rumours that Congressmen would proceed regardless, President Clinton embarked on a diplomatic marathon to try and pave the way for a negotiated settlement before the Congress reconvened in mid-September since the impact of such a decision on UNPROFOR's standing could not be avoided. There was also the prospect that further Bosnian Serb humiliations would make the UN mission untenable in troop contributing capitals, and that Britain and France might have carried out their threats to withdraw their troops from UNPROFOR. The State Department's 1996 official study of the process leading to the Dayton Accords of November 1995 confirms that most senior foreign policy officials, most notably the President himself was surprised to learn in June 1995 that US troops might soon be on their way to Bosnia whether the US administration liked it

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<sup>759</sup> Maynard Glitman, "US Policy in Bosnia: Rethinking a Flawed Approach," *Survival* 38, no. 4 (Winter 1996-97), 66-83.

<sup>760</sup> The newly elected president Jacques Chirac had publicly indicated that French troops would not remain in Bosnia for another winter without a more positive role. Quoted in Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 276.

<sup>761</sup> On 26 July 1995, the US Senate voted 69 to 29 to lift the arms embargo against the Bosnian government unilaterally. This was followed in the House of Representatives on 1 August with a vote of 298 to 128 in favour of lifting the arms embargo. The vote was on a proposal introduced by the Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole who argued that UNPROFOR could defend neither itself nor the Bosnian Muslims, so the arms embargo should be lifted to allow the Muslims to defend themselves. The proposal would direct President Clinton to cease US participation in the UN arms embargo if Bosnia requested such action, if UN peace-keeping forces withdrew from Bosnia or 12 weeks after Bosnian government asked UN forces to leave. The votes in favour exceeded by eight the two thirds majority required theoretically to override a presidential veto. President Clinton imposed his presidential veto nonetheless on 11 August saying that ending the arms embargo was the "wrong step at the wrong time" because it would "intensify the fighting, jeopardise diplomacy, and make the outcome of the war in Bosnia an American responsibility". George Graham, "Clinton Vetoes Bill to Break Arms Embargo," *Financial Times*, 12-13 August 1995.

or not.<sup>762</sup> President Clinton had, in December 1994, pledged that, should the European forces withdraw from UNPROFOR, the US would provide a NATO force of 45-50,000 man to facilitate the evacuation of UN troops.<sup>763</sup> In fact, after President Clinton's confirmation, NATO planners had begun to work on Op-Plan 40104 (codenamed 'Determined Effort'), which called for using 20,000 US troops as part of a 60,000 person evacuation force.<sup>764</sup> Then, NATO approved this mission in the Spring of 1995 with the consent of American NATO Ambassador Robert E. Hunter and US military planners in Brussels, Clinton Administration trapped itself. Several senior officials, including UN Ambassador Madeleine K. Albright and National Security Adviser Anthony Lake advised began arguing that since American troops would have to go to Bosnia sooner or later, why not send them on Washington's terms.<sup>765</sup>

The US wanted to use the after-shock created by Croatia's attack on Krajina to generate momentum for a negotiated settlement hoping to reap diplomatic dividends from the creation of a new balance of power on the ground. Obviously, the fall of Krajina led to a complete shift in the balance of power in Bosnia, favouring the Croats and Muslims against the Serbs.<sup>766</sup> William Perry was now speaking of a window of opportunity that had been created with the Serb leadership divided and psychologically weakened.

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<sup>762</sup> Warren Bass, 'The Triage of Dayton,' *Foreign Affairs* 77, no. 5 (September/October 1998), 99-100.

<sup>763</sup> M. Rogers, "Bolster or Withdraw," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, January 1995, p. 8. H. J. Adams, "US Troops Set for Bosnia," *The Sunday Times*, 4 December 1994.

<sup>764</sup> Julie Kim, "Bosnia: Potential Withdrawal of UN Forces, Questions and Answers," *CRS Report For Congress* (30 August 1995) 14-16.

<sup>765</sup> Lenard C. Cohen, 'Bosnia and Hercegovina: Fragile Peace in a Segmented State,' *Current History* 95, no. 599 (March 1996), 105.

<sup>766</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 361.

On 11-12 August US envoys, led by Robert Frasure made a shuttle tour to Europe to discuss various peace initiatives with their Contact Group counterparts. US ideas were premised on three points: first, seeking a negotiated settlement based on the mutual recognition of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina; second, using the fruits of negotiations over the past three years in a 'flexible' manner, that is, not excluding modifications to the Contact Group map; third, using a system of incentives and disincentives to make the parties involved accept the peace proposals. One of the incentives envisaged by the US was the possibility of a reconstruction plan for the region and the suspension of economic sanctions against the rump Yugoslavia. Among the disincentives the US envisaged was the unilateral lifting of the arms embargo in favour of the Bosnian government accompanied by the possible use of air strikes, or the dispatch of a multilateral intervention force to fight alongside the Bosnian government forces.

Special Envoy Frasure's shuttle diplomacy mission was making good progress. He had certainly eclipsed the EU-UN efforts of ICFY, where Owen had resigned at the end of May to be replaced as EU mediator by former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt on 9 June. However, the American diplomatic race was broken on 19 August as a result of a tragic accident on Mount Igman which killed Robert Frasure of the State Department, along with two other US officials: Joseph Kruzel of Defence Department and S. Nelson Drew of the National Security Council.<sup>767</sup> Within ten days, the mission was taken over by Assistant Secretary of State, Richard Holbrooke who led the American mission from late August onwards. His work was significantly assisted by the extensive use of NATO air power.

The shell that killed 37 people in Sarajevo market on 28 August provided the trigger for long overdue retaliatory action against the Bosnian Serbs.<sup>768</sup> Already, at a meeting held on 25 July, NATO members had decided for air strikes to be authorised solely by UN and NATO commanders, cutting out the involvement of UN civilians.<sup>769</sup> General Rupert Smith, the UNPROFOR commander in Sarajevo authorised air strikes without hesitation and NATO launched 'Operation Deliberate Force' on 30 August to demolish Bosnian Serb ammunition dumps and anti-aircraft guns.<sup>770</sup> Air strikes paused after 72 hours to issue a set of demands that Mladic must meet to avoid further air strikes.<sup>771</sup> Mladic refused to pull back his heavy weapons, but agreed to stop attacking safe areas. NATO bombing resumed on 5 September with the full support of Slobodan Milosevic who was at the time engaged in peace talks with Richard Holbrooke in Belgrade. By September 14, when NATO paused to allow Mladic to withdraw his forces, NATO had conducted over 3,500 sorties, including 750 attack missions against 56 ground targets in a two week campaign.<sup>772</sup> The turning point on the road to Dayton was the decision to take a more robust approach towards the Bosnian Serbs making the threat to use force credible.

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<sup>767</sup> Richard Holbrooke, "The Road to Sarajevo," *The New Yorker* (October 21-28, 1995), 88-104.

<sup>768</sup> Christopher Bellamy, "How the Peace-Keeper Became Enforcers," *The Independent*, 31 August 1995.

<sup>769</sup> It was stated that air strikes would be used to "deter attacks, or threat of attacks, against a safe area and to be ready, should deterrence fail, to conduct operations to eliminate any threat, or defeat any force engaged in an attack on a safe area". Wording of the UN/NATO Agreement, *Atlantic News*, August 17, 1995.

<sup>770</sup> The air attacks were in part made possible by the completion of a reconfiguration of UNPROFOR which removed UN troops from isolated locations. In particular, final withdrawal of UN troops from Gorazde took place on 29<sup>th</sup> August.

<sup>771</sup> These three demands were withdrawing the weapons, ending attacks on safe areas, and guaranteeing free movement for UN personnel, including unrestricted access to Sarajevo airport. Michael Evans, "How West Closed Ranks Against Milosevic," *The Times*, 5 September 1995.

<sup>772</sup> Operation Deliberate Force was the largest of such operations in the history of the Atlantic Alliance. It also involved artillery strikes by French, British and Dutch units of the recently formed UN Rapid Reaction Force on Mount Igman near Sarajevo. See Ian Urban, "Sarajevo to NATO: JET'aime," *Transition* 1, no. 20 (3 November 1995), 27.



## 8.6. The 'Endgame' and the Beginning of the Peace Process

In the middle of NATO onslaught, talks resumed in Geneva after more than 18 months of deadlock. Bosnian Serbs had already agreed to form a six member delegation, led by Serbian President Milosevic and empowered him to cast the decisive vote.<sup>773</sup> In a phase called the 'diplomatic endgame' by some commentators, foreign ministers of Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina and the joint Serb delegation met in Geneva on 8 September and agreed on a number of 'Basic Principles' as a basis for further discussions: Bosnia and Hercegovina would continue its legal existence within its present borders and continuing international recognition; but it would be comprised of two distinct entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Hercegovina as established by the Washington agreements, and the Republica Srpska (RS), and the territorial split between them would be 51 percent to 40 percent respectively.<sup>774</sup> In reality, however, this was the recognition that Bosnia and Hercegovina had been partitioned into ethnic statelets by the war; a concession to the Serbs who, for the first time, secured an agreement which formally recognised Republica Srpska as a separate entity.

And since it also allowed for the Serb half of Bosnia to enjoy a 'special relationship' with Serbia, to parallel any confederal relationship between the Federation and the Republic of Croatia, it seemed inevitable that this plan would lead sooner or later not

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<sup>773</sup> As the NATO planes were attacking the Bosnian Serb targets, Milosevic convened a meeting of the Serb leadership in Belgrade, attended by President Momir Bulatovic of Montenegro, the Bosnian Serb leadership, and the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church. During this meeting, Milosevic got the opportunity to win his political war against the Bosnian Serb leaders. He wanted to be declared in charge to mediate between the Bosnian Serbs and the outside world. The US administration had also made this a precondition for future negotiations. Radovan Karadzic was, by then, along with Ratko Mladic, indicted by the International Tribunal in The Hague on suspicion of war crimes. The Bosnian Serb leaders had little choice but to agree to allow Milosevic to represent them at the peace negotiations in the future. Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 366-7

only to secession of the Serb territory but also to its final absorption into a Greater Serbian state.<sup>775</sup> The original aims of Slobodan Milosevic, although seriously curtailed and thwarted in Croatia itself, would thus achieve at least partial fulfilment. Bosnia, a country with one of the longest and most continuous histories, as a distinct geopolitical entity, in the whole of Europe, would undergo an irrevocable division.

In the meantime, although international community warned the allies not to try to take advantage of air strikes, Croatian, Bosnian Croat and Bosnian government troops were keeping up the pressure on the battlefield in northwest of Bosnia and Hercegovina. Voguca, Dojni Vakuf, Drvar, Jajce and other towns fell in rapid succession, and by mid September, Croatian and Bosnian government had taken roughly 3,000 square kilometres from the Serbs.<sup>776</sup> By the end of September, the offensive had run out of steam. Bosnian government army's attempts to capture Banja Luka were thwarted, partly by reorganised Bosnian Serb resistance and partly due to the withdrawal of the heavy weapons under US pressure.<sup>777</sup> Washington feared that the fall of Banja Luka to Bosnian government forces might lead to direct involvement of Serbia proper and thus to a wider escalation of the Bosnian conflict.

After a significant tilt in the war against the Serbs, the parties was nearing the point at which they all deemed their interests could be better defended at the negotiating table

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<sup>774</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 267.

<sup>775</sup> Tony Barber, "The Grinding Out of An Ignominious Peace," *The Independent*, 13 September 1995.

<sup>776</sup> Noel Malcolm argues, however, that, these successes were not directly caused by the NATO air strikes, since these had targeted almost nothing except air defences in that part of Bosnia. But, he adds that, of course the Bosnian government and Croatian forces had benefited indirectly both from the collapse of Serb morale and from the damage inflicted on Serb communications and logistics. Malcolm, *Bosnia*, 267.

than on the battlefield. On 26 September, all three sides agreed on a future constitutional framework in New York, perceived as a 'landmark' accord, although diplomats warned that it was not a legal document in itself, and that there was still a great deal of work to be done, including the negotiation of a cease-fire and a division of territory.<sup>778</sup> The main provisions of the agreement called for the holding of free and direct elections throughout the country with international monitors, who would be sent to the country immediately, on the account that there was a peace. A federal parliament and presidency would be elected on the basis of two thirds from the Muslim-Croat Federation and one third from the Serb entity (reflecting the current population distribution). A constitutional court would also be created.<sup>779</sup> The New York agreement was based on the territorial division proposed by the Contact Group Plan in July 1994, namely that the Croat-Muslim Federation would cover 51 percent of Bosnian territory and the Republica Srpska would be allocated 49 per cent of territory. Previously, the Bosnian Serbs had refused to negotiate on the basis of this territorial division. However, the latest Muslim and Croat offensives in northern and western Bosnia left them in control of roughly the amount of territory allocated to them by the international peace plan.

On 5 October President Clinton announced that the parties had reached agreement on a cease-fire to come into force on 12 October. The agreement included a proviso that gas and electricity had to be restored to Sarajevo before the cease-fire would come into effect. The cease-fire was due to last 60 days or until the completion of further 'proximity talks' to be held in the US and compliance was to be monitored by the

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<sup>777</sup> Stephen Kinzer, "Croats and Bosnians Agree to Halt Attack on Serbian Stronghold," *International Herald Tribune*, 20 September 1995.

UNPROFOR. The accord called for an end to all offensive operations, sniper fire and the laying of mines. It also included a provision for the opening of a route to Gorazde for civilian and UN traffic and arrangements for the exchange of prisoners of war.

Although there were some unresolved points -for example there was no agreement on formal recognition of Bosnia and Hercegovina by rump Yugoslavia -the New York Agreement was no doubt an important achievement by the US.<sup>780</sup> Within 30 days, Richard Holbrooke and his team visited 11 countries which shifted the momentum towards peace.<sup>781</sup> “The lesson of Bosnia” he said, “is that when the NATO is united behind a policy and determined to carry it out, everything works. But NATO only works when we give full-hearted American leadership and American commitment”.<sup>782</sup>

By November 1995, the situation on the ground was radically different from that which it had been at the beginning of the year in Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina: Croatian Serb control of territory had been reduced from 23 percent to 5 percent; Bosnian Serb controlled land had been reduced from around 70 percent to under 50 percent. Most significant of all, for the first time since the beginning of the war, the use of air power and, the RRF artillery around Sarajevo had put the Bosnian Serbs on the receiving end of the fire.

It was apparent from the beginning of the war in former Yugoslavia that peace would most likely be the result of developments on the battlefield. Croatian Foreign Minister

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<sup>778</sup> David Usborne, “Bosnia Peace Deal Signed by All Sides,” *The Independent*, 27 September 1995.

<sup>779</sup> Moore, “An End Game,” 8-9.

<sup>780</sup> “Pax Americana... Almost Certainly,” Editorial, *The Guardian*, 6 October 1995.

<sup>781</sup> Martin Walker, “Holbrooke: A Hero’s Hour,” *The Guardian*, 6 October 1995.

<sup>782</sup> Ibid.

Mate Granic told the UN: "Croatia is of the opinion that the joint effects of 'Operation Storm', the co-ordinated activities of the army of Bosnia and Hercegovina and the Bosnian Croat forces, and the NATO Rapid Reaction Force actions against the Bosnian Serbs, coupled with diplomatic efforts, have finally opened the way to serious and comprehensive peace negotiations which will eventually lead to a ... solution".<sup>783</sup> When the 51:49 division was achieved as a result of the latest gains of Bosnian government forces, Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic said that "we stand more chance with peace".<sup>784</sup> Muhammed Sacirbey, Bosnian Foreign Minister, said that Bosnian government's military successes proved that 'the best diplomacy is created on the ground'.<sup>785</sup>

### **8.7. The Proximity Talks and the Dayton Peace Agreement**

Although there were still ups and downs in the peace process, with intense US diplomatic efforts, 'proximity talks' started in Dayton, Ohio, by the beginning of November 1995. Present, along with delegations from the Contact Group countries, the EU and the UN, were the Presidents of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina. Although a Bosnian Serb contingent was included in Milosevic delegation, it did not include either Karadzic and Mladic.<sup>786</sup> At the end of three weeks,

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<sup>783</sup> Quoted in Moore, "An End Game," 10.

<sup>784</sup> Ian Traynor, "Carrion Country," *The Guardian*, 18 September 1995.

<sup>785</sup> Foreign Staff, "Serbs Given Three More Days to Withdraw Heavy Weapons," *Financial Times*, 18 September 1995.

<sup>786</sup> Republica Srpska was represented by former speaker of the Bosnian Serb Assembly and recently designated President, Momcilo Krajisnik and included more moderate Deputy President, Nikola Koljevic.

on 21 November, a peace deal was initialled by the presidents of Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia and Serbia.<sup>787</sup>

The most important part of the Dayton process was to build the elements which would create the context for an agreement. The negotiations were marked by three distinct phases. The first, eight day phase, focused on strengthening the ties between the Bosnia Croats and Muslims, in order to present the Serbs with a unified front. First of all, the Muslim-Croat Federation was too weak to provide a basis for any overall settlement. Resolving the differences between the Muslims and Croats, Ambassador Michael Steiner of Germany secured an agreement reaffirming the Federation. According to the Agreement on 'Implementing the Federation of Bosnia and Hercegovina,' signed by Croatia, Bosnia and Federation Governments on 10 November, the Croats had agreed to abandon Herceg-Bosna within the Federation and the Bosnian government consented to devolve powers to the Federation government. The new agreement also called for the reunification of Mostar, the return of refugees and a customs union, points on which there had previously been no progress despite nearly two years of peace between the Croats and Muslims.<sup>788</sup>

Three days were then devoted to resolving the Croat-Serb dispute over Eastern Slavonia, the territory of Croatia which remained under Serbian control at the time of the talks.. In fact, one of the most significant Serb concessions was over Eastern Slavonia. An Agreement on Eastern Slavonia was signed on 12 November between Croat government and local Serb representatives in Erdut (Eastern Slavonia) and

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<sup>787</sup> On details, see Editor's Special Report on Dayton, "How the Bosnians Were Broken," *War Report* 39 (February/March 1996), 26-42.

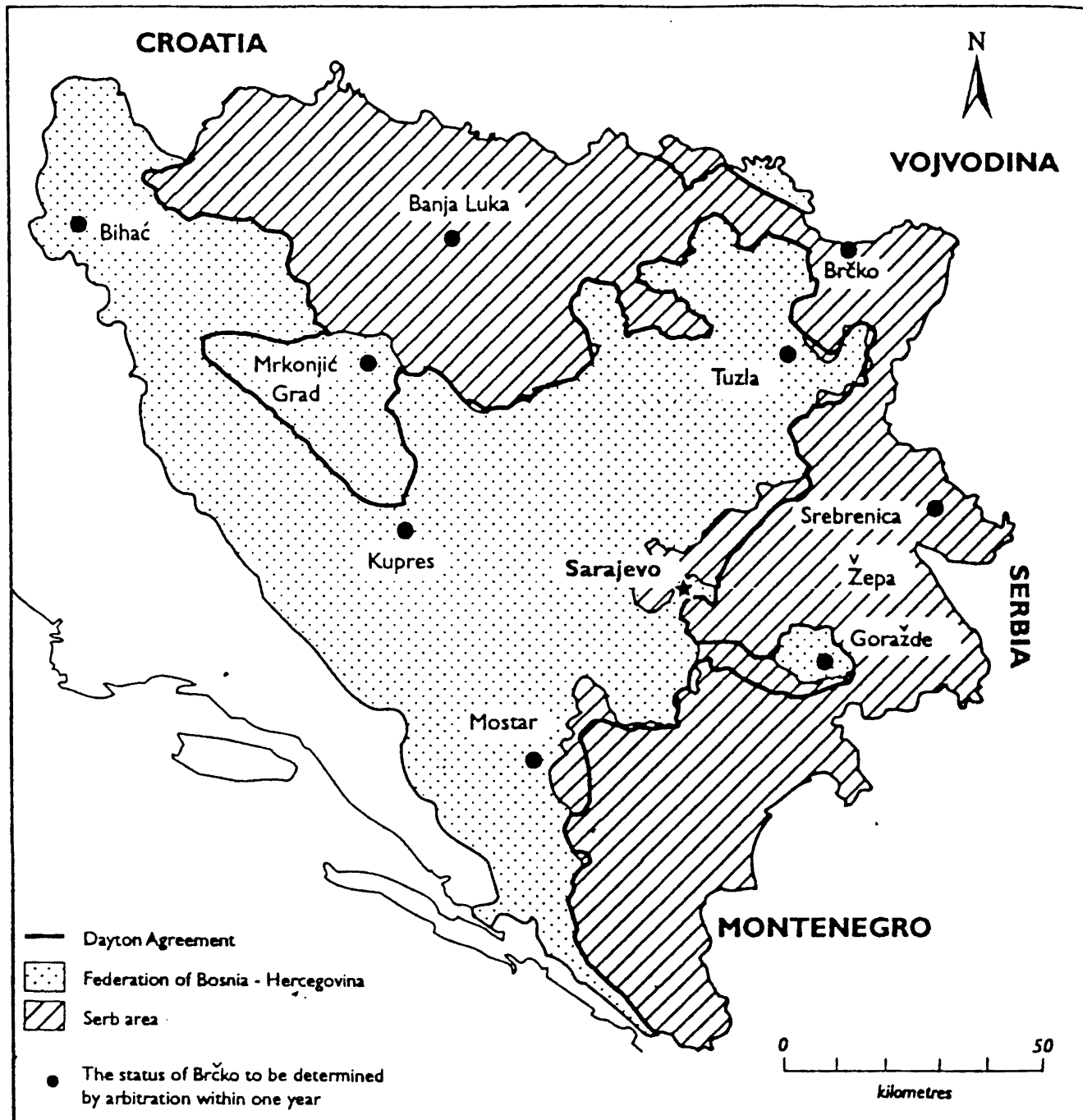
Zagreb. The agreement provided for the setting up of a 'Transitional Administration' to govern the region for a period of twelve months (with possible extension for another twelve months); demilitarisation; an international military force to implement the Agreement, and; displaced peoples to return to their homes. In return for agreement on restoring full control in eastern Slavonia, Zagreb agreed to the ceding of territory by the Bosnian Croats in the Posavina corridor.<sup>789</sup> Key points of negotiation concerning the capital Sarajevo, Gorazde and Drina Valley and north-western Bosnia were dealt with in the last period. Although the principle of sharing out the land according to 51-49 basis was adopted from the Contact Group proposal, the Bosnian government could not persuade anybody that the territorial disposition proposed in the Contact Group map should be adhered to at Dayton; something which would have meant the return of Srebrenica, Zepa and a number of other places to government control. The Bosnian government could not take any land on the Drina or on the Sava. It, however, secured an agreement on the control of whole of Sarajevo, as well as the establishment of a corridor to Gorazde (Map 7).

The Dayton accords which were initialled on 21 November, formally signed as a peace agreement in Paris on 14 December. The Dayton Accord's ten main points were supplemented with eleven annexes, as well as one hundred and two maps. The main points of the agreement were as follows: A NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) was going to establish demilitarised zone of separation between the warring parties; Bosnia would be an internationally recognised state within its present borders; the state was to be composed of two entities: the Bosnian Serb Republic and the Muslim-Croat

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<sup>788</sup> Silber and Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 370.

MAP 7



The Dayton Accords



Federation; the capital, Sarajevo would remain united under the Muslim-Croat Federation; the central government was to include a parliament, presidency and constitutional court; free and democratic elections would take place under international supervision; refugees were to be allowed to return their homes or seek equitable compensation; human rights would be monitored by an independent commission and people indicted for war crimes were to be excluded from political life.<sup>790</sup>

Although, international attention at the end of 1995 seemed only to treat the military aspects of the agreement and the imminent deployment of a new NATO force to implement the agreement (IFOR), the bulk of the Dayton accords, nearly five sixths of the documentation, concerned civilian aspects of the settlement.<sup>791</sup> It was in the implementation of the civilian aspects that the real test of the Dayton process was to come.

### **8.7.1. Tensions in the Dayton Agreement and British Position**

The US success in brokering the Bosnia peace accord caused remorse and embarrassment in the EU, shattering its superpower illusions and underscoring its failure to achieve a cohesive security policy that could resolve conflicts in its own

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<sup>789</sup> This decision which led to the announcement of resignation of the Bosnian Croat leader and Prime Minister of the Federation, Kresimir Zubak. He was, as a moderate, very important for the credibility of the Federation.

<sup>790</sup> "Dayton Peace Agreement, General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Hercegovina," last revised November 22, 1995. *FCO Spokesman: Notes For Editors*, Tuesday, 21 November 1995, 17.30 hrs.

<sup>791</sup> Annexes 1A and 1B dealt with military matters. Annex 1A established the arrangements and timetable for separation of forces and the deployment of IFOR, the NATO organised military peace implementation force, which would be responsible for ensuring the military parts of the Dayton Agreement. The primary task of 60,000 troops was to enforce the line of separation. IFOR's rules of engagement were robust, permitting prompt and comprehensive military action to suppress any breach of cease-fire.

backyard.<sup>792</sup> To add insult to injury, the Europeans were shut out of the negotiating process entirely in Dayton. As one European diplomat put it:

“The Europeans were there because it was important to have the outcome endorsed by the Contact Group governments. I don’t suffer any illusions as to whether the Americans actually wanted any active European participation. They were not even willing to let us discuss or advise behind the scenes.”<sup>793</sup>

The European states in the Contact Group complained of being kept barely abreast of what was going on and stated that the Dayton Accords were not much different from the plan they had put forth a year ago.<sup>794</sup> Jonathan Eyal, Director of Studies at the Royal United Services Institute in London, suggested that “Richard Holbrooke, the chief negotiator, should win Greenpeace’s top recycling prize” since the deal he brokered rested on ideas which had been put forward for years.<sup>795</sup> In fact, it was true that the plan was not much different than the previous ones. As Lord Owen, the former British foreign secretary who spent a good deal of time trying to reach a settlement on behalf of the EU, aptly observed that once the idea of maintaining the pre-April 1992 Bosnia and Hercegovina was abandoned, one necessarily left with ‘shades of partition’. What caused the breakthrough was the decisive operation of the US and Holbrooke’s diplomatic approach.<sup>796</sup>

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<sup>792</sup> William Dzordiak, “EU Absorbs Embarrassing Lessons in Bosnia Accord,” *International Herald Tribune*, 23 November 1995.

<sup>793</sup> Quoted in James Petras and Steve Vieux, “Bosnia and the Revival of US Hegemony,” *New Left Review* 218 (July/August 1996), 23.

<sup>794</sup> Martin Walker, “Dirty Dick Edges Europe Off Map”, *The Guardian*, 24 November 1995.

<sup>795</sup> Jonathan Eyal, “A Step in the Balkan Quicksand,” *The Times*, 12 October 1995.

<sup>796</sup> Michael Williams, “The Best Chance for Peace in Bosnia,” *The World Today* 52, no. 1 (January 1996), 4.

British delegates admitted that they were not privy to all aspects of the Proximity Talks in Dayton either.<sup>797</sup> Pauline Neville-Jones, Political Director at the Foreign Office at the time, was Britain's key player in the delicate game of peacekeeping with the Americans and ensuring that British interests were not swept aside. Her confidential telegrams to the Foreign Office -according to one who has read them already- reflected a continuous tension between the Europeans and a high-powered team of American negotiators who were forcing the pace.<sup>798</sup>

The British delegation were also not involved in discussions on the maps during the third and final week of the talks, nor were they as active as the Germans during the first week which was devoted mostly to issues surrounding Zagreb's relations with the Federation between the Muslims and Croats inside Bosnia. The British contingent claim, however, that they made substantial contribution to the negotiations on the Constitution during the second week at Dayton. Apparently, the initial American drafts did not provide for strong constitution for the central government in Sarajevo.<sup>799</sup> Instead the original US draft gave all significant powers to the two entities within Bosnia and Hercegovina: the Republika Srpska and Muslim-Croat Federation. This suited the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Croats but obviously distressed the central government in Sarajevo, because it confirmed their fears that the US really did have partition in mind, and that talk of a unified Bosnia and Hercegovina had been a mere

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<sup>797</sup> Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 60.

<sup>798</sup> The telegrams will be open to vintage reading in 30 years time. Michael Sheridan, "Muslims Learn to Fear Tudjman's Embrace," *The Independent*, 25 November 1995.

<sup>799</sup> Pauline Neville-Jones, "Dayton, IFOR and Alliance Relations in Bosnia," *Survival* 38, no. 4 (Winter 1996-97), 49. Jane Sharp argues that 'this was unexpected since in the run-up to the talks most Europeans assumed Washington would be fighting Izetbegovic's corner on most issues'. Sharp, *Honest Broker*, p. 60.

figleaf.<sup>800</sup> Surprisingly it was the head of British delegation at Dayton who emphasised that central structures must be firmly established. This was in fact critical practically for channelling assistance according to the programme of reconstruction and rehabilitation.<sup>801</sup>

From the very beginning, Holbrooke had criticised the Europeans, above all Britain, for hand wringing timidity. Six months after signing the Dayton Peace Treaty and with eight months remaining in the year that NATO was planning to stay in Bosnia, Holbrooke accused the Europeans of 'backsliding,' and said that 'it is distressing that some important European officials are privately writing off Dayton's political provisions and preparing ground for de facto partition next year'.<sup>802</sup> He added that 'the agreements will certainly fail if those responsible for carrying them out are not completely committed to them'.<sup>803</sup> Further to the point, he claimed:

American leadership, headed by President Clinton, achieved both Dayton and the successful military phase of implementation. But on the civilian side, a messy ineffective arrangement, insisted on by the Europeans, created multiple chains of command and little enforcement authority.<sup>804</sup>

In return, Pauline-Neville Jones -also talking on behalf of the heads of the German and French delegations at Dayton- replied that 'claims from the US that Europe is moving

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<sup>800</sup> Ibid.

<sup>801</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, 285.

<sup>802</sup> Richard Holbrooke, "Backsliding in Bosnia," *Time Magazine*, 20 May 1996, 26.

<sup>803</sup> Ibid.

<sup>804</sup> Ibid.

towards partition in Bosnia were offensive and that there was no evidence to support that thesis'.<sup>805</sup> On the contrary, she claimed:

Europeans want the Dayton agreement to succeed on its own terms and are making very considerable efforts to this end. These range from bearing our share of the costs of the Implementation Force (IFOR) -of the 55,000 troops involved in Bosnia, roughly 28,000 came from European countries (excluding Russia) and 18, 000 from the US. Europeans bear, by far, the largest share of the cost of economic construction. According to the World Bank, of the £1.2 billion pledged so far in economic aid about half comes from European sources, compared with £185 million from the US'.<sup>806</sup>

Basically, according to the British officials, the problem stemmed from the separation of the military and civilian aspects of Dayton. Effective co-ordination of aid projects was impossible since there was no way to make use of carrots and sticks. Moreover, there was also a law enforcement gap, which meant conditions were not safe for the return of refugees and displaced persons.<sup>807</sup>

In fact, it later became apparent that, consistent with British even-handed behaviour to both victims and aggressors during the entire Bosnian war, in implementing the peace, Britain was unwilling to abide by the rules of conditionality and that British officials transmitted aid to Bosnian Serb communities regardless of whether or not they were in compliance with Dayton agreements and the International Criminal Tribunal for

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<sup>805</sup> Pauline Neville-Jones, "Don't Blame the Europeans," *Financial Times*, 17 May 1996.

<sup>806</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>807</sup> Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 66.

Yugoslavia.<sup>808</sup> Human Rights Watch reported in late January 1997 that the funds for Republika Srpska from Britain's Overseas Development Administration (ODA) were being distributed by the same individuals in Prijedor who had run the Serb concentration camps in the same area in the spring and summer of 1992.<sup>809</sup>

Another piece of news was also disturbing about British officials' deals with Serbian President Milosevic who was considered as the architect of the carnage in former Yugoslavia. Britain's Former Foreign Secretary, since he left the cabinet in July 1995, had become the director of the National Westminster Bank and deputy chairman of its subsidiary NatWest markets. It was reported in 1996 that 'the latter has recently secured lucrative contracts both to advise on Serbia's debt and to help prepare the PTT, Serbia's telephone system for privatisation'.<sup>810</sup> Douglas Hurd, British Ambassador Sir Ivor Roberts and Pauline Neville-Jones (also a senior NatWest employee after retirement from the Foreign Office) met Milosevic in Belgrade on 24 July to thank him for the business.<sup>811</sup>

"Hurd who is supposed to be respected for his 'diplomatic' skills, is being very undiplomatic in running to make money with Milosevic even as the graves of Milosevic's victims are being unearthed by investigators for the International Tribunal on War Crimes in the Former Yugoslavia...And the question remains: what can decent people do about the direct complicity of their political and economic leaders in genocide. National Westminster Bank and NatWest

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<sup>808</sup> Other main donors, like EU, Japan, The US and the World Bank were trying to make reconstruction aid conditional on compliance with the provisions of Dayton and bring to justice of war criminals.

<sup>809</sup> Ed Vulliamy, "UK Aid to Bosnia Under Fire," *The Guardian*, 24 January 1997.

<sup>810</sup> Tim Judah, "Banker Hurd to Fund Butcher of Belgrade," *The Sunday Telegraph*, 1 September 1996.

<sup>811</sup> *Ibid.*

Markets are now, if the reports are true, fully cooperating with the man whose victims are being excavated throughout Eastern Bosnia, and their major link is a former British Foreign Secretary who spent three years providing diplomatic cover for Milosevic's crimes, including concentration camps, massacres, organised rape, systematic annihilation of cultural heritage, and a network of killing-centres."<sup>812</sup>

Even before that John Major Government's apparent support for Milosevic was visible. In July 1996, Serbia hired Lowe Bell Financial, owned by Tim Bell, the Conservative Party's public relations expert, to advise on acquiring a democratic image and gaining access to Western financial markets.<sup>813</sup>

In another article appeared in the British daily, *The Guardian*, in December 1996, it was argued that shortly before 1992 general election, Serbs close to the regime had secretly sent more than £96,000 to Britain and some of it was understood to have found its way into the Conservative Party funds.<sup>814</sup> The Opposition's campaign spokesman, Brian Wilson MP, wrote to the parliament ombudsman, Sir Gordon Downey, seeking an inquiry into the Serbian funding allegations.<sup>815</sup> The implications of the affair transcended domestic politics because of charges that British Foreign Policy during the war was biased in Serbia's favour.

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<sup>812</sup> Michael Sells, "National Westminster Bank, Hurd and Genocide," *The Sunday Telegraph*, 1 September 1996.

<sup>813</sup> Bruce Clark, "Belgrade Turns to UK For Advice on Image," *Financial Times*, 29 July 1996.

<sup>814</sup> Richard Norton-Taylor and Michael White, "MI6 Told Butler of Tories' Serb Link," *The Guardian*, 23 December 1996.

<sup>815</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER IX: CONCLUSION

Britain's diplomatic and military role in former Yugoslavia from 1991-95 has been severely criticised as a policy of appeasement. In general, Britain's Conservative Government took a pragmatic rather than a principled approach to Bosnia, seeking a settlement based on Serbian war gains and the *de facto* partition of Bosnia rather than on any kind of justice. Then, when John Major's government was replaced by Tony Blair's Labour Government, with its principled commitment to human rights, both the American and British governments stopped tacitly supporting the acceptance of the partition and began to emphasise long term goal of the Dayton Agreement as a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional, integrated Bosnia. Under Foreign Secretaries Douglas Hurd and Malcolm Rifkind, British policy towards Bosnia was more in tune with Russia than with the US. Tony Blair and Robin Cook, by contrast, have put Britain back on the right track, the Atlanticist camp.

During the course of Yugoslav wars of dissolution, Britain used all its diplomatic skills in international institutions to counter international community's more robust stance against Serbian expansionism. Instead of attempting to lead the international community to persuade, in particular, the US to take action (that would have been the case, as it was frequently supposed by the commentators, had Margaret Thatcher still been Prime Minister), British officials reacted swiftly to subdue discussion of using force whenever the issue arose.



In Autumn 1991, although it was obvious then that if the EC recognised Croatia and Slovenia, pressure for an independent Bosnia would follow which would eventually trigger military attack from Milosevic's well-armed proxies there, the repeated requests from the Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic for preventive troop deployments were refused by British government. Obviously, later on, the EC's recognition of Bosnia and Hercegovina in April 1992 without offering help to administer and protect the new state, or to lift the arms embargo to allow Bosnia to defend itself was highly irresponsible an action on the part of Britain as one of five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Although British strongly argued, on each occasion, for caution and impartiality as between what it called 'the warring factions,' and opposition to German pressure for recognition of Croatia and Slovenia was framed in principled terms, with the British claiming recognition would fan the flames of war, when Germany, for various reasons, urged for the recognition of Croatia, the anti-recognition stance was dropped for a diplomatic bargaining. London basically used the Yugoslav crisis as an opportunity to strike a bargain over 'Europe'. In 1991-2, the British government did not wish to sign up for the European Union's Social Chapter. This, at Franco-German behest, was necessary to be included in the Maastricht Treaty on European Union. The British concluded a trade-off with the Germans: an opt-out for the British on the social and financial sides, as against immediate recognition of Slovenia and Croatia.

One of the most important criticisms was related to the way in which the British government handled the war in Yugoslavia during its presidency of the EC in the second half of 1992. When Britain assumed the EC Presidency on July 1, 1992, the

Serb genocide in Bosnia was in full-swing. Reports from Helsinki Watch of Serb concentration camps in northern Bosnia had been circulating since late May. Far from using the presidency to build a consensus in favour of action to end the war, however, Britain continued to block all such initiatives, notably from France and Netherlands.<sup>816</sup> Not only did Britain continue to argue against the deployment of a European (WEU) peace-keeping force in Bosnia, but, it also blocked a German plan to share the growing refugee problem among the member states. As a result, Britain as the EC President was accused of taking up a negative rather than positive attitude and of pursuing a reactive rather than proactive policy. Early in the British presidency of the EC in August 1992, John Major hosted an EC-UN Conference in London, which launched the International Conference in Former Yugoslavia in the midst of a thick-hot war.

The reluctance of Britain to take military action to protect the victims of aggression in Bosnia led to increasingly blatant acts of appeasement. These included acceptance of the Serb euphemism of ethnic cleansing to describe deliberate genocide, and the redefinition of what was manifestly a war of aggression as a humanitarian crisis. This justified the deployment of passive peace-keeping troops rather than forces capable of curbing the aggression. Britain and France sent troops to Bosnia and Hercegovina not because they knew what these were meant to be achieving, but because the governments in London and Paris wanted to do something in order to appease their enraged public opinion at home, without doing anything in particular. Since the deployment of peace-keeping troops, it was the Britain's obvious reluctance to agree to air strikes while it had troops on the ground and its support for the commitment of ground forces of UNPROFOR, rather than withdrawal in favour of allowing arms to

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<sup>816</sup> Jane M. O. Sharp, "Will Britain Lead Europe?," *The World Today* 12 (December 1997), 316.

the Bosnian Government forces, which led to most criticism of the Britain. Despite the naked Serbian aggression and volumes of evidence on genocide, there was never a clear response from Britain with regard to the use of force. Since Britain was at the heart of the debate, this attitude played a pivotal role in determining the outcome.<sup>817</sup>

The clash between British public and media, with their high assessment of the efficacy of force, and the majority of the political and military establishment came to a head over Bosnia in 1992 and 1993. The public was in favour not just of humanitarian aid to Bosnia, which the government and armed forces provided, but of military intervention to impose peace on the combatants (peace enforcement). The political parties were also deeply divided on the Bosnian issue, but the Labour and Liberal Democratic parties, as well as the Thatcherite Tories, eventually came out in favour of peace enforcement. The Left was divided between the non-pacifists, who took a highly moralistic view of international affairs and thus called for massive intervention in Bosnia and those, who placed their priority on the avoidance of war. The interventionist Right led by Margaret Thatcher stressed the importance of avoiding appeasement of aggression.

The British press was generally in favour of peace enforcement though not without divisions and doubts. *The Times*' leaders stridently advocated this policy. Many of the paper's columnists, led by Simon Jenkins, were as hostile to intervention as the editorials were in favour. *The Daily Telegraph* called for 'all or nothing' and argued that if Western governments were not going to support peace enforcement, it was better to make this perfectly clear. Some of its columnists, such as Robert Fox, argued

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<sup>817</sup> Ibid.

for greater involvement and its Defence Editor, distinguished military historian John Keegan, contended that there were two realistic courses of action which would be worthwhile; to bomb Belgrade with precision guided munitions in the way the Baghdad had been attacked in the Gulf War, or to send an air assault division to attack the Serbs besieging Sarajevo and to destroy as many as possible.<sup>818</sup>

*The Guardian* writers were also generally in favour of intervention with many more troops sent under the UN banner to impose peace, though, like *The Times*, it was generally unspecific about how this was to be achieved. Its columnists, Maggie O'Kane, Tihomir Loza and Martin Woollacott called for intervention and it also published articles by Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democratic Leader, and George Kenney, formerly with the State Department, who strongly advocated greater use of force. *The Independent* bitterly attacked the Western appeasement and devoted its front page on two occasions to the names of the members of the public who wanted to impose peace on Serbs by using force.<sup>819</sup>

Despite all protestations from various circles within the country, why then did the British government constantly reject to impose peace on the Serbs? Indeed, the official British position on the use of force issue was predominantly determined by its perception of the nature of the Yugoslav conflict in general, and Bosnian war, in particular. The nature of the Yugoslav conflict was understood less in terms of the modern dynamics of disintegration, grab for power and more in terms of historic animosity. Throughout the war, general tendency of the British officials was to

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<sup>818</sup> John Keegan, "Only a Short, Sharp Attack Will End Their Defiance," *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 August 1993.

describe the war as an inter-communal violence; neighbours and villages fighting one another. Holding this theory of 'ancient ethnic hatreds' about Yugoslavia was, in fact, very convenient, since it connoted that 'everybody is equally guilty' and there was no need to make a differentiation between the aggressor and victim. Consequently, the main British argument against the lifting of the arms embargo was that lifting it would lead to a 'level killing field', Douglas Hurd's favourite metaphor. Consequently, the best thing to do was considered as containing the conflict spreading to other parts of the region and limit the level of violence then sit back and let the ancient hatreds burn themselves out. British politicians who described their policy as 'non-intervention' or their approach as 'impartial' in fact, intervened decisively on the Serbian side, since the Serbian forces had from the very beginning large stockpiles of the fourth largest army in Europe.

The motives for leaving Bosnia to its fate were, undoubtedly, reinforced by other considerations. There was an instinctive reluctance within the government and armed forces to become too deeply involved in 'inimicable inter-ethnic' conflicts; strong parallels were drawn between Yugoslavia and Northern Ireland in that sense. By rejecting to get involved militarily, Britain wanted to avoid a second experience like Northern Ireland. British army officials believed that defeating Serbian guerrillas would be very costly, since they had shown their capacity for guerrilla warfare in the Second World War, and that they had been trained for 40 years by Tito's regime to fight in the same way if the country were to be invaded by NATO or the Warsaw Pact. However, Milosevic was not Tito and the Serbian forces attacking the civilians were far from being a credible force to stand up against well-trained NATO forces. In

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<sup>819</sup> The Folly of Betraying Bosnia," *The Independent*, 26 July 1993.

addition, it was never taken into account that, if the West really wanted to save Bosnia, army of the Bosnian government were quite capable of defeating the Serbian guerrillas, had they been equipped with adequate armament. Another concern of British government about Northern Ireland was to seek to avoid diplomatic developments which might have adverse implications for the situation there. Although not very prominent concern in British thinking, any international role in the dissolution of the Yugoslav state had to be weighed against the possibility of parties or organisation outside Britain which might try to take role in resolving the troubles in Northern Ireland.<sup>820</sup>

An equally effective factor limiting the British commitment was the objective of not doing anything which would call into question the 1994 Ministry of Defence's White Paper entitled 'Options for Change'. This important treasury-driven programme derived from the government's programme to cut public expenditure, including that on defence. Under 'Options' various cuts were being made in the UK armed forces. An unstated imperative guiding action was the requirement not to do anything which might reverse these decisions. Britain already had troops in many parts of the world; 14,000 troops were still maintained in Northern Ireland and there were already UN contingents scattered from Cyprus, to Cambodia via Kuwait. However, this proved not to be an absolute, as, first the decision was taken in September 1992, to deploy 2400 troops in Bosnia and Hercegovina with UNPROFOR, then, later in the summer

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<sup>820</sup> James Gow, "British Perspectives," in *International Perspectives on the Yugoslav Conflict*, ed. Alex Danchev and Thomas Halverson (London: 1996), 89-90.

of 1994, the UK contribution to UNPROFOR was more than doubled (totalling 3688).<sup>821</sup>

As a result, throughout the war in former Yugoslavia, Britain took a pragmatic rather than a moral attitude to the search for peace. It tended to discount the viability of a multi-ethnic community in Bosnia and Hercegovina after the horrors of 'ethnic cleansing' and increasingly as the war progressed to regard the three main ethnic groups as equally guilty warring factions. While not totally blind to the genocidal nature of ethnic cleansing, Britain tended to play down the need to deal with the Serbian and Croatian war crimes and to focus on pragmatic ways to end the war, even if it meant acquiescing in Serbian war gains. Peace-now prevailed over peace-with-justice. As a result, while the US and Germany considered any military success of Croat and Bosnian government forces to regain the territories previously occupied by Bosnian Serb militias as necessary to reach a just peace, Britain tended to see it as a prolongation of war and consequently slowing down the peace process.<sup>822</sup>

Indeed, no other country was well-placed as Britain to be statesmanlike in Bosnia and Hercegovina. It had the job, as European Community's president in the second half of 1992 of setting the EC's agenda and co-ordinating its policies. It also faced none of the inhibitions distracting the other big western players -the presidential campaign in the United States, the imminent referendum on the Maastricht treaty in France, Germany's constitutional qualms about sending any forces abroad. John Major's government was fresh from election victory. The British might have reasonably be

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<sup>821</sup> Ibid.

<sup>822</sup> Sharp, *Honest Broker*, 38.

expected to be making the running in the Bosnian imbroglio. However, backed by credible military power, it was the US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke who was able to broker a peace agreement in Dayton, Ohio, in November 1995 ending the Bosnian part of the Yugoslav wars of dissolution. Only when Washington was fully engaged, it was possible to force a policy which was broadly accepted by other significant players in the international management of the Yugoslav war.

Dayton agreement was signed in Paris in December by the leaders of Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia and guaranteed by the five power Contact Group (US, UK, France, Germany and Russia), Japan and a number of Islamic states in the form of a Peace Implementation Council. It consolidated the October 1995 cease-fire between the warring parties, guaranteed the rights of refugees and displaced people to return home in safety, and established federal institutions designed to reintegrate Bosnia as a multi-ethnic society. But, the agreement suffered from structural problems. First, it had an unrealistically short term schedule, especially for the NATO implementation forces. Second, it embraced two sets of contradictory goals: partition of Bosnia into two political entities with separate armies (a Muslim-Croat Federation and the Republica Srpska) while also seeking a single integrated state with central institutions. Thirdly, the military and civilian aspects of the agreement are separately controlled and administered. This produced a dangerous law enforcement gap and a fragmented aid program with little opportunity to exert economic leverage on recalcitrant parties. Both before and after the agreement, the EU governments poured enormous military and economic resources into Bosnia, but three years on, the peace remains fragile, not least because appeasement still characterises western policy.



Many on both sides of the Atlantic hold Major government in Britain responsible for the complete failure of European and American policies in Bosnia from 1991-1995. When Britain had the chance to take lead in the world's response to the war in former Yugoslavia, it made the worst of it. Its involvement in Bosnia was disastrous both for Bosnia's well-being and Britain's reputation. Unfortunately, in the end, Dayton Agreement reinforced Britain's image of being a perfidious Albion rather than an honest broker and thus did have important political implications both in Britain and the world. For example, although the long term cost of the British opposition to US policy could not be easily assessed, it is for certain that there had been damage to the so-called special relationship between the two and where that left the Britain's tuck-under-the American-wing policy remained to be judged.

The new Labour government, which came to power in May 1997, however, recognised all the faults of the previous government and took genuine steps to repair the damage done to Britain's international standing so far. Once installed as Foreign Secretary Cook emphasised that British foreign policy would now be ethically based and 'support for the demands of other peoples for the democratic rights on which we insist for ourselves.'<sup>823</sup> This change of policy was reflected in new government's support to Germany and the US in implementing the peace in Bosnia. But, the consequences of previous government's policies for Britain's standing in the post-Cold War world will not be easy to shake off.

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<sup>823</sup> Ian Traynor, "Cook Reads Bosnia Riot Act," *The Guardian*, 25 July 1997.

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