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The Collapse of Yugoslavia: Background and Summary

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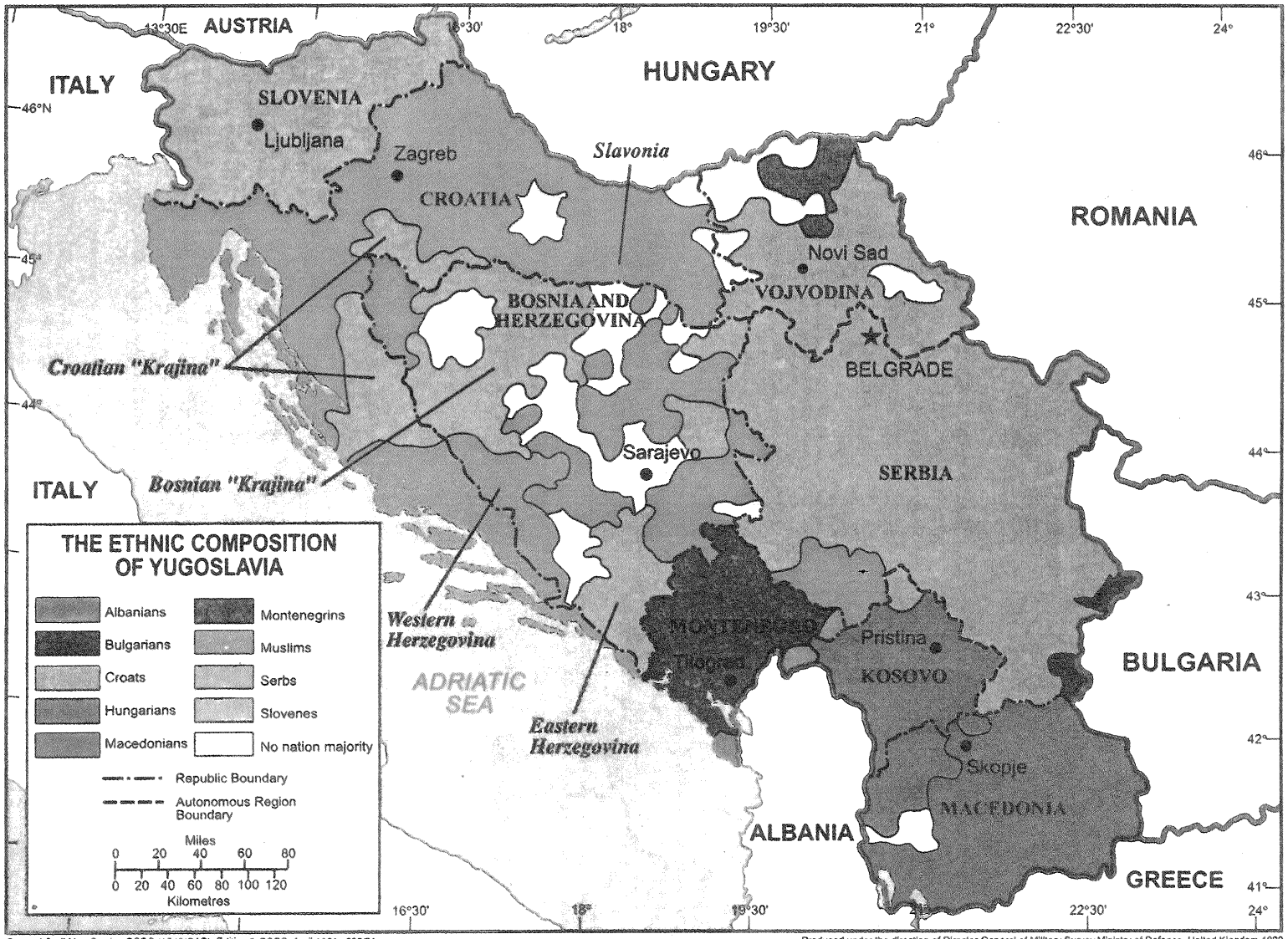


Source: Great Britain. House of Commons. Foreign Affairs Committee. *Central and Eastern Europe: problems of the post-communist era*, Vol. II, London, HMSO, 1992: 43.

Map 2

Croatia, Showing UN Protected Areas, and Bosnia-Herzegovina

Source: S.L. Woodward. *Balken tragedy*. Brookings Institution, Washington, 1995

Abbreviations

CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
EC	European Community
EU	European Union
ICFY	International Conference on Former Yugoslavia
JNA	Yugoslav People's Army
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
WEU	West European Union

Major Issues

This paper and its companion paper, 'The role of the UN in the former Yugoslavia', arose out of a wish to present a balanced picture of UN participation in the Balkans conflict. In presenting a background to the Balkan wars, one aim of this paper is to indicate that virtually all actors involved in negotiations on the dispute performed inadequately.

Key Historical Developments

- For centuries the South Slav lands were under the control of two contending empires, the Ottomans and Hapsburgs. The Turks took control of Bosnia and Serbia, while Croatia and Slovenia became part of the Hapsburg (and later the Austro-Hungarian) empire.
- The Yugoslav state was created after World War I. However, the state was dominated by the Serbs, and a major source of tension was the Croatian wish for greater independence.
- In 1941 Yugoslavia was quickly taken over by German forces, and a bitter conflict ensued between an oppressive Nazi-supported Croat state and resistance movements, the two most significant of which were the Chetnik guerilla movement, consisting of Serbian freedom-fighters, and the communist Partisan movement, under the control of Tito.
- After World War II, Tito's communist party tried to unite the six republics - Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina - and balance the competing claims of the different ethnic groups. While a degree of harmony and group interaction was achieved under Tito, underlying antagonisms and tensions remained as a very useful tool for any leader who wished to stir up nationalist sentiment, and historical bitterness has been used by all sides in the present conflict as a weapon in their quest for power.
- At Tito's death in 1980, there were three fundamental problems: the divergent ethnic interests remained, the economy was inefficient, and the country's institutional structure was incapable of retaining Yugoslav unity.

- During the 1980s, Yugoslavia was destabilised by a severe economic and political crisis. It seemed ethnic violence could erupt in the autonomous region of Kosovo, with its large Albanian majority.
- A key political development was the appointment of Slobodan Milosevic, first as communist party chief and then as President of Serbia in 1989. Milosevic stimulated and exploited Serbian nationalism to gain political support.
- Serbia's growing power in the central government in Belgrade and its harsh treatment of Albanian protesters caused a strengthening of nationalist movements in the other republics, especially in Croatia and Slovenia. This was aided by the collapse of communism across Eastern Europe in 1989-90 and the move to multi-party elections, which brought nationalist parties to power in most republics.
- The key dispute was between, on the one hand, Slovenia and Croatia, both of which wanted more independence, and, on the other, Serbia, which wanted to unite the eight million Serbs, 25 per cent of whom lived in republics other than Serbia, into a position of power within Yugoslavia.
- Croatia, especially, was a problem with its 600 000 Serbs, and the harsh policies of President Tudjman only added to the Croatian Serbs' fears.

The Course of the Wars

On 25 June 1991, Slovenia and Croatia unilaterally declared independence. In Slovenia the attempt by Yugoslavian army troops to seize control was unsuccessful, but in Croatia a much more intense fight developed as the Yugoslavian army assisted the local Serbs to defend the Serb-populated areas. A peace agreement was accepted in January 1992.

However, the worst fighting came in Bosnia. The international recognition of Croatia in January 1992 was unfortunate in that it forced Bosnia-Herzegovina to decide between remaining in a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia or choosing independence - and thus taking 1.3 million Serbs out of Yugoslavia against their will. Both Croatia and Serbia had ambitions that Bosnia-Herzegovina should be divided between them. Widespread fighting broke out in Bosnia in early April 1992, and by July the Serbs controlled about 70 per cent of Bosnia.

Both the Bush and Clinton administrations were reluctant to become involved, seeing too few interests at stake. The European Community viewed the problem as an opportunity to assert itself, but entered the situation too late to play an effective part and by late 1991 was handing its tasks over to the United Nations. By the second half of 1992, Western policy had settled into several limited aims:

- Contain the crisis ie. prevent it spreading to involve states outside the former Yugoslavia;
- Use the UN to provide humanitarian relief for the Moslems;

- Avoid becoming entangled in a prolonged military conflict.

At this stage only compromise solutions were possible; the passage of time had put the only satisfactory outcomes, the provision of durable solutions to the core problems, progressively beyond reach. The influx of UN forces into Bosnia in November made the British and French even more nervous about any provocation, such as peace enforcement measures. Their UNPROFOR contingents, dispersed in the Bosnian countryside in order to carry out their humanitarian duties, were highly vulnerable to potential Serbian attack, and became virtual hostages.

However, in 1995 several developments led to a breakthrough in the military situation, and allowed the peace talks which are taking place in Ohio at present:

- The Croatian military began to assist the Bosnian government troops, and the Bosnian Serbs were forced into widespread withdrawal.
- The Croatian forces regained all but one of the Serb-controlled areas of Croatia after a series of massive attacks.
- Most important, the Clinton administration, with an election looming, began to take decisive steps to end the protracted war. First, a new diplomatic initiative was launched. Second, British-French objections to air strikes were resolved, and NATO planes launched a series of attacks on key Bosnian Serb targets.

The Cause of the Wars

The paper concludes with an attempt to summarise the major factors, both domestic and international, which contributed to conflict in the former Yugoslavia. My assumption is that, however divisive have been the historical factors, such as the centuries of oppression by different regimes and the bitter experiences in World War II, the cultural diversity, and the geographic dispersion of nationalities, these things need not have led to war. Certainly Yugoslavia was lacking in many of the cohesive features that characterise more stable societies, but conflict based on ethnic nationalism was only one of a number of possibilities for Yugoslavia.

- The central factor in the Yugoslav crisis is the relationship between the two biggest ethnic groups, the Serbs and the Croats. Croatia was eager to secede from a Yugoslav state dominated by Serbia, but 11.3 per cent of Croatia's population were Serbs.
- A key aspect of the above relationship is their differing perceptions of the common state: while Serbs basically opted for the unitarist goal, ie. the creation of a strong federal state of Yugoslavia, Croatian leaders tended to see Yugoslavia merely as a necessary step towards a fully independent Croat nation-state.
- A more immediate cause of the conflict was the assertion of Serbian nationalism, the revival of the Greater Serbia ideal. This was very much a nationalism manipulated and stimulated by President Milosevic in his quest for power, particularly as communism

began to fall apart in Yugoslavia. A prime early example of this occurred during the Kosovo issue with his emphasis on the Serbian role over the centuries as victim of a variety of aggressors.

- Yugoslavia has been most unfortunate in the leadership of the two main republics. Tudjman's obsessive nationalism was seen at its worst both in his harsh treatment of the Serb minority, and in his decision to leave Yugoslavia without taking into account the needs and fears of this minority. Tudjman and Milosevic initially provided the dynamics of the war, an unchecked nationalism.
- Some commentators claim a key leadership failure was seen in Slovenia's, and later Croatia's, reluctance to cooperate with the federal government in an attempt to find a more modern structure of federation that would accommodate the interests of all three republics. Prime Minister Markovic was sincere in his wish to find a more satisfactory system, and both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia regarded a compromise framework as essential to their survival.
- Ironically, one matter on which Serbia and Croatia held similar views was Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serb and Croat nationalists view the Bosnian Moslems as, at best, Serbs or Croats forcibly converted to Islam under the Ottoman Empire, and at worst as a bridgehead of Islamic fundamentalism in Europe. There have been several accounts of Serb and Croat agreement at a senior level to carve up Bosnia between them at the expense of the Moslems. And the Bosnian war is seen as an historic crusade for many Bosnian Serbs, who refer to Bosnian government troops as 'the Turkish army'.
- Bosnia-Herzegovina's general aim was to avoid war, but one crucial mistake was made by their leaders in February 1992 when they alone rejected the plan put forward at the Lisbon conference. This would have organised Bosnia-Herzegovina into three territorial units and provided for Moslem-Serb-Croat power sharing, probably as reasonable a scheme as the one being debated today, three and a half tragic years later.
- The quarrelsome leaders of the Yugoslav republics must bear prime responsibility for the war, but the international community was inept in its response to the problem. The chief failure was that of the European Community in not diagnosing the problem sufficiently early, or at least in not realising its seriousness. Also, having failed to set up in 1990-91 a new set of institutions suitable for conflict resolution in a post-Cold War world, it lacked the organisation to handle the task. Jonathan Eyal refers to the Europeans' eagerness to substitute 'vision for reality', and trying 'to run before it could walk'.
- In 1991, with conflict threatening, the European Community failed to persist in negotiations for a comprehensive settlement for the entire country. The EC held enormous leverage from 1989 to 1991 if it wished to use it, as the Yugoslavian politicians were critically intent on finding the right path to European membership.
- The one consistency in international actions toward the conflict in Bosnia has been that interests at stake did not justify military action except in support of humanitarian goals.

Thus, while it resorted to building a 'piecemeal peace' on the basis of ceasefires, the West's main objective was to do as much as possible to aid the war's victims by assisting the UNHCR, utilising UNPROFOR for this purpose. It focused on relieving symptoms rather than resolving underlying causes.

- Germany bears some responsibility for the crisis with its support for the secessionist goals of Slovenia and Croatia, especially with its pressure on the other Western powers for too-early recognition of the independence of the two states. As has been seen, this brought to a head the issue of the territorial rights of the Serb minority in Croatia, and forced Bosnia to choose an independence in which it could not survive.

Introduction

With the potential for a peace agreement in Bosnia being more favourable at present than at any earlier time in the conflict, and with the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations (UN) being celebrated, the time is appropriate to attempt a more balanced picture of UN participation in the Balkans conflict. Increasingly since 1992 the general attitude of the media to the UN's role has been highly critical. In presenting a background to the Balkan wars, one aim of this paper is to indicate that virtually all actors involved in negotiations on the dispute performed inadequately. A second, companion paper examines the nature of the UN's contribution, and traces its failure to inappropriate decisions made in the Security Council.

A major problem in any assessment of the Balkans war is the sheer complexity of the chain of events and of the regional actors and international organisations involved. While this paper focuses on the key events and decisions to the end of 1992, an outline of the conflict since 1992 is included.

The paper is divided into three parts:

- An historical background, which looks at key developments during the nearly fifteen centuries which have elapsed since the Slav tribes first moved into the Balkan peninsula. This section ends with the outbreak of the current wars in June 1991.
- A summary description of the current wars - in Slovenia, then Croatia, and finally Bosnia-Herzegovina.
- The final section examines the actions of the international community, especially during the early part of the dispute.

The implications of the crisis for Australia are discussed, and the paper concludes with a section summarising the main factors, both domestic and international, which contributed to the outbreak of the wars.

Background

The Legacy of History; the Development of Unique Senses of Identity and of Grievance

How did such an apparently artificial construct as Yugoslavia come into existence and survive for nearly a century? 'Yugoslavia' means 'land of the southern Slavs', and a political union of South Slavs was an ideal which began to spread among the oppressed peoples of the region during the 19th century.

The Serbs, Croatians, Slovenes and Macedonians were all part of the great Slav influx from areas to the north-east into the Balkan peninsula during the 6th, 7th and 8th centuries. Up to that time, the western Balkans were inhabited by people known as Illyrians, the linguistic ancestors of the present-day Albanians. The Croatian and Slovenian tribes to the west soon came under the sway of Rome (and Roman Catholicism), while the Serbs and Macedonians in the east came under Byzantine (and Eastern Orthodox) influence. The different writing scripts (Latin for Croats and Slovenes; Cyrillic for Serbs and Macedonians) reflect the early influences.

At first the settlements were tribal, but gradually principalities, such as Croatia and Bosnia, developed, although all these medieval principalities underwent drastic and usually short-lived expansion and contraction. Eventually two contending empires, the Ottomans and Hapsburgs, began to assert hegemony over the various South Slav ethnic groups, generally retaining control until the early 20th century. In 1102, Hungary assumed control of Croatia, beginning a relationship that lasted until 1918, at which time Croatia was a kingdom within the Austro-Hungarian empire, which evolved from the Hapsburg dynasty. The Turks began their invasion of the Balkans in the 14th century, and had subdued the Serbs by the mid 15th century after a series of fierce battles. Bosnia was conquered shortly after, and the Bosnian/Croatian border formed the boundary between the Ottoman and Hapsburg empires.

Although the Turks did not settle in the Balkans in large numbers, over the centuries a number of the Christian population converted to Islam. This was particularly so in Bosnia and especially among the Bosnian landowners since under Ottoman law only Moslems could own property. Those who remained Christian either emigrated or were relegated to peasant status, free to exercise their religion but in all other respects a subject people. As the Ottoman empire declined in the 18th and 19th centuries, this Christian underclass suffered increasingly from the exactions of their landlords and the misrule of local despots. The fact that the peasantry was also Serb and Croat, in addition to being Orthodox or Catholic, assumed even greater importance in an age of nationalism.

At the beginning of World War I only Serbia among the South Slav lands had achieved freedom, having been granted independence in 1878 after a series of peasant uprisings during the previous 70 years. Serbia's territory was enlarged after the defeat of the Turks and Bulgarians in the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. By this time, Bosnia and Herzegovina had, like Croatia, become part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, having been occupied by Austria-Hungary after the Christians in the two provinces rose in revolt in 1875.

The Yugoslav idea had its origin both in Croatia and Serbia, and was part of the 19th century nationalist revolts against, on the one hand, overbearing Austrian and Hungarian authority and, on the other, Ottoman control.[1] Elements within Croatia, Bosnia, Slovenia and Serbia agitated for a form of union of South Slavs. When the Austro-Hungarian empire collapsed and was dismembered in 1918, this ideal of a Slavic state was to some extent realised with the creation of the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, which in 1929 changed its name to Yugoslavia in a vain attempt to minimise nationalist antagonisms. However, the new state in 1918 was essentially a creation of the victorious powers, France and Britain. Their ally in World War I, Serbia, was rewarded with new territories, including the Hungarian Vojvoidina and the Albanian Kosovo, and with a centralist constitution that ensured that all the important decisions were taken by a government in Belgrade dominated by Serbs. In effect the new Yugoslav state was a Greater Serbia, and a major source of tension was the Croatian wish for some devolution of power.[2] These differing perceptions of the common state, with the Serbs favouring a Yugoslav nation, and the Croats seeing Yugoslavia merely as a necessary step towards a fully independent Croat nation-state, influenced the nature of Yugoslavia's collapse both in 1941 under Nazi attack and again in the 1990s.

An agreement in 1939 redrew the internal administrative boundaries, assigning most of Herzegovina and southeastern Bosnia to Croatia, with the rest subsumed in Serbia. No account was taken at the time of the Moslem population. Since the 19th century, both Serbs and Croats have considered part or all of Bosnia an essential ingredient of their national identity.

Traditionally the Moslem landowners in Bosnia had tended to congregate in urban areas, with the Serbs generally settling in the countryside as peasants. Thus in 1991 the Serbs, although fewer in number than the Moslems, could claim to occupy up to 70 per cent of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

World War II

Hitler's Germany invaded the defiant Serb-dominated Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941. The blitzkrieg was devastatingly swift, and within ten days Yugoslavia's large but antiquated army was defeated, with the loss of only around 150 German troops. The disunity of the country was quickly revealed, with Croat nationalists seizing upon the invasion as an opportunity for secession. On 10 April the Croatian Ustasha, a group of extreme right-wing nationalists, proclaimed an independent state. Hitler, in his subsequent carving up of the country among his allies, established the so-called 'Independent State of Croatia', which included Bosnia-Herzegovina, with Ustasha leader Ante Pavelic as puppet dictator.[3]

There followed what has been called 'the cruellest of all the internecine wars that would torment Europe during the Hitler years'. The Ustashas were seen to combine a racialist hatred of Jews and gypsies with a religiously derived loathing of the Orthodox Serbs, and Pavelic was determined to purify the population of Croatia - the first ethnic cleansing - and to impose his rule by terror. The most notorious centre of Ustasha atrocities was the concentration camp at Jasenovac, which recent Serb propaganda has utilised and exaggerated to stimulate bitterness.

However the facts themselves are bad enough. Mark Almond presents the following conservative estimates in a recent book:

> Probably about 325 000 Serbs were killed by the Ustasha in the [new Croatian state], including about 60 000 at Jasenovac alone. In other words about one in every six Serbs in Pavelic's realm was killed. This was the work of a force of about 30 000 Ustashas.[4]

Resistance movements grew rapidly in response to this oppression. The first to emerge was the Chetnik guerilla movement, consisting of Serbian freedom-fighters loyal to the vision of Yugoslavia as a 'greater Serbia'. 'Chetnik' means 'guerilla fighter', and the first bands of chetniks had engaged in a revolt against Turkish rule in the late 18th and early 19th century. Similar chetnik units were organised subsequently when guerilla warfare was a priority.

The second significant resistance group was the communist Partisan movement, under the control of the communist leader, Josip Broz, better known by his pseudonym 'Tito'. Tito drew his support from all the peoples of Yugoslavia; among the Croats who joined the Partisans was the young Franjo Tudjman, the present Croatian President.[5]

With Yugoslavia's mountainous terrain ideally suited to irregular warfare, the Chetniks and Partisans provided bitter resistance to both the fascist Ustashas and the occupying forces, with 20 Italian and/or German divisions being tied up at times in Yugoslavia and Albania. However hindsight has diminished the perceived achievement of the Yugoslavian resistance in weakening Hitler's war effort. The Chetniks and Partisans spent much time fighting each other, especially towards the end of the war as they competed for eventual control of the country.[6] In September 1944 Russian forces arrived in Yugoslavia, and a provisional government was nominated in March 1945, with Tito as prime minister.

Savage atrocities had been perpetrated by all sides, although particularly by the Ustashas. The legacy of the war was certainly inter-ethnic hatred and deep suspicion, and some of the more notorious massacres have become part of historical myth. David Rieff, in his recent book 'Slaughterhouse', makes the point that many Croatians, although neither fascists nor fascist-sympathisers, have a different view of the Ustasha period than do non-Croats:

> Where outsiders saw the era of the Nazi-supported state of Ante Pavelic as a descent into fascist barbarism, many Croats kept returning to the fact that, odious though his regime had been, for a brief period their country had been independent.[7]

Linked with the religious rivalry and territorial competition which had existed for centuries, this wartime legacy has caused some commentators to see the present conflicts as inevitable, and to regard Tito's Yugoslavia as a volcano of inter-ethnic tension ready to erupt as soon as communist controls were removed. More perceptive analysts tend to modify this picture, pointing to the general harmony and interaction of all groups under Tito. What can be said is that the underlying antagonisms and tensions existed as a very useful tool for any leader who wished to stir up nationalist sentiment, and historical bitterness has been used by all sides in the present conflict as a justification for further excesses. Some of the worst atrocities in the last four years have occurred in areas where World War II massacres occurred.

Tito's Yugoslavia

The new communist leaders of the second Yugoslavia tried hard to unite state, capital and labour and put an end to the divisive competition between ethnic groups. A federal structure was developed of six republics and two autonomous provinces. In an attempt to balance the competing claims of the different ethnic groups, the internal boundaries were arbitrarily redrawn in a way which favoured Croats and Slovenes territorially. Much to the disappointment of both Croats and Serbs, Bosnia-Herzegovina, with its heterogeneous population of Moslems, Serbs and Croats, regained its identity as a separate republic, and in the 1974 constitution achieved its goal of recognition as a Moslem nation. Another initiative by Tito aimed at ethnic balance was the development of Macedonia, an attempt to dilute the influence of Serbs and Croats in Yugoslavia.[8] Certainly the people generally lived in peace under Tito, and there was a degree of intermarriage between the different groups, especially in the cities.[9] However, at Tito's death in 1980, three fundamental problems remained:

- The economy remained inefficient, without a workable public finance system, and with disparities worsening in levels of economic development and standards of living between the different parts of Yugoslavia. For example, in the 1980s the per capita GNP of Slovenia was more than twice the average for Yugoslavia, while that of Kosovo (with its large and restive Albanian majority) was less than a third of the average.[10]
- Despite efforts under Tito to soothe the different groups, the divergent interests had not been reconciled; the 'national problem' had not been resolved.
- Yugoslavia lacked an institutional structure capable of resolving the destabilising economic and international problems which were to arise in the 1980s and capable of retaining Yugoslav unity in the face of centrifugal nationalist forces. For example, the eight-member Collective Presidency, with the post of President rotated every 12 months, was too cumbersome an instrument to deal with the multiplying problems. This Collective Presidency was typical of the unusual institutions introduced by Tito in an endeavour to achieve a balance between the ethnic groups.

Writing in the New York Review of Books, Michael Ignatieff emphasises that Tito left a country dominated by the communist system, and this system had an adverse effect on the country's leaders:

> ...the system destroyed the country. For it was the system which taught this elite to believe that politics is conspiracy and political success is the art of the lie. It was the system which taught these men that they had no other purpose than the maintenance of power by *any* means.[11]

The Ethnic Composition of the Former Yugoslavia

The tables on the following pages, and also Map 2 at the beginning of the paper, indicate the patchwork quilt of peoples that made up the former Yugoslavia. Apart from the three large groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina, other significant minorities are the 11.3 per cent of Serbs in Croatia, who have, of course, been involved in the present conflict, and the 13.8 per cent of Moslems in Montenegro. The Albanian majority in Kosovo, an autonomous province in Serbia, forms another important tension point. The 1991 census reported this majority as 80 per cent but, given the problems resulting from widespread Albanian boycotting of the census, the correct figure is more likely to be 90 per cent.

Table 1: Former Yugoslavia
Total Population in republics and autonomous provinces 1991

	Population (Million)	Percentage
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4.4	18.6
Croatia	4.8	20.3
Macedonia	2.0	8.5
Montenegro	0.6	2.5
Slovenia	2.0	8.5
Serbia		
Inner Serbia	5.8	24.6
Vojvodina	2.0	8.5
Kosovo	2.0	8.5
Former Yugoslavia	23.6	100.0

Table 2: Former Yugoslavia
Population Distribution by Ethnic Group 1991

	Number (Millions)	Percentage
Montenegrins	0.62	2.6
Croats	4.52	19.2
Macedonians	1.43	6.1
Muslims	2.40	10.2
Slovenes	1.78	7.5
Serbs	8.32	35.3
Albanians (1)	2.21	9.4
Hungarians	0.40	1.7
Yugoslav (2)	1.33	5.6
Others	0.60	2.5
Total	23.60	100.0

Table 3: Former Yugoslavia
Ethnic composition of republics and autonomous provinces 1991 (Percentages)

						Serbia		
	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Croatia	Macedonia	Montenegro	Slovenia	Inner Serbia	Vojvodina	Kosovo
Montenegrins	0.3	0.2	0.2	61.9		1.3	2.2	1.4
Croats	18.1	74.6	0.2	1.1	3.2	0.5	5.2	0.5
Macedonians		0.1	64.8			0.5	1.0	0.1
Muslims	41.0	0.6	2.2	13.9	1.0	3.1	0.3	3.5
Slovenes		0.5			89.1	0.1	0.2	
Serbs	30.7	11.3	2.2	3.5	2.6	84.8	54.8	11.4
Albanians (1)	0.1	0.2	21.5	6.2		1.5	0.2	79.9
Hungarians		0.6			0.5	0.1	17.8	
Yugoslav (2)	8.1	8.9	0.7	5.6	1.4	4.2	9.1	0.2
Others	1.7	2.5	7.8	0.6	1.3	2.7	8.6	2.4

(1) The figures for Albanians may be understated. Albanians generally boycotted the 1991 census and the figures have been calculated from births and deaths statistics.

(2) Yugoslav indicates those who consider themselves to be in this category rather than another ethnic group. They are usually the offspring of mixed marriages.

The April 1991 census provides the latest available figures.

Source: Great Britain. House of Commons. Foreign Affairs Committee. Central and Eastern Europe: problems of the post-communist era, Vol. I, London, HMSO, 1992: xviii.

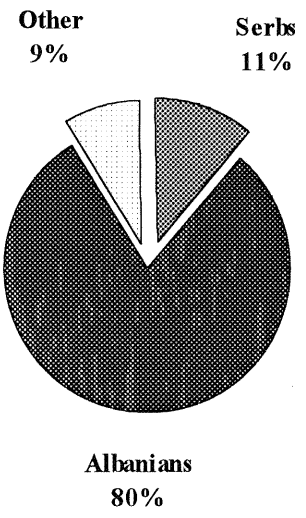
The Post-Tito Years

In his recent book on the conflict, US academic Lenard Cohen sums up the severe recession which hit Yugoslavia in the decade following Tito's death:

> During the 1980s Yugoslavia was beset by an economic and political crisis that seriously destabilised the country and eventually impaired its very existence. By the end of the decade the country's economy was afflicted by skyrocketing inflation, high unemployment, a huge foreign debt, and serious food shortages. According to official figures, salaries in the country dropped by 24 per cent in 1988 and living conditions plunged to the level of the mid-1960s.[12]

Thus the growing ethnic and regional tensions were heightened by economic hardship and discontent. Failure during Tito's period as president to properly invest the considerable amount of foreign capital which entered the country contributed significantly to this economic decline.

Figure 1: Ethnic composition of Kosovo 1991



Note: The figures in this chart are taken from the 1991 census, which many Albanians boycotted. The correct figure for the Albanian majority is generally accepted as being close to 90 per cent.

The first post-Tito ethnic discontent occurred in the autonomous region of Kosovo. Indeed throughout the 1980s, Kosovo was seen as the most likely place for violence to erupt. Kosovo's largely Albanian population expressed growing resentment against what they viewed as the privileged position of Serbs and Montenegrins in the province and against Kosovo's subordination to Serbian republican officials in Belgrade. For their part, the Serbs in the province claimed that they were being subjected to 'genocide' and 'terror' by Albanian nationalists. This reinforced a growing feeling among Serbs in general that, despite being the country's largest ethnic group, their interests were insufficiently recognised.

Key events in the progression towards conflict were the appointment of Slobodan Milosevic, first as Serbian communist party chief in 1986, and then as President of Serbia in 1989. Milosevic soon realised the usefulness of nationalism as a political weapon, and began to take steps (such as the reassertion of Serbian republican authority over Kosovo) and voice sentiments that would harness the mass support of Serbs. Suppression of Albanian protests by Serbian authorities following the curtailment of Kosovo's autonomy in March 1989 resulted in the deaths of over 60 Albanians and the imprisonment of hundreds of Albanian activists. Cohen sums up this militant Serb nationalist policy:

> In effect, Milosevic successfully exploited a backlash of Serbian nationalism in order to build a cross-regional alliance of ethnic Serbs unprecedented in Yugoslavia since the formation of Tito's World War II Partisan movement.[13]

Apart from Montenegro, where more than half of the citizens consider themselves Serbs, the reaction in the other republics to Serbia's growing power in Belgrade and its heavy-handed response to Albanian demands was a strengthening of their own nationalist movements. This was stimulated by the collapse of communism across Eastern Europe in 1989-90, and the subsequent move to multi-party pluralism and competitive elections. During 1990, multi-party elections were held for the first time and, in Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, these democratic elections brought to power politicians who had appealed to voters on nationalist grounds, although the substance of that nationalism varied widely from one republic to the next. But even in the two most independent and economically developed regions of Yugoslavia, Slovenia and Croatia (where Franjo Tudjman's Croatian Democratic Alliance took power), the mood for much of 1990 was not for outright secession. Both new regimes certainly rejected Yugoslavia's old federal structure, but aimed at this stage at a radical transformation of the country into a loose confederation of sovereign states,[14] although secession from the existing state was threatened should planned 1991 interrepublican negotiations prove unsuccessful. In response, Serbia argued that procedures for secession must first be worked out, and the rights of minorities settled. In December 1990, the Slovenian Parliament stated that, if a loose confederal solution was not found in the next six months, Slovenia would unilaterally proclaim its independence. Tudjman said Croatia would do likewise.

The major impediment to progress in any negotiations between the republics was the 'Serbian question', the position of the 25 per cent of Yugoslavia's Serbs living outside Serbia proper. Milosevic wanted a remodelled federation, in which the dispersed Serbian population remained united in a single state, and in which Serbs had a political influence commensurate with their position as Yugoslavia's largest ethnic group. This was generally supported by the top-ranking officers, the majority of which were Serbs or Montenegrins, in the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA). These officers saw themselves as the last bastion of Yugoslavism and state unity, and viewed the nationalist forces in Croatia and Slovenia as Yugoslavia's number one enemies.

In the first months of 1991, a series of talks were held between the leaders of the six republics and the two autonomous regions, but no agreement was reached on a more modern federation which would accommodate Serb and Croatian/Slovenian interests. All parties were inflexible except Macedonia[15] and Bosnia-Herzegovina, which cooperated in trying to find some middle

ground in the federation-confederation debate.[16] Bosnia's President Izetbegovic argued that the survival of Yugoslavia in some form was essential for Bosnia's survival as well. The only major support in the search for some compromise by Macedonia and Bosnia came from the Yugoslav Prime Minister, Ante Markovic. For some years, Markovic had been trying to rescue the economy with an ambitious economic reform program, but strong support would have been needed from the international community for his policies to be effective and for him to survive in office.

Slovenia almost invariably took the initiative in the move towards secession, serving as a stimulus for Croatia. But in following each Slovenian initiative, Tudjman was ignoring the very different natures of the struggle for Slovenian independence and the struggle for Croatian independence. Slovenia had a relatively homogeneous ethnic population, with only 2 per cent being Serbs, whereas 12 per cent of Croatia's population were Serbs. In attempting during 1990-91 to impose a militant Croatian regime in Serb-controlled regions, involving the formation of Croatian military units and the widespread sacking of Serbs from both public and private enterprise in the Krajina, Tudjman showed no regard for the legitimate claims and historical sensitivities of the Serb minority. These policies stimulated fears among Serbs living in Croatia of a revival of the Ustasha. [17] What was needed was for Tudjman to disassociate himself and his party from the fascist regime of World War II. With no adequate guarantees of their safety being given to the Croatian Serbs, Milosevic in Belgrade had encouraged them to arm themselves.[18]

The Wars

War in Slovenia

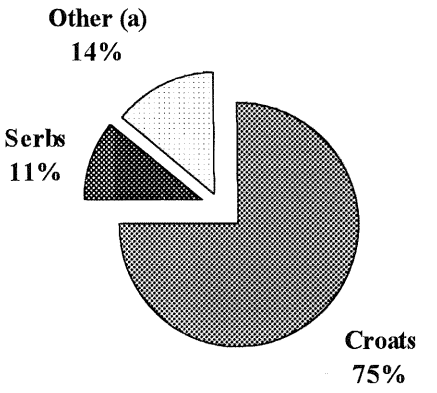
On 25 June 1991, Slovenia and Croatia unilaterally declared their independence, disregarding prior warnings by both the European Community and the United States that their independence would not be recognised. Within 24 hours, the JNA and the Slovenian Territorial Defence Force were locked in combat, and Croatian Serb paramilitary forces had launched an offensive on the Croats. The Slovenian conflict was short but decisive, and ended in the failure of the JNA to achieve even their limited aims of seizing Slovenia's border crossings. Certainly the Slovenians had prepared well for hostilities, and the JNA operation was mismanaged. But a more fundamental reason for the JNA failure was that Milosevic had accepted eventual Slovenian secession months earlier, and few JNA troops were deployed for the operation.[19] The EC-negotiated Brioni Agreement of 7 July brought hostilities to an end, and all JNA troops had withdrawn from Slovenia by 19 July.

War in Croatia

The Croatian war differed completely, both in nature, with the resident Croatian Serb forces playing a major part, and in intensity, with more than 10 000 people killed in the six months of

fighting from July to December. The JNA and the Croatian Serb paramilitary forces, often abetted by paramilitary forces from Serbia, worked in close cooperation, with the aim of carving out an enclave for their people and 'cleansing' it of Croatians. During July and early August, the violence did not increase greatly from the de facto civil war which had been taking place throughout 1991, being mainly border skirmishing. However, by September fighting had intensified greatly, and one of the most ferocious battles, the Serbian siege of Vukovar, continued for nearly three months until the shattered town finally fell in November. At the same time, the Serb assault on the historic coastal city of Dubrovnik was headline news throughout the world.

Figure 2: Ethnic composition of Croatia 1991



(a) Mainly Yugoslav ie those who considered themselves to be in this category rather than another ethnic group. They are usually the offspring of mixed marriages.

Atrocities carried out by both sides have been well documented. Misha Glenny, author of *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, reports that 'between 100 000 and 200 000 Serbs were forced to leave their homes in large-scale ethnic cleansing which has received much less publicity than any other.'[20]

The protracted hostilities in Croatia accelerated the transformation of the JNA from a multi-ethnic force into an essentially Serbian-run and Serbian-manned military force. Although the JNA had considerable autonomy, and on occasion defied Prime Minister Markovic, the military leaders continued to be guided by Milosevic, the real centre of power in Yugoslavia. The federal government collapsed late in 1991, and in April 1992 Serbia and Montenegro formed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

More than a dozen EC negotiated cease-fire agreements collapsed in rapid succession, largely because the sides in conflict were more interested in winning the war than accepting political compromise. In October 1991, Lord Carrington presented, on behalf of the European Community, principles for a comprehensive solution to the crisis. Five of the leaders of the six republics accepted the proposal; Milosevic alone refused. Glenny comments: 'No international mediators have come closer to solving the Balkan riddle than Lord Carrington did with the Hague document.'[21]

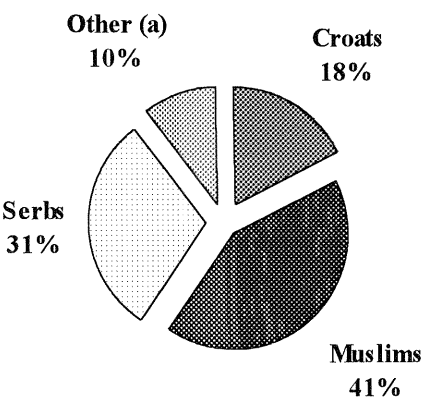
With the failure of the EC-hosted negotiations, the UN was invited to mediate, with Cyrus Vance as Special Envoy. Eventually, on 15 January 1992, the Vance peace proposals were accepted by Croatia, as well as by Belgrade and the JNA, which had seized considerable territory. By this time the front line had solidified, and Vance's plan involved the deployment of 14 000 UN peacekeeping troops, which began arriving in March 1992. But the accord was not a political settlement; the conflict was left unresolved, merely frozen until a proper political solution could be found. The leaders of the Serb community in the Krajina felt betrayed by the decision to cease hostilities, but Milosevic, seeing the deployment of UN troops as a mechanism for consolidating his military gains in Croatia, overruled their objections.[22]

With hindsight it can be seen as unfortunate that Vance's terms of reference were not extended to deal with the looming crisis in neighbouring Bosnia.

War in Bosnia: the Beginning

Glenny notes that 'from the start of Yugoslavia's disintegration, those who understood the implications of this country's collapse were most concerned about the impact it could have on Bosnia..[23] The EC's recognition of Croatian independence on 15 January 1992, under pressure from Germany,[24] had virtually guaranteed war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in that it forced Bosnia to choose between remaining in Yugoslavia, which meant Bosnia's Croatians and Moslems would stay under Serb domination, or claiming independence, which would take 1.3 million Serbs out of Yugoslavia against their will. Croatia was implacably opposed to the first alternative and Serbia to the second. The greatest fear of the non-Serb population of Bosnia was remaining in a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia. Taken under the false impression that the western powers would guarantee Bosnia-Herzegovina's sovereignty, President Izetbegovic's steps towards independence, such as the referendum on 29 February,[25] thus gave Serbia a pretext to attack.

Figure 3: Ethnic composition of Bosnia-Herzegovina 1991



(a) Mainly Yugoslav ie those who considered themselves to be in this category rather than another ethnic group. They are usually the offspring of mixed marriages.

The Serbs and the Croats within Bosnia included the most militant nationalists of these two nations, and both had begun preparations for aggression well before Croatia had been recognised. The two groups had been arming themselves (the Serbs utilising JNA supplies), had started to form 'autonomous regions', and had been negotiating secretly over who should take over which parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina.[26] Warren Zimmerman, US Ambassador to Yugoslavia at the time, makes the point that these steps by the Bosnian Serbs could not have been possible without Milosevic's direct involvement.[27] It can be assumed Tudjman was active in the Bosnian Croats' preparations; at least since mid-1991 he had been claiming that the solution of the Yugoslav problem was to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina between Serbia and Croatia.

Widespread fighting broke out in Bosnia in early April 1992, and by the end of the month Sarajevo was under siege. By July 1992 the Serbs controlled about 70 per cent of Bosnia.

Bosnian War: Phase 1 - April 1992 to April 1993

Freedman makes the point that mid-1992 was possibly the last opportunity, 'before the Serbs consolidated their gains and before the Croats split with the Bosnians, when a serious military intervention might have allowed the West to get a grip on the conflict.'[28] But US participation was crucial to any such action, and the impending presidential election eliminated risk-taking by the Bush administration. By late 1992, the international community had settled into a policy that sought to ease the Moslems' plight but eliminated any option for going to war on their behalf.

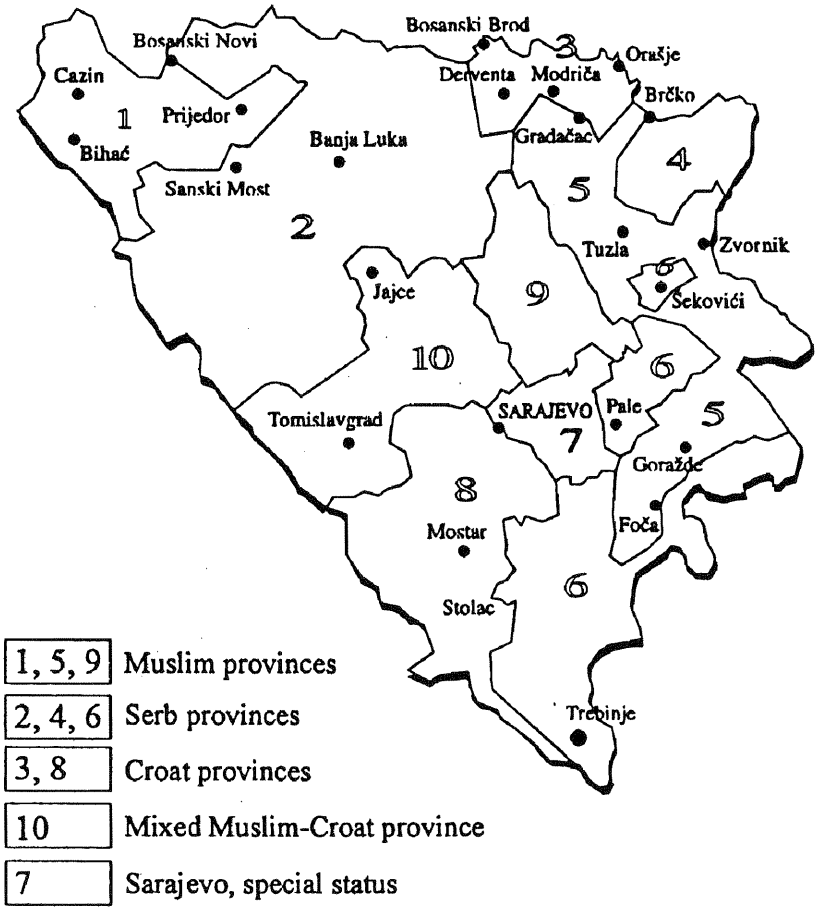
During 1992, a major split developed between the peacemaking process, led by the EC under Lord Carrington, and the growing peacekeeping process, carried out by the UN Secretariat. Boutros-Ghali became increasingly annoyed at the EC team making agreements which involved extra duties for the UN force in Croatia without discussing the matter with UN representatives.[29] The tension was resolved by the establishment in August 1992 of a new joint regulating framework, the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia (ICFY), based in Geneva. David Owen replaced Lord Carrington as the EC appointee, and Cyrus Vance remained the UN representative.

The deployment in Bosnia of UNPROFOR, with British and French troops, also led to some disagreements between the major European powers and the US. The US was pushing for tougher measures by the UN. But France and Britain, with troops in the field, were reluctant to become more aggressive and were even cautious about UN troops asserting their right to retaliate if under fire. Similarly, early in 1993 the new Clinton administration adopted a 'lift and strike' policy - lift the arms embargo to enable the Bosnians to obtain equipment, and use NATO for air strikes on the Bosnian Serbs. But understandably the contributors to the UN forces were reluctant to endorse any form of coercive action that could produce severe retaliation. Indeed, the question of UN troops' security was a practical obstacle to armed intervention, quite apart from the size of the intervention force estimated as necessary for success. Any decision to use force required at least the partial withdrawal of UNPROFOR.

In January 1993, Vance and Owen presented a ten-point plan as an interim political solution for Bosnia.[30] This plan, building upon earlier models, called for the establishment of a highly decentralised state in which the three major ethnic groups would be recognised as the 'constituent units'. However, in an ambitious attempt to avoid the appearance of forming three ethnic territorial spheres of influence, Bosnia would be organised administratively into ten cantons, each with a mixture of the different ethnic groups. Although most governmental functions would be carried out by the cantons, a central government, operating from Sarajevo, would be responsible for such things as foreign policy, defence and taxation. The international community was generally opposed to any partition of Bosnia out of fear it could have a domino effect, triggering claims to sovereignty by other ethnic communities, such as the Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia.

Map 4

1993: Vance-Owen plan



Source: L. Silber and A. Little. *The death of Yugoslavia.* London, Penguin Books, 1995: ix.

Although the Vance-Owen Plan provided the framework for a moderately just political settlement, difficulties arose over the degree of autonomy which would be granted to Bosnia's ethnic communities. Only the Bosnian Croats were immediately satisfied with the Plan.

The attitude of the Bosnian Government to the Vance-Owen Plan was certainly not enthusiastic, although the Plan was far more favourable to the Moslems than subsequent schemes. It avoided the blatant division of the country into three ethnic areas, and it forced the Serbs to hand back 60 per cent of the territory they had conquered militarily. But the Bosnian Government was still under the impression that Clinton rhetoric, both before and after the election, made substantial Western assistance likely. On 25 March 1993, after the map was revised to enlarge Moslem control around Sarajevo and after receiving US assurances that cease-fire enforcement would be implemented if a peace plan was signed, the Bosnian Government agreed to all conditions of the Plan. The Moslems were also apprehensive that the Bosnian Croats, impatient at the failure of diplomacy, were beginning to resort to force to secure the area they claimed as 'Herceg-Bosna' in the south of the country.[31]

In April 1993, the Plan was rejected by the Bosnian Serbs, fearing possible Moslem-Croat domination by the proposed central Sarajevo government, and possibly calculating that their military strength made compromise unnecessary. The Bosnian Serbs also criticised the Vance-Owen Plan for cutting off the land corridor in the north of Bosnia linking much of the existing Serbian zone of control to the Serb Republic. Because of the dispersion of Serbs within Bosnia, the forging and preservation of this corridor has been an important strategic aim for the Bosnian Serbs.

Bosnian War: Phase 2 - April 1993 to February 1994

The Vance-Owen Peace Plan had come close to acceptance but, with the final Bosnian Serb rejection in May 1993, the attempt to keep Bosnia intact under a federal state was abandoned. In June 1993 the plan was replaced by a proposal drawn up by Presidents Milosevic and Tudjman, but generally known as the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan.[32] This aimed at dividing Bosnia into a loose union of three ethnic republics. The Bosnian Government was reluctant to accept a 'carve up' of its state, but eventually agreed to the plan on condition the Moslems received more territory than they had been allocated in first draft. The core problem became, and to some extent still is: 'how to persuade the Serbs to relinquish sufficient territory for the Bosnian government to concoct a viable state with honor served.'[33] In November 1993, a Franco-German proposal was accepted by the European Union: that Belgrade give up more conquered territory in return for an easing of the international sanctions, which had been imposed on Serbia and Montenegro by the Security Council on 1 June 1992 as a response to Serb aggression in Bosnia.

The Bosnian Serb advances had gradually forced the Moslem population to shelter in enclaves, and both the UN and the private aid agencies were regularly prevented access to these areas. In one of the worst cases, no aid convoys were allowed to reach the eastern Bosnian town of Srebrenica for months. In May 1993, Security Council Resolution 824 designated six towns -

Srebrenica, Sarajevo, Tuzla, Gorazde, Bihac and Zepa - as 'safe areas', which were proclaimed free from 'armed attacks and from any other hostile acts'. UNPROFOR was tasked with securing the safe areas in a number of ways, but the required additional troops were not provided, and the safe areas mandate was never enforced. Most of them continued as very 'unsafe' areas.

In April 1993, intense fighting between Moslems and Bosnian Croats erupted in central Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moslems and Croats had been allies until this time, united against a common Serb enemy, although Croat forces had been 'cleansing' areas adjacent to Croatia since January 1993. Anticipating implementation of the Vance-Owen plan, the Bosnian Croat forces began to move against Moslems in Herzegovina. The town of Mostar was to be virtually destroyed in the ensuing siege, and atrocities were carried out by both sides, although, unlike atrocities perpetrated by the Serbs, they received relatively little coverage in the world media.[34]

During 1993 the debate continued over the utility or otherwise of NATO air strikes, as recommended by the Clinton administration. When NATO finally put its air power at the disposal of the UN early in 1994, it became clear that a useful air role depended on ground forces to spot targets.

By mid-1993 it was obvious that the sanctions which the Security Council had imposed on Serbia and Montenegro on 1 June 1992 were having a significant effect on their economies. One result was a change of focus for Milosevic, with the lifting of the sanctions rather than gaining additional territory becoming his first priority. By 1994 Milosevic had become the West's best hope for achieving peace and stability in the region.

Bosnian War: Phase 3 - February 1994 to January 1995

A breakthrough of sorts came as a result of a mortar shell exploding in a crowded Sarajevo market in February 1994. Pressure for action brought the US back into the negotiating scene; Clinton had shown little interest in Bosnia since his threats to employ air power had failed to receive European support in 1993. NATO, acting for the first time 'out of area', issued an ultimatum, the first in its history, to the Serbs to remove heavy weaponry from the exclusion zone around Sarajevo or face air strikes. Russia seized the opportunity and, taking advantage of its relationship with the Serbs, agreed to replace the Serbs in the exclusion zone with Russian peacekeepers. Air strikes were avoided, and the Russian intervention led to the replacement in April 1994 of the EU-UN mediators, the ICFY, as the focal point in negotiations. The new mediation group, known as the 'Contact Group', consisted of diplomats from the US, Russia, France, the UK and Germany, with officers from the last three states representing the EU as well as their national interests. The EU thus retained a place in international crisis management.

An important initiative by the US was to assist in patching up the link between Croatia and Bosnia and bring an end to the fighting which had been going on since March 1993. In March 1994, the US, assisted by German influence on the Croatians, brokered the Washington

Accords, which established the Croatian-Moslem Federation. The agreement was an indication that the Bosnian government had finally consented to a carving-up of Bosnia.

The Contact Group had been formed in an attempt to inject new momentum into the peace process and, in July 1994, the Group presented a new set of peace proposals in map form. The map assigns 51 per cent of the Republic's territory to the newly formed Moslem-Croat Federation and 49 per cent to the Bosnian Serbs, thus cutting the Serbs holding from the existing 70 per cent to less than half. The Bosnian Serb Government was warned that failure to accept the proposal would result in a tightening of sanctions against its main ally in Belgrade. The Bosnian government, critical of the amount of territory still allocated to the Serbs, eventually approved the proposals under pressure. The Belgrade government accepted the scheme but the Bosnian Serbs rejected it, a decision which President Milosevic denounced as 'senseless and absurd'. This was a further illustration of the deteriorating relations between Milosevic and the political leader of the Bosnian Serbs, Dr Radovan Karadzic. Milosevic's decision in August 1994 to close the border between Serbia and Bosnia appears to have had little effect on the Bosnian Serbs apart from threatening their fuel supply.

The final success of the Contact Group's proposals rests on the questionable assumption that the Moslem-Croat Federation is a viable entity. But it can be said that by this time the tide of war was shifting in favour of the anti-Bosnian Serb forces. The ceasefire and new link with Croatia, the help being received from Iran and the Arab states, and secret US arming of Croats and Moslems[35] were all combining to give some balance to the battlefield, although the Serbs still had the advantage of vastly superior equipment.

The tension continued between America's greater readiness to use air power, and the British and French fears that such action would compromise UNPROFOR's role on the ground. The disagreement springs from two fundamentally different views of the war. The US perceived the conflict primarily in terms of Serb aggression, and saw the answer in the use of NATO armed forces, preferably in a limited way with use of air power. In this view, a ceasefire could only come if accompanied by a political agreement that reversed Serb gains. The major European powers saw the war in a rather more complex way, a civil war resulting from a variety of factors, and requiring fixing at a number of points. In their view the basic cause of the civil war was the revival of ethnic conflict after the fall of communism. An eventual solution would require a political settlement among the three warring parties over their territorial dispute. The main needs were to persuade Milosevic to continue to isolate the Bosnian Serbs, obtain a Bosnian ceasefire, and introduce stability to the region by inducing reforms in Serbia and Croatia.[36] Rieff claims that, in their opposition to harsh measures to end the fighting in Bosnia, Britain and France 'increasingly came to see a Serb victory as the best solution on offer'.[37]

Bosnian War: 4th phase - January 1995 on

A significant move, for the conflict in Croatia as well as for the Bosnian war, occurred in January 1995 when President Tudjman decided to terminate the UN operation in Croatia. It was eventually agreed the UN presence would continue, but at a much lower level. This cleared the

way for a return to all-out war between Croatia and the Croatian Serbs, which resumed in May with Croatia retaking Western Slavonia, one of three areas secured by the Serbs in the 1991 fighting.

During 1994, there had been seven air strikes by NATO aircraft against Serb targets in Bosnia and Croatia, but generally air strikes had been restrained by French and British opposition. On 25 May 1995, in response to the Bosnian Serbs' refusal to return stolen UN heavy weapons, six NATO planes destroyed a Serbian ammunition dump near Pale. Part of the Serbs' retaliation was to take nearly 400 UN personnel as hostages, and secure them near key potential targets as human shields against further air strikes. This crisis led to the commitment of an additional 12 500 British, French and US troops to the region as a rapid reaction force, while frenzied diplomacy went on to have the hostages released. Great hopes were held for the rapid reaction force, that it would give teeth to the UN's position, but the Bosnian Serbs remained defiant. On 11 July, they captured one of the 'safe areas', Srebrenica, with reports of atrocities, and with the fate of up to 10 000 Moslem civilians remaining a mystery. Two weeks later, on 25 July, another 'safe area', Zepa, fell, and soon a third area, Bihac, was under attack.

On 21 July, with Congress arguing for a lifting of the arms embargo and pressure increasing for the withdrawal of UNPROFOR, an international crisis conference was held in London. But these talks failed to resolve the disagreement over air strikes, with the US wanting major NATO air operations and the French and British remaining reluctant. The quarrel was also over the 'dual key' system, which required authorisation by both the UN Secretary-General and NATO for bombing strikes to go ahead. At this stage, media reports that NATO had drawn up lists of Bosnian Serb targets for an intensive air campaign, seemed like a continuation of the empty rhetoric which had been a feature of, especially, US statements on the war.

Between the end of July and the end of August, a series of events took place which significantly altered the course of the conflict. On 24 July it was announced that the Croatians had agreed to provide 'urgent military assistance' to Bosnian government troops. On 28 July, with the Bihac enclave under increasing Serb pressure, 10 000 Croatian troops crossed the border and attacked Serb positions. It is obvious the Croat forces had prepared carefully for this offensive, and their rapid advance in the next few days relieved the pressure on Bihac and constituted probably the most severe military set-back for the Bosnian Serbs up to that date. On 4 August, Croatian forces launched a massive attack on the Serbs in the Krajina region of Croatia. In three days the Croatians had retaken the region, which had been under separate Croatian Serb control since early 1991, and up to 200 000 Croatian Serb refugees were pouring into northern Bosnia. While Croatian forces began to build up on the borders of Eastern Slavonia, the one remaining Serb-held region in Croatia, Croatian and Bosnian forces began to advance into central Bosnia and along coastal areas.

Facing Presidential elections in 1996, President Clinton was showing new determination to end the Bosnian war. During August he launched a new diplomatic initiative by sending an Assistant Secretary of State, Richard Holbrooke, to negotiate with the warring parties and with major powers. The new proposal was based on the Contact Group plan, with Bosnia remaining within its current borders, and with Serbs having 49 per cent of the territory and Croatians and

Moslems sharing the remaining 51 per cent. It differed from the Contact Group plan in having different maps, and abandoning the idea that the two parts of Bosnia could form a coherent whole.

A significant move late in August was the withdrawal of UN forces from Gorazde. Although widely regarded at the time as a betrayal of the Moslems, in reality it was a strategic withdrawal designed to lessen UNPROFOR vulnerability, and thus avoid the risk of another humiliating hostage crisis. The major French-UK objection to air strikes had now been resolved. On 29 August, following a Serb shelling of Sarajevo which killed 38 civilians, more than 60 NATO planes launched a series of attacks on Bosnian Serb targets, destroying communication facilities, ammunition depots and command posts. These were the first extensive air attacks of the war, and signified that NATO would not allow the Bosnian government to lose.

On 8 September, after intensive shuttle diplomacy by Holbrooke, Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia accepted a US-brokered agreement aimed at ending the fighting in Bosnia. On 26 September, at talks in New York conducted by the Contact Group, the parties to the conflict agreed that there would be a single Bosnian state with a federal constitution, and accepted broad constitutional principles, including a presidency, a parliament, a constitutional court and free elections.

On 5 October, the parties agreed to a Bosnia-wide cease-fire, followed by Proximity Peace Talks in the US, and eventually a peace conference in Paris. The cease-fire began on 12 October and has gradually been taking hold.

On 1 November, the Proximity Peace Talks began at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio with the aim of clearing away obstacles and reaching an agreement that would make possible a formal peace conference.

It is anticipated that, in the event of a peace accord, a 60 000-strong multinational military force will be deployed, with 20 000 troops from the US and a contingent from Russia.

The Role of the International Community

The Failure of the European Community[38]

What had the major powers been doing as tension increased in Yugoslavia and war broke out, first in Slovenia, then in Croatia, and finally in Bosnia? Certainly they were well aware of the danger. The US had known of Milosevic's ambition for a Greater Serbia from the time he took power in 1987, and the CIA warned in November 1990 that Yugoslavia would violently fall apart within 18 months, although the crisis point was seen as Kosovo, not Croatia or Bosnia.[39] Unable to perceive a course of action by which it might arrest the slide towards breakup and war, and believing the Europeans had more leverage to head off a catastrophe, the US encouraged the European Community to accept leadership in the crisis. David Gombert, senior director for Europe on President Bush's National Security Council staff, claims 'American

attempts in 1990 to get the Europeans to face the dangers were brushed aside', with the French accusing the US of 'overdramatising' the problem.[40]

Certainly there were at that time other distracting world events, against which the Yugoslavian problems might appear insignificant. In the latter half of 1990 and early 1991 the Gulf War drama was being played out, and throughout 1991 the USSR was in crisis prior to its dissolution in December. But the main reason for European inactivity seems to have been an initial failure to grasp the complexity and potential of the crisis. When eventually it began to become concerned, the EC seized on Yugoslavia as an opportunity to assert itself 'as the premier security institution in Europe'.[41] Thus at the end of May 1991, the EC sent a mission to Belgrade to mediate and to offer aid if a political solution could be reached, but by this time it was too late, with Slovenia and Croatia on the verge of secession.

The influence of the 12-member EC was also weakened by lack of unity. Britain and France, for example, in their desire to maintain Yugoslavian unity, generally supported Serbia's views on a remodelled federation. Germany and Austria, on the other hand, having historic, religious and cultural ties to Slovenia and Croatia, were more sympathetic to these states' ambitions for self-determination within some sort of loose confederation.[42] Continuing debate over their disagreements during 1991 and 1992 prevented any decisive and rapid response, and gave all combatants time to arm and prepare for battle.

On 23 June 1992, the EC unanimously voted not to recognise the independence of Slovenia and Croatia if these republics unilaterally seceded. But by November, with fighting in Croatia intensifying, Germany had taken an independent path and was advocating immediate recognition of Slovenia and Croatia. Such recognition would change the conflict from internal to international, and Dr Muller, the German peace research analyst, says Germany's policy change sprang from a hope that an interstate war could quickly be brought under control.[43] Serbia claimed Germany's strong EC pressure indicated a serious threat that 'Germany is about to attack our country for a third time this century'.[44]

Britain and France argued that recognition should come after an overall settlement of the problems associated with Yugoslavia's disintegration. As it was, the recognition by the major powers did not resolve the core problem in Croatia, the Serbian question. Over half a million Serbs had automatically changed from Yugoslavia to the new Croatian state which many Serbs, however mistakenly, saw as fascist. Also, as we have seen, recognition of Croatia pushed Bosnia into an impossible decision over its own independence. As Glenny comments, recognition 'meant that the Croats and Serbs could continue their fight by proxy in Bosnia-Herzegovina'.[45]

The EC lacked appropriate instruments for crisis management, and with its diplomatic and peacekeeping efforts proving unsuccessful, the EC began to hand over its tasks to the UN in the last months of 1991. When the conflict had begun in June, the dominant attitude in both the Security Council and the General Assembly was that this was a civil conflict that international intervention would exacerbate. Also the Soviet Union, having at the time similar internal problems to those in the Balkan republics, had made it clear it would veto a peacekeeping force.

The EC was not the only multilateral organisation to fail. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), relying as it did on unanamity to enable it to act, was rendered virtually impotent when this unanimity was not forthcoming, and quickly passed the problem to the EC. The West European Union (WEU), perceived as a kind of EC security arm, had never tackled a major peacekeeping venture, and lacked both forces and a command structure. During the early days of the crisis, France, particularly, believed any military needs could be managed by the WEU, but this illusion disappeared in a few months. NATO was the only body with force capability but, under its Cold War rules, the crisis was initially an 'out-of-area' conflict. Later, when its rules were altered allowing it to intervene, its member governments proved unwilling to act in any serious way, and it lost credibility as it issued threats without the intention to back them up.

Lacking a clear perspective on Bosnia's future, the international community was unable to achieve a coherent strategy for the country as inter-ethnic tension increased early in 1992. As Woodward observes: 'the EC did nothing on Bosnia during January and February, losing an invaluable opportunity for political negotiation'.[46] One point was agreed upon - that there was to be no significant military intervention. It was generally put forward that, to be successful, the scale of intervention would have to be prohibitively large - the usual estimate was around 400 000. But the main reason was a lack of political will to act forcefully in a complex situation where risks appeared high and benefits limited.

The Rhetoric of the US

In any case, any large-scale international military operation would have required US involvement, and both the Bush and Clinton administrations were happy to hand the conflict to the Europeans, seeing it as more in the nature of a Vietnam than a Gulf War. This reluctance to make any long-term commitment on the ground in Bosnia was not just Presidential nervousness about losing votes. Thomas Halverson points out:

> The Pentagon and the State Department consistently opposed the use of American ground forces except for peace-keepers after a stable peace was established. Not only were too few interests at stake, but the characteristics of the war were not conducive to US strategy, and risk of casualties was high.[47]

It was unfortunate that Clinton's statements during the Presidential campaign in 1992 encouraged the Bosnian Government to expect more direct US action if President Bush was defeated. Although, once in office, Clinton continued making rhetorical commitments, his policy differed little from that of the Bush administration. Unfortunately he continued holding out hope of intervention. Woodward argues that the Clinton administration was responsible for delaying a settlement:

> [The] Bosnian government had no incentive to negotiate any compromise, when the United States offered air strikes against Bosnian Serbs, a lifting of the arms embargo, and covert - and eventually overt - military aid to win back control of all Bosnian territory.[48]

Thus by the second half of 1992, Western policy had settled into several limited aims: contain the crisis ie. prevent it spreading to involve states outside the former Yugoslavia, provide humanitarian relief; and avoid becoming entangled in a prolonged military conflict. At this stage only compromise solutions were possible; the passage of time had put the only satisfactory outcomes, the provision of durable solutions to the core problems, progressively beyond reach. The influx of UN forces into Bosnia in November made the British and French even more nervous about any provocation, such as peace enforcement measures. Their UNPROFOR contingents, dispersed in the Bosnian countryside in order to carry out their humanitarian duties, were highly vulnerable to potential Serbian attack, and became virtual hostages.

Implications of the Balkans Crisis for Australia

The crisis in Yugoslavia was of direct concern to Australia for several reasons, one being that 160 000 of its citizens, almost 1 per cent of its total population, were born in Yugoslavia. This figure would be almost doubled if the Australian-born generation is counted. Croatians are the largest of the Yugoslav ethnic groups in Australia, followed by Serbs. Although the number of Bosnian Moslems in Australia is not large, a significant increase has occurred since 1991 due to the Balkans conflict. This can be expected to continue. While the Australian communities have naturally shown keen interest in developments in the former Yugoslavia, fears of significant outbreaks of violence in Australia between settlers from the former Yugoslavia have, fortunately, not been realised, apart from scattered incidents.

It is, therefore, not surprising that Australia was the first country to suggest that the United Nations had a role to play in mediating the conflict. The Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, wrote to the United Nations General Secretary suggesting that the issue of Yugoslavia be brought before the Security Council as a matter of urgency, and the Foreign Minister, Senator Evans, raised the matter in his speech to the Forty-Sixth General Assembly on 23 September 1991. This emphasis by the Australian Government on the role of the United Nations in the Yugoslav Crisis also reflects the importance which it attaches to the United Nations in its overall foreign policy.

Australia also featured in the first contingent of UN troops to be sent to Yugoslavia in January 1992. The 55 man UN liaison mission was led by an Australian, Colonel John Wilson. Australia did not contribute more troops to UNPROFOR, however, and with hindsight it can be seen as a wise decision. Certainly the UN did not ask Australia, and we were more heavily committed in peacekeeping at the time than at any other time in our history, with over 2000 troops deployed in Somalia, Cambodia and the Western Sahara. But, in addition, Senator Ray made it clear that it was purely a European problem that should be sorted out by the European powers. Australia has tended to be very selective in its peacekeeping contributions, not becoming involved in missions which have no clear objective or offer no definite end date for Australia's participation. Senator Ray was reported as saying recently that the UN operation in Bosnia had failed every classic test of a peacekeeping operation.[49]

The Cause of the Wars

In conclusion I will attempt to summarise the major factors, both domestic and international, which contributed to conflict in the former Yugoslavia. My assumption is that, however divisive have been the historical factors, such as the centuries of oppression by different regimes and the bitter experiences in World War II, the cultural diversity, and the geographic dispersion of nationalities, these things need not have led to war. Certainly Yugoslavia was lacking in many of the cohesive features that characterise more stable societies, but conflict based on ethnic nationalism was only one of a number of possibilities for Yugoslavia.

- The central factor in the Yugoslav crisis is the relationship between the two biggest ethnic groups, the Serbs and the Croats. As Glenny sums up:

  > The essential problem of a Yugoslav state lies in the numerical and political dominance of Serbs over Croats; the essential problem of a Croatian state lies in the numerical and political dominance of Croats over Serbs.[50]

- A key aspect of the above relationship is their differing perceptions of the common state: while Serbs basically opted for the unitarist goal, ie the creation of a strong federal state of Yugoslavia, Croatian leaders tended to see Yugoslavia merely as a necessary step towards a fully independent Croat nation-state.[51]

- A more immediate cause of the conflict was the assertion of Serbian nationalism, the revival of the Greater Serbia ideal. As we have seen, this was very much a nationalism manipulated and stimulated by Milosevic in his quest for power, particularly as the communist system began to fall apart in Yugoslavia. A prime early example of this occurred during the Kosovo issue with his emphasis on the Serbian role over the centuries as victim of a variety of aggressors.

- Mention of Milosevic raises another factor: Yugoslavia has been most unfortunate in the leadership of the two main republics. Tudjman's obsessive nationalism was seen at its worst both in his harsh treatment of the Serb minority, and in his decision to leave Yugoslavia without taking into account the needs and fears of this minority. [52]These two leaders initially provided the dynamics of the war, an unchecked nationalism. Michael Ignatieff is critical of the political cynicism of both leaders. For example, he makes the following comment on Tudjman:

  > Tudjman, for his part, posed as the friend of Slovenian and Bosnian independence, only to betray both when it suited him. Tudjman's portrayal of himself and his country as blameless victims of Serbian aggression cannot conceal the low cynicism with which Croatia has acted as the scavenger in Bosnia, now siding with the Serbs, now with the Moslems, depending on which side would increase the Croats' advantage.[53]

- Some commentators claim a key leadership failure was seen in Slovenia's, and later Croatia's, reluctance to cooperate with the federal government in an attempt to find a more modern structure of federation that would accommodate the interests of all three republics. Prime Minister Markovic was sincere in his wish to find a more satisfactory

system, and both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia regarded a compromise framework as essential to their survival.[54]

- Ironically, one matter on which Serbia and Croatia held similar views was Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serb and Croat nationalists view the Bosnian Moslems as, at best, Serbs or Croats forcibly converted to Islam under the Ottoman Empire, and at worst as a bridgehead of Islamic fundamentalism in Europe.[55] There have been several accounts of Serb and Croat agreement at a senior level to carve up Bosnia between them at the expense of the Moslems.[56] And the Bosnian war is seen as an historic crusade for many Bosnian Serbs, who refer to Bosnian government troops as the Turkish army.[57]

- Bosnia-Herzegovina's general aim was to avoid war, but one crucial mistake was made by their leaders in February 1992 when, apparently influenced by US assurances that a better deal could be found, they alone rejected the plan put forward at the Lisbon conference. This would have organised Bosnia-Herzegovina into three territorial units and provided for Moslem-Serb-Croat power sharing, probably as reasonable a scheme as the one being debated today, three and a half tragic years later.[58]

- The quarrelsome leaders of the Yugoslav republics must bear prime responsibility for the war, but the international community was inept in its response to the problem. The chief failure was that of the European Community in not diagnosing the problem sufficiently early, or at least in not realising its seriousness. Also, having failed to set up in 1990-91 a new set of institutions suitable for conflict resolution in a post-Cold War world, it lacked the organisation to handle the task. Jonathan Eyal from the Royal United Services Institute refers to the Europeans' eagerness to substitute 'vision' for reality, and trying 'to run before it could walk'.[59]

- In 1991, with conflict threatening, the European Community failed to persist in negotiations for a comprehensive settlement for the entire country. The EC held enormous leverage from 1989 to 1991 if it wished to use it, as the Yugoslavian politicians were critically intent on finding the right path to European membership.[60]

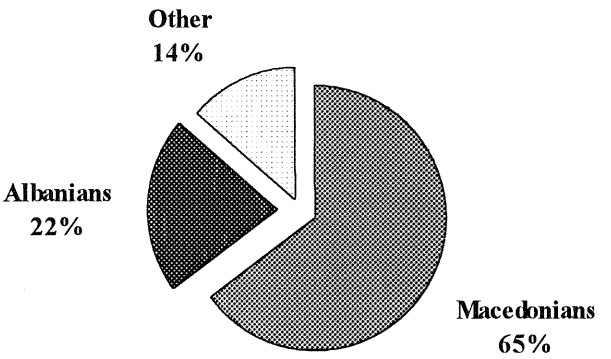
- The one consistency in international actions toward the conflict in Bosnia has been that interests at stake did not justify military action except in support of humanitarian goals. Thus, while it resorted to building a 'piecemeal peace' on the basis of ceasefires, the West's main objective was to do as much as possible to aid the war's victims by assisting the UNHCR, utilising UNPROFOR for this purpose.[61] It focused on relieving symptoms rather than resolving underlying causes.

- Germany bears some responsibility for the crisis with its support for Croatian succession, especially with its pressure on the other Western powers for too-early recognition of the independence of the two states. As has been seen, this brought to a head the issue of the territorial rights of the Serb minority in Croatia, and forced Bosnia to choose an independence in which it could not survive.[62]

The Situation in Kosovo and Macedonia

The fourth Balkans conflict, involving Serbs, Albanians and Macedonians, is still under some sort of control, but has certainly not been resolved. Although Macedonia receives more media attention, the main point of tension is Kosovo, one of two autonomous provinces within Serbia. In fact a major danger to Macedonia is from conflict spilling over the border from Kosovo.

Figure 4: Ethnic composition of Macedonia 1991



Albanians in Kosovo have been well served by their leaders, who have tried hard to restrain violence. A policy of non-violent resistance has been implemented and alternative institutions, such as schools, established. This behaviour has enabled the mainly peasant society to continue functioning without serious conflict, and has gained the province much goodwill in the West. One dispute at the peace talks is likely to arise over US insistence that the autonomy granted under the 1974 Constitution be restored to Kosovo. Due to Milosevic's manoeuvring, this status was formally removed in 1989. Kosovo is at present virtually a police state.

The deployment in 1993 of a peacekeeping force to monitor Macedonia's border with Serbia and Albania has diminished whatever threat of war existed. At present the force consists of about 500 US marines and a battalion of around 700 peacekeepers from Scandinavia. But even if peace is secured in Bosnia and Croatia, the tension between ethnic Albanians and Macedonians makes for a fragile state. Misha Glenny emphasises that, whereas the Bosnian and Croatian conflicts have been contained so far within the former Yugoslavia, conflict in Macedonia would have the potential to spread to several external states:

> A breakdown in relations between Macedonia's Slav majority and Albanian minority would provoke an internal collapse. In such an event, three of Macedonia's neighbours (Albania, Serbia, and Bulgaria), if not more, would be forced to consider filling the resultant power vacuum. If war reaches Macedonia, it will no longer matter whether a solution to the Bosnian

> and Croatian wars can be found - a whole new series of conflicts, distinct from the northern Balkans except in their common origin, would begin.[63]

Another actor in the dispute is Greece, which has asserted that the use of the name 'Macedonia' by the former Yugoslavian republic implied a claim on the neighbouring Greek province of Macedonia.

Conclusion

As it moved into the 1990s, Yugoslavia was obviously in a fragile condition, and nationalist stirrings by, first, Milosevic and then by Slovenia's leaders and Croatia's President Tudjman, were sufficient to trigger violence. Certainly internal structures adequate to handle the dispute were lacking, but it is most unfortunate that suitable European mechanisms to assist did not exist. Chances were certainly missed in 1990 and 1991 and even up to the early part of 1992, and there is a real need to act earlier in such situations and try to avoid conflicts. Most people would agree with Thomas Weiss that 'forestalling violence is clearly preferable to picking up the pieces from war or humanitarian intervention',[64] and even if preventive measures may be costly in the short run, the long term savings from avoiding the expense of warfare justify a preventive policy. As Andrew Cottey in his article in *Brassey's Defence Yearbook* concludes:

> Thus, if conflicts in various regions of the world are to be prevented and managed, increasing attention must be directed toward relatively low cost forms of early engagement and preventive diplomacy, rather than intervention after conflicts have broken out.[65]

Tito's attempt at multi-ethnic accommodation was the largest such endeavour that has taken place in the 20th century. Now a new model for the region has to be prepared and, while it is pleasing that a cease-fire in Bosnia is holding and peace talks are taking place, there is considerable doubt whether any new model will be satisfactory given the bitterness of the last four years of war. There is doubt also concerning the sincerity of some of the main players. For example, Michael Ignatieff commented recently on Tudjman's intentions:

> Reading the tangled story of Tudjman's calculations and subterfuges should convince anyone that the current Muslim-Croat federation is likely to be short-lived, and that Tudjman will turn on Izetbegovic again as soon as it seems advantageous to do so.[66]

It is also uncertain how long any peacekeeping force will need to stay. Hopefully it will not become another Cyprus, which has had UN peacekeepers since 1964; a major problem in Cyprus has been the lack of a formal peace agreement. It must also be decided what other international support - economic, diplomatic - will be required to enable the countries, especially Bosnia, to function. With the two richest of the former Yugoslavia's republics - Slovenia and Croatia - now independent, the other former republics will have lost significant economic input.

As well as the Bosnian and Croatian problems, the Macedonian situation still simmers, and Serb-Albanian relations in the province of Kosovo remain tense. An even more sober note to finish on is that this whole Balkans conflict could be a forerunner of what might happen in the former Soviet Union, with 25 million Russians dispersed in countries adjoining Russia.

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5 Ibid: 146.

6 Ibid: 140.

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21 Ibid: 60.

22 For an account of the wars in Slovenia and Croatia, see Cohen, Lenard J.: Op.Cit.: 223-236.

23 Glenny, Misha. *The fall of Yugoslavia*: 143.

24 Germany recognised Slovenian and Croatian independence on 18 December 1991.

25 In October 1991, the Bosnian Parliament had voted in favour of secession, with the Bosnian Serbs opposing. This vote led to the referendum in February 1992.

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29 Fetherston, A.B. *Towards a theory of United Nations peacekeeping*. St. Martin's Press, NY, 1994: 80-81.

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31 Glenny, Misha. *The fall of Yugoslavia*: 229-230.

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33 Freedman, Lawrence. Op.Cit.: 67

34 Glenny, Misha. *The fall of Yugoslavia*: 221. . See also *Strategic Survey* 1994:1995. IISS, London, 1995: 101.

35 Jonathan Eyal writes:

> For over two years, the Americans have brokered a federation between the Croats and Moslems of Bosnia. They also secretly armed both, in the hope that this federation would be able to stand up to the Serbs: the American calculation was that a solution could only be found when the Serbs were in checkmate.

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53 Ignatieff, Michael. Op.Cit.: 18.

54 Glenny, Misha. Yugoslavia: the great fall: 58.

55 Ibid: 57.

56 Cohen, Lenard J. Op.Cit.: 241.

57 Rieff, David. *Slaughterhouse*: 70.

58 See Cohen, Lenard J. Op.Cit.: 237. and Sharp, Jane. Appeasement, intervention and the future of Europe in Freedman, Lawrence (ed) *Military Intervention in European Conflicts*: 53.

59 Eyal, Jonathan. *Europe and Yugoslavia: lessons from a failure*. RUSI, London, 1993: 71.

60 Woodward, Susan L. Op.Cit.: 396.

61 Ibid: 317.

62 Cohen, Lenard J. Op.Cit.: 266.

63 Glenny, Misha. Heading off war in the Southern Balkans: 102.

64 Weiss, T.G. The United Nations and civil wars. *The Washington Quarterly*, Autumn 1994: 148.

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Appendix

Chronology of Conflict in Former Yugoslavia, 1990-95

1990

February	Multiparty elections bring an end to Communist rule in Croatia and Slovenia.
23 December	Referendum in Slovenia decides in favour of independence within 6 months, with the possibility of a confederation with the other Yugoslav peoples if they so wish.

1991

25 June	Croatia and Slovenia declare independence.
26 June	10 day war begins in Slovenia.
8 July	Brioni Agreement brings peace to Slovenia, but only a temporary cessation of fighting in Croatia.
25 August	Bombardment of Vukovar in Eastern Slavonia begins.
7 September	Peace conference begins in The Hague, the EC's final attempt to settle the conflict.
1 October	JNA begins attacks on towns on the Croatian Adriatic coast, including Dubrovnik.
3 October	JNA begins blockade of 7 Croatian ports.
8 October	UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar appoints Cyrus Vance, a former US Secretary of State, as his Personal Envoy for Yugoslavia.
17 November	Vukovar falls to JNA forces.
15 December	UN Security Council votes to send a small monitoring group to Yugoslavia to prepare for the eventual deployment of peacekeeping troops.
20 December	The Yugoslav Prime Minister, Ante Markovic, resigns.
23 December	Germany recognises the independence of Slovenia and Croatia.

1992

14 January	UN Military Liason Officers' force, numbering 55 men, and led by an Australian, Colonel Wilson, arrives in Yugoslavia.
15 January	EC recognises the independence of Slovenia and Croatia. A number of other countries, including Australia, also recognise the new states.
21 February	UN Security Council passes Resolution 743 to approve creation of 14 000-strong UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) for initial period of 12 months.
29 Feb.-1 March	Referendum in Bosnia-Herzegovina votes for full independence
3 March	President Izetbegovic of Bosnia proclaims the republic's independence from Yugoslavia. Fighting begins in Bosnia.
25 March	Bosnian Government rejects the Lisbon Agreement which would have divided the republic into three autonomous units along ethnic lines.
6 April	The EC and US recognise the independence of Bosnia.
21 April	Serbs begin artillery bombardment of Sarajevo.
27 April	Yugoslav Federal Assembly adopts the constitution of a new Yugoslav state, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, comprising two republics - Serbia (together with its autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina) and Montenegro.
12 May	Bosnian Serbs form their own government and announce the formation of their own armed forces.
17 May	UNPROFOR moves its headquarters from Sarajevo to Belgrade because of fighting between Bosnian Serbs and Moslem forces. A skeleton UNPROFOR force of 120 remains in Sarajevo.
22 May	Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina accepted as members of the UN.
30 May	UN Security Council (Resolution 757) imposes comprehensive sanctions on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia ie. Serbia and Montenegro.
July	Refugee crisis worsening in the face of continuing Serb advances and 'ethnic cleansing'.
4 August	UN Security Council condemns detention camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

26 August	Start of London peace conference; sets up Geneva peace talks to be mediated by David Owen and Cyrus Vance.
6 October	UN Security Council votes to create a war crimes commission.
9 October	UN Security Council orders no-fly zone over Bosnia.
28 October	Vance and Owen publish peace plan and new Bosnia map based on 7 to 10 provincial governments. Bosnian Croats and Moslems accept the new proposals, but Bosnian Serbs reject them.
16 November	UN Security Council authorises naval blockade of Serbia and Montenegro to enforce fuel sanctions.

1993

2 January	Vance and Owen offer new peace plan, involving reorganisation of Bosnia-Herzegovina into 10 provinces.
8 January	Serbian troops kill Bosnian Deputy Prime Minister in UN convoy.
25 April	Vance-Owen peace plan rejected by Bosnian Serb assembly.
27 April	UN sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro, introduced in May 1992, tightened.
6 May	UN Security Council (Resolution 824) declares Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zepa, Goradze, Bihac and Srebrenica to be 'safe areas'.
26 May	UN Security Council (Resolution 827) votes to establish a war crimes tribunal to be based at The Hague.
June	Intense fighting continues especially around Gorazde (a 'safe area'); around Travnik in central Bosnia; and (between Bosnian Croats and Moslems) around Mostar in the south.
16 June	At Geneva a conference chaired by Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg (Vance's replacement) heard new proposals which would divide Bosnia into three ethnically based states with federal constitution.
July	Fighting between Croats and Moslems intensifies around Mostar, and Sarajevo suffers some of the heaviest bombardments of the war from Serb forces.
9 July	President Izetbegovic rejects three-way partition plan proposed in June.
19 July	EC decides not to impose sanctions against Croatia for participating in 'ethnic cleansing', after objections by Germany.
August	Siege of Mostar continues. Considerable discussion takes place in NATO and UN on use of air strikes, as proposed by the US.

21 September	New peace plan collapses.
November	As in previous month, primary fighting is between Moslems and Croats.
December	Heavy fighting around Sarajevo.
21 December	President Izetbegovic rejects Croat-Serb proposal for partition of Bosnia, which would allocate one-third of territory to Moslems.

1994

January	Continued disagreements over air strikes.
5 February	In worst such incident of war, mortar shell kills 68 in market place in Sarajevo.
9 February	NATO threatens air strikes if Serbs do not pull weapons back from around Sarajevo. Following Russian intervention, Serbs withdraw.
23 February	Bosnian government and Croat forces sign general ceasefire.
26 February	Moslem and Croat peace talks begin in Washington, brokered by US.
28 February	In an enforcement of the 'no-fly zone', four Serb aircraft shot down in NATO's first aggressive military action since its foundation in 1949.
18 March	Bosnia and Croatia sign an accord creating a federation of Bosnian Moslems and Croats.
10 April	In response to Serb assault on Gorazde, NATO carries out air strikes against Serb ground targets, the first such action in NATO's history.
22 April	Gorazde falls to Serb forces after heavy fighting.
24 April	After Russia agrees to use of air strikes, Serbs begin withdrawal from Gorazde.
26 April	First meeting of 'Contact Group', comprising France, Germany, Russia, the UK and the US.
6 July	The Contact Group unveils new package of peace proposals, with Moslem-Croat Federation allocated 51 per cent of Bosnia-Herzegovina's territory.
4 August	Serbian government imposes sanctions on Bosnian Serbs for refusing to accept Contact Group's proposals.
24 September	UN Security Council approves temporary lifting of some sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro.

October	Fierce fighting around Sarajevo. Bosnian government forces make significant advances against Serb forces around Bihac.
5 October	Some sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro lifted permanently after UN observers accept the authenticity of Yugoslavia's economic blockade of Bosnian Serb territory.
November	Bosnian government forces, backed by Bosnian Croat army, make advances on three fronts.
21 November	In largest NATO air strike to date, 39 NATO aircraft attack Bosnian Serbs' Udbina airbase.
December	Increased harassment of UNPROFOR by Bosnian Serb forces.
2 December	Contact Group produces new version of peace plan.
31 December	Four-month ceasefire, mediated by former US president Jimmy Carter, signed by all sides.

1995

January	Despite the ceasefire, heavy fighting continues in Bihac enclave.
12 January	President Tudjman announces that UNPROFOR mandate in Croatia, involving 14 000 UN peacekeepers, would be terminated on 31 March.
Feb.-March	Heavy fighting continues in Bihac enclave.
6 March	Commanders of forces of Croatia, Bosnian government and Bosnian Croats agree to establish a military alliance between their forces.
19 March	Bosnian army, gaining strength in spite of continued arms embargo, launches major offensive in northeast.
April	Bosnian forces continue progress in offensive near Tuzla. Serb shelling of Sarajevo area increases.
21 April	Renewal of selective sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro.
May	Escalation of fighting around Sarajevo leads to NATO air strikes.
1 May	Croatian army captures Serb enclave of Western Slavonia in first major bid to retake its occupied territories; Krajina Serbs launch rocket attack on Zagreb in reply.
26 May	NATO air strikes touch off crisis in which more than 350 UN peacekeepers are taken hostage by Bosnian Serbs. Serbia, improving relations with the West, helps to arrange the hostages' release.

June	Hostage crisis; UN personnel gradually released by Serbs.
3 June	NATO agrees to create a rapid reaction force under UN command.
11 July	Bosnian Serbs overrun Srebrenica, a 'safe area'; similar enclave at Zepa falls two weeks later.
1 August	NATO threatens major air strikes if remaining 'safe areas' are attacked.
4 August	Croatia launches offensive against Krajina, capturing in three days a region under Serb control for four years.
11 August	President Clinton sends envoy Richard Holbrooke on new peace mission.
28 August	Serb shells hit Sarajevo near main market killing 37 and wounding 85 in the worst attack in more than a year.
30/31 August	NATO planes and UN artillery blast Serb targets in Bosnia in response to the market attack.
30 August	Bosnian Serbs give Serbian President Milosevic authority to negotiate for them.
September	Moslem-Croat offensive wins 4000 square kilometres of land.
14 September	Bosnian Serbs agree to move weapons away from Sarajevo. NATO halts bombing.
5 October	President Clinton announces ceasefire agreed for 10 October; combatants to attend talks in US; eventual peace conference in Paris. Prospect of ceasefire spurs fighting in last-minute land grab.
10 October	Ceasefire delayed after Bosnian government complains utilities have not been restored to Sarajevo.
12 October	Ceasefire goes into effect.
20 October	Frontline meetings of military commanders end most ceasefire breaches in northwest Bosnia.
1 November	Proximity Peace Talks begin at Dayton, Ohio.