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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS

University College

International Affairs Program

**THE BOSNIAN WAR AND THE NEW GREAT GAME:  
A CASE STUDY IN STRATEGY AND DIPLOMACY**

By

Sarah Cécile Maurizi

A thesis presented to the  
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of  
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the degree of Master of Arts

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## **ABSTRACT**

A brief overview of Balkan history describes Bosnia as a geostrategic pawn of the great powers and explains this intense rivalry by the need to control the Balkans in order to reach Central Asia which abounds in natural resources. This struggle has been dubbed the “Great Game”.

The parallel between Central Asia and the former Yugoslav federation highlights recurring patterns regarding the strategy of the great powers. One can ask if the Bosnian war (1992 -1995) was the natural consequence of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia or was part of a bigger dynamic.

Given our interest in the strategic and geopolitical dimension of the conflict, we are looking at the outcomes of the Bosnian War as part of a larger maneuver by the great powers. The analysis of both historical and theoretical elements, and examine NATO reports, UN resolutions, and government papers is essential. We thus revise the working definitions of geostrategy and geopolitics to understand the “great game” and its implications and offer a critical look on foreign intervention and on the peace process in the case of Bosnia Herzegovina.

This paper reveals Bosnia as a microcosm of Yugoslavia where the political and economic dynamics inherent in the latter were present in the former on a different scale. This resulted in a surge of ethnic and religious tensions leading to foreign intervention and defining the dismantlement of Yugoslavia as a response to the international context and order of that time.

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« Réfléchir à contre-courant est pourtant une tradition de la pensée française, un cadeau de Voltaire qui est bien précieux. La condition première de la liberté n'est-elle pas celle de douter ?

Mais le doute ne vaut rien s'il ne reste que mélange de méfiance et de prudence. Il doit être surmonté. Et ne peut l'être que par une remise à plat d'idées reçues et par un travail d'enquête repartant des faits et des documents bruts. La tâche est rude et vaste. Elle est en vérité indispensable et urgente si l'on est persuadé que les débordements actuels peuvent provoquer un cataclysme dépassant, de très loin, les pauvres Balkans. »

JACQUES MERLINO

## **Introduction:**

Located in the Balkans, Bosnia is surrounded by Croatia to the South, the West and the North, and by Serbia on the East. Its small littoral on the Adriatic Sea creates strategic access to Western Europe and thus gives the country this special status as cultural “Carrefour” between Slav and Mediterranean influences. As a religious intersection between Catholics, Muslims, and Orthodox, Bosnia is a geostrategic pivot in the region and pays, still today, the price for this “poisonous gift”.

History shows that Bosnia has endured annexation after annexation by foreign invaders over the course of centuries explaining the mix of religious and ethnic influences, the cultural metamorphoses of the country, as well as the recurring conflicts that took place in the region. In 1463, the Ottoman Empire invaded what was, at that time named, the Christian Kingdom of Bosnia. Their conquests marked centuries of foreign occupation. 1878 marked the end of the Russo-Turkish war settled by the Treaty of San Stefano which aimed to “redesign” the geography of the Balkans (more precisely Bulgaria). Never implemented it was superseded by the Treaty of Berlin of 1878, the final act of the Congress of Berlin.

Statesmen from the Ottoman Empire, Russia, Britain, France, Italy, and Austria-Hungary attended the Congress of Berlin which highlighted Germany's newly-established position as the preeminent power on the Continent. Bismarck, architect of the balance of power that reign in Europe from the Prussian War to the First World War, aimed to mediate the crisis posed by Russia's decisive victory over the Ottomans which gave Russia control over a greater Bulgarian state that included Macedonia, then geographic center of gravity in the Balkans. San Stefano undermined Austrian influence in the region. In addition, the



Congress sought to contain the wave of pan-Slavist agitation percolating throughout the region by restive Slavic minorities. One of the crucial outcomes of this congress was to give Austria-Hungary a mandate to occupy, not annex, Bosnia. Although the length of the occupation was unspecified, Bosnia remained not only an integral part of the Ottoman Empire, but the province was also supposed to revert back to Ottoman control once Austro-Hungarian soldiers restored order. Nevertheless, thirty years later, in 1908, Austria-Hungary almost started a World War when it unilaterally annexed Bosnia in response to complex negotiations between Vienna and St. Petersburg. These were the same negotiations whereby Russia had received the right to send its war ships through the Straits of the Dardanelle and regained access to the Mediterranean Sea, while the Treaty of Paris, that ended the Crimean War, initially denied Russia. This brief overview of Balkan history shows how Bosnia was a geostrategic pawn of the great powers; it would seem that history has come full circle as modern powers vie for clout and influence over this “small piece of land”.

Such intense rivalry is explained by the fact that in order to reach Central Asia, one must control the Balkans, and for the Central Powers Central Asia abounds in natural resources, coveted for centuries by the empires and great powers of the world. This struggle by the great powers for access to the mineral resources of Eurasia has been dubbed the “Great Game” in reference to Rudyard Kipling who first coined the phrase.

Making the parallel between Central Asia and former the Yugoslav federation reveals that this race for Central Asia is inextricably intertwined with the collapse of the Yugoslavia. Indeed, the Balkans is the perfect alignment of this “link” to Central Asia,

and we can wonder if the recurring incidence of conflicts in the region is not a coincidence but rather directly related to great power interests.

Thus, the recurring conflicts in the region underscore a deeper questioning of the official nature of the Bosnian war of 1992-1995 as a moral imperative, and leaves us wondering if this war was one of countless others in the region by local actors, or if it is simply the visible “part of the iceberg” hiding underneath a broader picture and bigger stakes. In this sense, was the Bosnian war the natural consequence of the disintegration of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia or was it part of a bigger dynamic, that is to say a game of geopolitical import? If so it seems legitimate to question the motivations of the intervening powers and the interests at stake.

Given our interest in the strategic and geopolitical dimension of the conflict, we have decided to make certain restrictions and decisions in terms of the time frame we judge more relevant to the study. Indeed, for the purposes of this investigation we will not cover the Bosnian genocide as moral imperatives. In this study we are more interested in the geopolitical outcomes of the Bosnian War as part of a larger maneuver by the great powers, and in particular the United States, a newly united Germany, Russia, Britain, and France.

For this reason our study will focus on the analysis of both historical and theoretical elements allowing a geo-strategic approach to the issue to be the centerpiece rather than a mono-disciplinary approach typical of previous scholarship on Bosnia and the Yugoslav wars of secession. Consequently, references to history as well as to the main theories proposed by exponent of geostrategic policy will be the main topic of study in this paper. The examination of expert analysis in addition to NATO, UN reports, resolutions, and

government papers should help us identifying the recurring patterns in the historical record.

In order to answer the aforementioned questions, we propose to revise the working definitions of geostrategy and geopolitics in an effort to understand how the “great game” is really defined, and what the implications of such a trend are for the study of international relations. In the second part of this study we want to examine briefly the origins of the conflict in order to determine the historical context and the political framework in which the conflicts developed. In the third section, we will take a critical look at foreign intervention in both the Yugoslav and Bosnian wars in an attempt to identify the main issues in the conflicts, assess their consequences and establish the link between these and the direction towards which the conflicts evolve. Finally, we will study several endeavors, that is to say, peace initiatives by various diplomats who tried to end the Yugoslav wars; tragically, this study will demonstrate how these very negotiations were skippered by specific actors in order to “prolong a war that should not have happened in the first place.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Misha Glenny in *Yugoslavia, the Avoidable War*: “If the Lisbon plan had been adopted, the war in Bosnia probably would not have happened”, *Yugoslavia, the Avoidable War*; Frontier Theatre and Film, Princeton, New Jersey, Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 2001, 52’50”.

## **Chapter I: Preliminary Theories of Geo-Strategy: from Geo-Politics to the New Great Game.**

In order to understand the context in which the collapse of Yugoslavia and by extension the Bosnian war occurred and link this to the new great game it is necessary to look at the dynamics of the Central Asian region and thus study the theoretical background to which these interactions refer. For this purpose, we want to go back to the origin of geostrategy and study the major schools of thoughts and authors in geopolitics.

“In a sense, geopolitics is an attempt to draw attention to the importance of certain geographical patterns in political history”<sup>2</sup>. This is how Gray and Sloan in their book *Geopolitics: Geography and Strategy*, define the notion of geopolitics. It refers to an explanation of political history via the observation of geographical parameters. Too often mistaken with geopolitics, geostrategy can be differentiated from it in that it is a “variant” of geopolitics defined as “the strategic application of new and emerging technologies within a framework of geographic, topographic, and positional knowledge”<sup>3</sup>. This special emphasis on strategic questions gives a particular attention to the mechanisms that characterize the interactions between states but also between states and other entities (for example, international organizations, multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations etc ...).

States are led by their own interests which provoke specific reactions and behaviors among and within states. Understanding the aforementioned relations implies to look at the stakes of each state and move back and forth between the different scales available

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<sup>2</sup> Gray, Sloan, *Geopolitics: Geography and Strategy*, Franck Cass, Portland, Oregon, 1999, p.1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.83

such as the international, regional, national, and local level etc... This gives the tools and information necessary to capture the essence of such mechanisms.

Interactions between the aforesaid entities are also determined by the balance of power that is to say “[...] the product, on the one hand, of geographical conditions, both economic and strategic, and on the other hand, of the relative number, virility, equipment and organization of the competing people.”<sup>4</sup>The balance of power is a significant concept in international relations and the key issue in most conflicts in that each entity part of the conflict wants to serve its interests while minimizing the risks incurred for this purpose. Powers try to match their influence against another nation or group of nations. Ways to do so are to increase their own power by the acquisition of territories or to increase their power by the intermediary of other states that is to say to make alliances with them.

As mentioned by Gray and Sloan, geography is a crucial parameter in this balance of power and implies thus a geographical assessment of the region, in the current case, Central Asia. The political division of Eastern Europe and the existing geographical structure are what make the region so interesting. Central Asia, also called Eurasia, represents mainly deserted plains, lands, rare mountains and overall long stretches hard to access. However, the region abounds in natural resources such as fossil energy and ores that explain why the region has been coveted for centuries. Eurasia is also the most direct road from south Asia to Russia or Europe consequently; mastering its access can be the key for the domination of the entire continent.

The link between balance of power, geopolitics, geostrategy and geography was first clearly exposed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Mackinder’s famous article entitled *The*

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<sup>4</sup> Mackinder H., *The Geographical Pivot of History*, 1919, p.437

*Geographical Pivot of History*. The article studies the correlation between geography, history and politics and follows the transformation of these relations throughout the decades. This article is considered to be the base of modern geopolitics and defends the idea that each region has a pivot state whose strategic localization is coveted by other countries, usually greater powers that are looking to dominate the region.

### **A. The Geographical Pivot of History**

- **Mackinder's Heartland theory**

Main architect of the British Empire's foreign policy, Sir Halford Mackinder was a geographer, advisor at the chamber of the lords and later founder of the London School of Economics and Political Science. Professor of geography and director of the institution from 1903 to 1908 he also founded of the school of geography at Oxford University in 1899. Beyond his academic accomplishment, his strategic theories are however what he remains the most known for.

The concepts he studied are associated to the Heartland Theory he initially described in the article previously mentioned: *the Geographical Pivot of History*. Initially published in 1904 the article aimed to examine the link between the strategic and political advantages of Great Britain and the possession of the largest sea power in the world. In his research, Mackinder included that mastering the ocean, via navigation, at that time the fastest and most efficient mode of transportation was the guaranty of world domination.

Mackinder also highlights the strategic strength given to a country by its location and geographical feature. Thus, some countries, because of their position, have a strategic access to resources or the perfect route to access remote regions. For Mackinder these

“points” on a map are what he calls Geographical Pivot. They are “[...] states whose importance is derived not from their power and motivation but rather from their sensitive location and from the consequences of their potentially vulnerable condition for the behavior of geostrategic players”<sup>5</sup>. The geographical assessment of Eurasia reinforces this assertion by the presence of the Silk Road and the role of the region as cultural and economic Carrefour.

The 1904 paper is not the only version of the Heartland theory. Two other updated versions of The Geographical Pivot of History were presented in 1919 and 1943 after Mackinder précised and deepened his analysis including the changes he witnessed in the international configuration of the twentieth century.

Heartland Theory relies on the relationships between international relations and geography and thus affects the balance of power. As explained in Gray and Sloan, geography can be linked to international relations in the three following cases; it can be a matter of “objective or policy” that is to say an ultimate goal as to gain territory, a question of “environment” which constitute the acquisition of the same territory but with a specific interest in its features that will serve the dominant country on the long term (example: natural resources, fauna, flora etc...) or “the theatre of military action” where the territory is a battle field and thus a location, a tool, not a gain or a resource any<sup>6</sup>.

Written throughout the twentieth century this theory intended to describe the best move and offer a better understanding of land power to the British Empire, which, so far remained a sea power. According to Sloan and Gray, the three perspectives of the

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<sup>5</sup> Brzezinski Z., *The Grand Chessboard, American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, New York, 1997, p.31.

<sup>6</sup> Gray, Sloan, *Geopolitics: Geography and Strategy*, Franck Cass, Portland, Oregon, 1999, p.22.

Heartland theory aimed to provide an explanation of the “technology induced changes in favor of land power”<sup>7</sup> and the political consequences this would have on the countries “Rimland area of the Eurasian landmass”<sup>8</sup>.

The major international conflicts of the century brought with them new technologies, defining new politics, and drew new borders that definitely changed the balance of power of the twentieth century. As a matter of fact, the progress of technology and information gave more possibilities to reach the region and open new doors for geostrategic actions. As mentioned by Mackinder, new technologies provoke a shift from sea-power, to land power which until the nineteenth century has been underexploited by lack of transportation and reduced technology. Such evolution in the balance of power led to an even fierce battle for the coveted heartland, key to global governance or absolute hegemony in the world.

In this sense, the industrialization of Europe and the development of new means of transportation have allowed countries to communicate through and via the landmass thus attain the so coveted resources and reach the “heart of the world” whose relevance was clearly expressed by Mackinder in the following dictum:

*“Who rule East European controls the Heartland:  
Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island<sup>9</sup>:  
Who rules the world-island commands the World”<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> Gray, Sloan, *Geopolitics: Geography and Strategy*, Franck Cass, Portland, Oregon, 1999, p.22.

<sup>8</sup> The landmass is the name given to the stretch of land that is Eurasia. Gray and Sloan p.22

<sup>9</sup> The World Island is defined as the territory regrouping Europe, Asia and Africa that surround the Eurasian “Heartland” or “pivot area” which is inaccessible from the sea, (cf: *The International Relations Dictionary*, Plano J.C., Olton R., p.9)

<sup>10</sup> Mackinder, H.J. "The geographical pivot of history". *The Geographical Journal*, 1904, 23, p. 25.



The ability of Mackinder to include and synthesize in the Heartland theory as “the evolution of a closed international system, where the idea of world domination [was], for the first time, a viable political aim”<sup>11</sup> is what strikes in this theory and can be almost called visionary. In that sense, Mackinder understood and was able to demonstrate that as the location commanding the resources of a huge transcontinental area “The heartland is the region in which under modern condition sea power can be refused access”<sup>12</sup>.

As mentioned by Gray and Sloane, “the innovative dimension of Mackinder’s New Geography’ was that it had a holistic approach<sup>13</sup>. But, even though influence of this theory on the nature of geopolitics is explicit it can be wondered the applicability of this model to modern or at least a more recent history of international relations.

- **Haussofer and the Lebensraum**

Even though Mackinder is definitely the main reference in terms of geostrategy some other thoughts have been suggested by some geographer considered as his doctrinal successors. In the case of the German general Karl Haushofer, who, geopolitical and geographer represents the German school of geopolitics. His thought was influenced by Mackinder’s Heartland theory but also by his own experience of war terrain and battlefields. Haushofer multidisciplinary approach resulted from his travels in the Far East as well as his knowledge of history and allowed him to understand the mechanism of the balanced and the parameters that can alter it. This way he was able to explain the German defeat during the First World War as a mismanagement of the geographical

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<sup>11</sup> Mackinder, H.J. "The geographical pivot of history". *The Geographical Journal*, 1904, 23, p.25

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p.27.

<sup>13</sup> Gray, Sloan, *Geopolitics: Geography and Strategy*, Franck Cass, Portland, Oregon, 1999, p.19.

space. From this observation he also started planning the German power extension by the conquest of new territory in particularly to reach the heartland.

Haushofer was thus concurring with Hitler's annexations and conquest in that they were to expand the German territory<sup>14</sup>. His understanding of the geographical parameter as a variable of decision making, politics and so geostrategy definitely reveals Mackinder's ideological mark. In addition, the actual name of "heartland" is not totally inexistent from his rhetoric; it was simply changed to the German name Lebensraum, meaning "vital space". Both stress the necessity to dominate the heartland to protect its own interest and power but also to create a hegemonic rule the region. The slight difference between these twin concepts relies on the necessary of the conquest of the territory for their domination, according to the Nazi understanding, whereas, the Heartland only mentions a domination of the area with deterrence of the enemy.

It is also necessary to underline the fact that Germany was not and has never been a sea power but a land power instead for which land access to the heartland was determining for lack of having sea power. Thus here again, the development of technology and land transportation shifted the balance of power in favor of Germany getting then closer to world domination.

The access to Central Asia was also crucial for Germany during the Second World War because of their motorized engine of transportation; the access to the region was a guaranty for fossil fuel and other natural energies and resources and fueling their artillery was in itself a partial insurance of a favorable balance of power for them.

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<sup>14</sup> Plano Jack C., Olton Roy, *The International Relations Dictionary*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, New York, 1969, p.9

Such use and understanding of his heartland concept as a tool of promotion of conflict and exacerbated imperialism left Mackinder skeptical and distrustful of the German school of geopolitics.

- **Spykman and the Rimland.**

Another approach to the heartland was provided by the American geographer Nicholas Spykman also considered as the engineer of containment. In 1944 he published a famous book entitled *The Geography of Peace*<sup>15</sup> in which he explains the security stakes Eurasia represents for the United States that consequently it will have a noticeable influence on its foreign policy.

Like Mackinder, Spykman saw Eurasia as a landmass that needs to be dominated to attain world supremacy. However, Spykman also insist also on the “Rimland”<sup>16</sup> of Europe, Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and the Far East that he sees as a determining factor of the United States security which can be an easy path for sea powers to encircle the landmass even though it would still remain technically impossible to access it. Given this indirect presence of the sea power Spykman insist on the fact that the United States should watch the behavior of any hostile power that would represent a clear menace in the case where it would dominate the Rimland.

Because the United States are not linked whatsoever to the World Island they are in a weaker position in terms of the access to the heartland moreover, given the presence of

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<sup>15</sup> Plano Jack C, Olton Roy, *The International Relations Dictionary*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, New York, 1969, p.8.

<sup>16</sup> The Rimland is in fact Haushofer’s equivalent of Mackinder’s inner crescent; that is to say, the coastal periphery of a continent (cf: Plano J.C., Olton R., *The International Relations Dictionary*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, New York, 1969, p.9)

great power around the heartland and on the Rimland the United States can witness and encirclement of the region and risk to lose any way in. To reinforce his warning, Spykman transformed Mackinder dictum into the following, then highly relevant for the United States:

“Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the World”<sup>17</sup>.

To avoid this “trap”, Spykman suggest that the United States smartly play the balance of power at their advantage and take into consideration the geographical, economical and political dimension of each situation they have to face. Thus, it remains clear that as did Mackinder, Spykman sees geography as the “most fundamentally conditioning factor of foreign policy”<sup>18</sup>.

So far, it seems that the study of the Heartland Theory and more generally classical geopolitics and geostrategy was extremely influential in the making of modern geopolitics however, the question of the application of this model nowadays remains open. In this sense, is this theory applicable to modern international relations or is it obsolete?

## **B. The New Great Game**

- **At the origins, a “Great Game”**

After having set the bases for geostrategy and the concept of geographical pivot of history there is a last but not least notion that needs to be covered for our use: The New Great Game. Shyly studied in modern geopolitics and in the “internationalist” jargon, the

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<sup>17</sup> Plano J.C., Olton R., *The International Relations Dictionary*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, New York, 1969, p.9

<sup>18</sup> Idem.

New Great Game has proven to be a new approach to the race to Eurasia over the past decade. However, there seems to be several missing elements in this “new” trend that only history should be able to explain. Indeed, if “New Great Game” there is, shouldn’t “Great Game” (only) or “Old Great Game” have been?

As naïve and simple as the question sounds, its implications are far from being meaningless for our study. Indeed, we have mentioned earlier that after presenting the Heartland Theory, Mackinder had been able to understand the evolution of the countries’ stakes in international politics and the changes that occurred in the balance of power. The issue encountered then is whether this model is still applicable today.

The previously described features of Eurasia have shown how the region could have created rivalries and aroused keen interests; following this assumption, history happens to support this thesis. Indeed, the name “Great Game” finds its origin this particular kind of struggle that goes back to the eighteenth century and the “Anglo-Russian competition for mastery of Central Asia”<sup>19</sup>. At that time, the British were wary of Russia’s imperial hunger for territory and feared for their East Indian Colonies that were located in the perfect alignment/prolongation of the former Silk Road and others routes for the commerce of natural resources.

The British Empire could not afford to lose the prestige and wealth these territories were giving and even less lose them in aid of the Czarist machine. But, as explained earlier, the development of technologies and the construction of railways across Central Asia created opportunities for the Russian empire to access the region and consequently decrease the

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<sup>19</sup> Meyer K., Brysac S., *Tournament of Shadow, The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia*, Counterpoint, Washington D.C., 1999, p.123.

meaning of having sea powers, not anymore a privileged asset for the British. The balance of power had changed.

- **Conquering Eurasia.**

In the nineteenth century, the goal was for the British to circle Russia via their Indian colonies and this way keep an eye on any Russian move. The actual term “Great Game” was brought by Arthur Conolly, Captain in the British East Indian Company sent in Central Asia for several missions of observation. Understanding the mechanisms of the rivalry between the two empires he interpreted it as a “Grand Game”<sup>20</sup>. The expression was spread in the British army usage to become the natural name given to the struggle for the domination of Central Asia.

Reaching India at that time implied to go through Russia and Central Asia, yet it was an opportunity for Prime Minister Lord Palmerston to keep a watch on Russia’s affairs and aspirations. The British distrust towards Russia was increasing the multiplied missions of envoys, observers, geographers and topographers, and explorations with the underlying mission to “keep an eye” on the other’s aspirations thus starting what would be the emergence of modern spying agencies<sup>21</sup>. Central Asia became this way a nest of rival intelligences and a platform for the exchange of information.

The First World War gave both the British and the Russians another opportunity to explore Central Asia. The rise of the Bolshevik movement worried the British who were kept informed on the situation of Russia by the sending of informant to Russia via the

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<sup>20</sup> Morgan Gerald, *Myth and Reality in the Great Game*, Asian Affairs, iv (1973), p19.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p.58.

Indian government<sup>22</sup>. Later on, during the Second World War the dynamic slightly changed. The spread of communism in Eastern Europe represented a threat not only for the British this time but for most of Western Europe. The strategy was then to contain communism and hinder the Soviet imperial goals. Once again, it was all about keeping Russia down and limits its actions. The Cold War is the perfect illustration of this process and clearly shows the elements of this battle for the domination of Central Asia. However, while until the Second World War the control of the land mass was mainly seek by countries of the World Island, that is to say Great Britain and Germany, the cold war includes an actor that is not affected the same way by this dynamic: the United States.

- ***The Grand Chessboard: The Cold War and the United States Foreign Policy***

Because the United States is not on the World Island, its geographic position in relation to Great Britain and Germany make their strategy to reach the landmass of Central Asia different. The threat of the Cold War consisted in the rise of communism which, for the United States, meant that they had to prevent it from spreading to all Europe. From this observation, the strategy of “containment” initially exposed by Nicholas Spykman was enforced and it seems that, since then, the American foreign policy towards Russia has remained influenced by this thought.

A significant book covering the field of International Relations and diplomacy summarizes very clearly the American position, its stakes and its behavior towards Russia. Published in 1997, *The Grand Chessboard*, defines the American Geostrategy in Central Asia and insists on the need for the United States to prevent any competing great

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<sup>22</sup> Morgan Gerald, *Myth and Reality in the Great Game*, Asian Affairs, iv (1973), p.61.

power to dominate the region in order to remain the hegemon. This book is the work of Zbigniew Brzezinski, American statesman, geostrategist and National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1981.

Brzezinski is considered as the architect of the modern US foreign policy whom he mainly forged in a theoretically very similar approach to Mackinder's Heartland Theory. In this sense, Brzezinski is very clear on the necessity for the United States to reach the heartland and to dominate it: "how American's manage Eurasia is critical"<sup>23</sup>. He also considers the Central-East European heartland as a "vital springboard for the attainment of continental domination"<sup>24</sup> which reasserts Mackinder's explanation of the race for the domination of the Eurasian landmass. It is from the structure of this "game" of strategies and from the interactions it implied that Brzezinski came up with this famous expression mentioned in his book: *The Grand Chessboard*. Hence, he states: "Eurasia is thus the Chessboard on which the struggle for global privacy continues to be played"<sup>25</sup>.

Identifying the different emerging countries as potential rivals in the race for Eurasia, Brzezinski mentions the presence of pivots he defines as key players for the United States:

*"Geopolitical pivots are the states whose importance is derived not from their power and motivation but rather from their sensitive location and from the consequences of their potentially vulnerable condition for the behavior of geostrategic players. Most often, geopolitical pivots are determined by their geography, which in some cases give them a special role either in defining access to important areas or denying resources to a significant player. In some cases, a geopolitical pivot can be said to have very significant and political and cultural consequences for a more active neighboring geostrategic*

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<sup>23</sup> *The Grand Chessboard, American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Brzezinski Z., Basic Books, New York, New York, 1997, p.31.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p.38.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p.31.



*player. The identification of the post Cold War key Eurasian geopolitical pivots<sup>26</sup>, and protecting them, is thus also a crucial aspect of America's global geostrategy."<sup>27</sup>*

Therefore, to understand American foreign policy we need to give a closer look at the pivot states that are mostly determining its actions. Nevertheless, while Brzezinski stresses the need to deter any emerging power and focus on these pivots, he also emphasizes the fact that there is not actual power or other entity capable of reaching the level of the United States in terms of economic, technologic, agricultural and cultural performances and that for these reasons the American hegemon is not in jeopardy<sup>28</sup>. He also underlines the fact that no rational power or entity has any interest to see a failure of the hegemon given that the absence of hegemony would lead to anarchy at the international scale.

It seems that, according to Brzezinski, the United States do not have much to worry about regarding the balance of power. However, he insists on giving more credit to NATO and the European Union insofar as these two organizations can be way for the United States to extend their fear of influence. More precisely, Brzezinski sees NATO and EU as an indirect means to support its own foreign policy. The United States needs to work with NATO and make sure that the organization is growing along with the development of the

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<sup>26</sup> The "post Cold War key Eurasian geopolitical pivots" are exactly we will look at in the following chapters in an attempt to identify Bosnia as one of them.

<sup>27</sup> *The Grand Chessboard, American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Brzezinski Z., Basic Books, New York, New York, 1997, p.41. Brzezinski also had the following comment: "It should be noted at the outset that although all geostrategic players tend to be important and powerful countries, not all important and powerful countries are automatically geostrategic players". Yet, if we go back to the initial topic of our paper (the Bosnian war as precursor of the New Great Game), and put this note in perspective with this comment, an important element is unveiled and tends to support our main thesis. In this sense, Bosnia could be one of those geographical pivot and the war that took place on its territory was more the side effect of a great power opposition (in our case the former USSR and the United States) rather than a nationalistic conflict on a background of ethnic violence.

<sup>28</sup> *The Grand Chessboard, American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Brzezinski Z., Basic Books, New York, New York, 1997, p.195.

European Union which is geographically the perfect rampart against Russia. And, following the logic, the more countries join the EU, the more the United States will see new NATO members, thus swellings the ranks of new potential allies and not Russian “supporters”<sup>29</sup>.

This strategy clearly demonstrates that every geostrategy related move made by the United States on the international scene is mainly determined by the actions of Russian and that from a general standpoint American Foreign Policy is oriented towards the limitation of Russia. Everything is made to constrain Russian objectives and let the open door to the following provocative but nonetheless legitimate question: Is the Cold War Really over or did it simply changed of appearance and is now embodied by the New Great Game?

By mentioning, in reference to American Foreign Policy, that: “It follows that political and economic support for the key newly independent states in an integral part of the broader strategy for Eurasia”<sup>30</sup> Brzezinski indubitably refers to the New Great Game and reveal the axis around which American foreign policy revolves since the Cold War.

This first part of our study strongly emphasized the geopolitical and strategic concepts and theory that is the key to a clear understanding of the dynamic of the conflict in Bosnia and that will eventually allow us to bridge the gap between this war and the New Great Game. Indeed, what can be highlighted from Mackinder’s theory is that, as mentioned in Gray and Sloan, “the heartland provides a sufficient physical basis for

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<sup>29</sup> *The Grand Chessboard, American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Brzezinski Z., Basic Books, New York, New York, 1997, p.200.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p.203.

strategically thinking.<sup>31</sup>” Geography is thus the parameter that needs to be taken in consideration for the study of conflict and international relations and the heartland remains today what great powers are fighting for.

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<sup>31</sup> Gray, Sloan, *Geopolitics: Geography and Strategy*, Franck Cass, Portland, Oregon, 1999, p.31.

## **Chapter II: Divide and Conquer: maintaining chaos to gain the pivot.**

The preceding chapter of this paper aimed to define the theoretical background in which to place this study and what strategic variables are referred to. To further the understanding of the Bosnian war, its implications and its causes, it is also necessary to look at the historical background and identify the recurring pattern defined by the theory. For this purpose, we want to address the question of the origin of the conflict, initially in Yugoslavia then in Bosnia and explore afterwards the reasons of the foreign involvement in the region. Our interest in this particular question rests on the fact that Bosnia is a microcosm of the Yugoslav conflict; all the dynamics present at the federal level and present at the republican one, but to the nth degree. The elaboration of a historical framework will give readers the necessary contextual tools to grasp the strategic meaning of the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and its implications for other areas of the world.

### **A. Yugoslavia: where it all began.**

- **The origins**

The belligerents in the Bosnian conflict fought over a principle: the international recognition of Yugoslav republican boundaries was incompatible with the principle of self-determination. The Bosnian Muslims wanted a centralized, unified Bosnian state from the Una to the Drina rivers, while the Serbs and Croats wanted a Swiss-style cantonal arrangement, decentralized in nature.

In the West, the war that took place in Bosnia is generally described as an ethnic conflict poorly handled by the international community. This thesis is quite popular and one can

easily adduce facts to support it; however, limiting the study of the conflict in Bosnia to its genocide would be too restrictive and misleading in that it would hide the political issues at the origin of the contention. The question of the nature of the Bosnian war goes beyond the mantra of ancient ethnic hatreds which is only the internal dimension of the issue; the external facet is as much crucial if not more given the wars of Yugoslav secession. As mentioned in the introduction, our paper does not take in consideration the ethnic and social dimension of the conflict, already broadly covered by the literature on Bosnia, but rather focuses on the underlying geostrategic and geopolitical questions. Therefore, in order to isolate the latter and understand the mechanisms of the conflict from another perspective, it is essential to review the history of the country.

The Twentieth Century witnessed the creation of two Yugoslavias: one, result of the Versailles System, the other, a by-product of Tehran and Yalta. In both cases, significantly, Yugoslavia's *raison d'être* was to function as a rampart against German or Soviet expansion. Bosnia was never an international state in the modern age; it actually only became a fully independent state in March 1992. In fact to be more specific, Bosnia has technically never been a country properly speaking (in the Westphalian understanding of the term) except during a brief period of the medieval times. Besides this short period of time, Bosnia has undergone numerous metamorphoses that can potentially explain its inherent instability. Before its actual status, Bosnia was one of the six Yugoslav republics (along with Macedonia, Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia, and Montenegro) which composed the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (more commonly known as Yugoslavia). The second Yugoslav state (lasting from 1943 to

1992) was the result of the ending of the Yugoslav monarchy and the beginning of the Second World War.

In 1941, half way through the Second World War, different Yugoslav resistance groups emerged as a mobilization against the Nazi invasion and occupation of the Yugoslav Kingdom started. The two main groups were the National Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia also called The Partisans, and the Yugoslav Army of the Homeland (Jugoslovenska Vojska U Otadžbini) or JVUO, supporting the monarchy<sup>32</sup>. The Partisans, promoting a pan-Yugoslav entity and the unity of the Yugoslav Nations, was led by Josip Broz Tito (also head of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia or KPJ) who fought to free the occupied territories. In November 1942, as the resistance movement grew the communists created a front whose political body the Anti-Fascist Council for the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) was identified by the West as the principal entity of organized resistance organized on the Yugoslav territory<sup>33</sup>.

Wary of the spread of resistance on the Yugoslav territory, the power of the Axis attempted to annihilate the movement in vain and finally withdraw from the country. This victory on the axis gave a strong impulse to the Partisans multiplying their supporters. Later in 1943, the AVNOJ met again to establish the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a conglomerate of six Slav republics. During this episode, the question of the nature of the regime (remaining a monarchy or becoming a republic) was not clearly answered leaving

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<sup>32</sup> Tomasevich Jozo, *The War in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: The Chetniks*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1975, p.125.

<sup>33</sup> Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p.30.

way, after a referendum, to a potential return of the King, Petar II, in exile in London at that time.

To lead the country, the National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia appointed Tito as Prime Minister. Meanwhile, in Iran the Allies, attending the Tehran Conference officially extended international recognition to the Partisans as the only legitimate allied of the Yugoslav and started supplying them with weapons and logistic support they needed to defeat both Germans and their arch-rivals, the pro-Western Chetniks<sup>34</sup>. The victory of the allies over the Axis naturally followed.

In June 1944, the King of Yugoslavia finally recognized the AVNOJ and the FRY as a legitimate democratic state emphasizing on pluralism. Yet, this did not match with Tito's ideal who considered the Peoples' Front as sufficient representation for the masses. The People's Front, was a branch of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia allegedly coordinating policy with the Soviet Union.

The Germans who remained on the Yugoslav territory were definitely expelled in March 1945 with the aid of the Soviet Army, leaving Yugoslavia as a free state. However, Tito disagreed with the king's view on the nature of the functioning of the state. Few month later, on November 29<sup>th</sup> 1945, Tito abolished the Yugoslav monarchy after holding national elections that ratified a socialist republic, and a single party state named the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia whom each federation was referred to as "People's Republic"<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup>Tomasevic Bato, *Life and Death in the Balkans, A Family Saga in a Century of Conflict*, Columbia University Press, New York, New York, 2008.p.511.

Initially protégé of Stalin, the federation turned against the Soviet Union and the United States a few years after the end of the Second World War. Externally, the pressure from both turned Yugoslavia into a buffer zone between the East and the West probably which eventually crippled the country, while dissensions grew at the internal level. Over the course of the Cold War, the combination of both elements built a complex environment which precipitated the dismantlement of the federation.

- **The collapse of Yugoslavia: the seeds of the Bosnian disaster**

The cooperation between the USSR and Yugoslavia ended in 1948 following an ideological schism between the two entities. Tito distanced Yugoslavia from both the West and the East while still defining Yugoslavia as a socialist state. The survival of the country is explained by the American military aid sent at that time and by the “U.S. orchestrated economic assistance from the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, U.S Export-Import Bank, and foreign Banks; and the restoration of trade relations with the West after August 1949”<sup>36</sup>. In exchange, Yugoslavia became the favored US tool of containment. Yugoslavia's existence was modeled on the existence of the Cold War; it was to be shield state thwarting Soviet expansion into the Mediterranean that would menace Italy.

Even though Tito’s Yugoslavia was supported by the United States, he remained attached to the ideological independence of the country and focused diplomatic efforts toward third-world cooperation, then initiating in 1961 the Non-Aligned Movement, or group of

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<sup>36</sup> Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p.25.



the 77; a conference of third world countries refusing to follow western and eastern policies exclusively.<sup>37</sup>

“Free” of Soviet influence, Tito developed his nationalist aspirations and tried to limit the expansion of Serb population present on the territory of the six People’s Republics by essentially playing off ethnic groups against each other. Via this “game” Tito made himself the guarantor of political stability in Yugoslavia as the counter weight to centrifugal forces. His determination provoked tension between different ethnic and political groups. These enmities built up until Tito’s death on May 4<sup>th</sup> 1980 which initiated the burst of the aforementioned tensions leading to the slow collapse of the Federal Socialist Republic<sup>38</sup>.

The ethnic pressures grew to the point that the collective presidency<sup>39</sup> that replaced Tito after his death was not able to contain it and witnessed a sudden rise of Nationalist political party in each of the republics, starting with Serbia.

Slobodan Milosevic, a Serbian politician, leader and head of the Socialist Party of Yugoslavia opposed the discriminatory policies advocated by Tito and, given his origins,

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<sup>37</sup> Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p.26.

<sup>38</sup>As Susan Woodward explains it in *Balkan Tragedy* Tito's policy was to play off one ethnic group against the other. As she explains, Tito’s charisma had nothing to do with the way the Yugoslav federation was held together. Instead, it was the result of “a complex balancing act in the international arena and a mixed economy an political system that provided governmental protections of social and economic equality and of shared sovereignty among its many nations” (p.22). This led to political conflicts between central and regional governments and, over political reforms. The impact on the federation was the fight between competing political parties to retain or enhance their political jurisdiction and public property rights over economics resources within the federal territory. Woodward goes further asserting that “the more they quarreled, the more they contribute to the incapacity and decline authority of the central government to regulate”. (p.16). The dilemma, as she defines it was to find a way to “guarantee the right to nation self determination in a multinational state”. (p.30).

<sup>39</sup> The Yugoslav constitution of 1974 edited by Tito mentioned that the presidency of the country would become annual and rotary after he left office. Thus the Presidents of each People’s Republic would, year after year rule the federation on a rolling basis. This system turned out to be highly inefficient and creator of tensions between populations, such as between Serbs and Croats.

was for the reestablishment of the Serb populations in Serbia and in particularly in the autonomous province of Kosovo. This nationalist aspiration aimed to serve the Serbs interest before the interest of the Serb communist party. When it became Serbia's turn to head the collective presidency in 1989, anti-Milosevic demonstrations erupted in Kosovo and Vojvodina.

Each demonstration against the Serbian directory was seen by Milosevic as a direct attack against the Serbian people but also against Yugoslavia. Determined to save the Yugoslav Union and protect the Serb People Milosevic initiated anti-communist reforms that lead to mass protests against the federal authority between 1988 and 1989<sup>40</sup>. Facing this chaos some of the Republics' leader left office to be then replaced by officials close to Milosevic. Concretely, these replacements were another evidence of the strengthening of Milosevic's influence in the Yugoslav Federation and were condemned by Slovenia and Croatia at several occasions who sought to use this crisis to make their case for secession from the Yugoslav federation, a ploy backed by the intelligence service of Germany, notably the BND.

At the ideological level, the 14<sup>th</sup> Congress of the League of the Communists of Yugoslavia met in January 1990 and highlighted the tensions within the state. The leagues collapsed by the end of the meeting with the departure of the delegation of Slovenia and the delegation of Croatia, thereby opening the door to multipartism<sup>41</sup>. Six month later the People's Republic of Slovenia and Croatia declared their secession from

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<sup>40</sup> Silber Laura, Little Allan, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, Penguin Books, New York, New York, 1996, p.58.

<sup>41</sup> Ali Rabia, Lifschultz Lawrence, *Why Bosnia? Writing on the Balkan War*, The Pamphleteer's Press, Stony Creek, Connecticut, 1993, p.242.

the federation and on June 25<sup>th</sup> 1991 announced their independence<sup>42</sup>. The next day, the Yugoslav minister of defense Veljko Kadijevic sent the Yugoslav People's Army to Slovenia to defend the Yugoslav frontier customs posts thus starting a war that ended with the mediation of the European Community, an event that marked the beginning of foreign intervention in Yugoslavia's internal affairs. Bosnia-Herzegovina followed the secessionist wave in February 1992 to be officially recognized by the United Nations in May in a complex quid pro quo<sup>43</sup>.

The Yugoslav war combined several factors such as ethnicity, ideology and foreign intervention that made the conflict so peculiar. Moreover, it is interesting to see how these elements led to the disintegration of the country, and how the so-called rump Yugoslavia did not divest itself of ethnic tensions. It can also be surmised that the Bosnian state, as previously mentioned, can be considered as artificial entity based on the outcomes of an unresolved historical conflicts. Indubitably, the link between this observation and the forthcoming tensions in the country that later imploded, were to be predicted.

## **B. The Descent into war**

- **Opening the gates of hell**

When on March 1<sup>st</sup> of the year 1992 Bosnia Herzegovina became independent the fledgling country was already sinking into chaos as many leaders in the Federation predicted it would. Indeed, Bosnia was already deeply politically divided by several old

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<sup>42</sup> Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p. 146.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p.147.

ethnic and confessional strives and the disintegration of the Yugoslav army prepared the terrain for conflict. Each nationalist group in Bosnia was trying to reinforce their power through constitutional changes in favor of its own community but this only exacerbated the tensions that already existed. The irony of the situation is that multiculturalism as defined and advanced by fifty years of Titoist policies led to political paralysis at a critical juncture.

The highly concentrated government and administration of the country inherited from the Titoist regency also contributed to the rise of tensions to the point that nationalists from all sides started a purge of the communists occupying official positions. Three nationalist parties worked on the purges. First, the SDS (Srpska Demokratska Stranka) or Serb Democratic Party led by Radovan Karadzic, loyal to Milosevic. The second was the SDA (Stranka Demokratske Akcije) or Muslim Party of Democratic Action lead by Alija Izetbegovic<sup>44</sup>. And finally, was the HDZ ( Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica) or Croatian Democratic Union which ended up splitting in two groups and lacked leadership.

The HDZ was politically close to Franjo Tudjman, the national leader of Croatia and differentiated itself from the two other movements in that it always supported the idea of a federal of Yugoslavia whereas the SDS and the SDA soon rejected it and claimed their independence<sup>45</sup>. Over time, and with the outbreak of hostilities, these political parties began to elaborate antithetical views of Bosnian sovereignty despising the civil society that could have been the cement of a stable Bosnian state.

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<sup>44</sup> Burg Steven L., Shoup Paul S., *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999, p.63.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p.70.

The debate on the future of Bosnia also implied the question of the nature of the state, and as already suggested by the historical elements and the analysis provided so far, the matter of “artificiality” of the state was already a concern. Indeed, as mentioned by Burg and Shoup in *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, “Karadzic and the Serbs argued that Bosnia-Herzegovina was Yugoslavia in miniature, an artificial creation whose people could not, and should not, be forced to live in one state”<sup>46</sup>. This powerful assertion clearly reveals that even leaders of the region were fully aware of the issues the dissolution of Yugoslavia was bringing as well as the structural implication this would have on Bosnia as a state. From this point, one can infer that the pervading fatalism characterizing the conflict and the skepticism regarding its resolution was not irrationally founded.

- **A stillborn state called Bosnia.**

The war that took place in 1991, in Croatia, neighbor of Bosnia, spread to the country and put the cat among the pigeons. The recognition of the country was not just a Yugoslav concern anymore and became a debate among the European Community (EC)<sup>47</sup>. The first European country that supported the independence of Croatia was Germany. This went against the advice of the European community, and drew harsh criticism from the United Kingdom, the United States and the United Nations. For the chairman of the EC conference of Yugoslavia, the British, Lord Peter Carrington, “[...] withholding recognition was the only way to compel the former republics to reach a solution”<sup>48</sup>. He

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<sup>46</sup> Burg Steven L., Shoup Paul S., *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999.71.

<sup>47</sup> Silber Laura, Little Allan, *Yugoslavia, Death of a Nation*, Penguin Books, New York, New York, 1995, p.190.

<sup>48</sup> Burg Steven L., Shoup Paul S., *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999, p.94.

also insisted on the fact that recognizing Croatia and Slovenia could not go without recognizing Bosnia. Yet, he foresaw the latest as the trigger to the civil war<sup>49</sup>. The fear was that the JNA would have time to gain more terrain while the just independent countries would still be building their military forces. This apprehension was also shared by the UN envoy to Yugoslavia, the American Cyrus Vance.

In December 1991 both of these views were included in a letter sent by Xavier Perez de Cuellar, at that time the UN secretary general, to Hans Van den Broek, the Dutch European Commissioner. The answer provided by Cuellar openly reports the aforementioned worries:

*“...the possibility of premature recognition of the independence of some of the Yugoslav Republics. Leaders of Bosnia –Herzegovina and Macedonia were among the many political and military figures who last week underscored to Mr.Vance their own strong fears in this regard. More than one of this high-level interlocutors described the possibly explosive consequences of such a development as being a “potential time bomb.” Given these anxieties, I believe that the Twelve were correct when they reiterated, at their special EPC Ministerial Meeting held in Rome on 8 November, that the prospect of recognition of the independence of those republics wishing it “can only be envisaged in the framework of an overall settlement....” As we know, that overall settlement is being pursued by the Conference in Yugoslavia under the Chairmanship of Lord Carrington. Let me be clear: I am not in any way calling into question the principle of self-determination which is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. However, I am deeply worried that any early, selective recognition could widen the present conflict and fuel and explosive situation especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina and also Macedonia; indeed, serious consequences could ensue for the entire Balkan region. I believe, therefore, that uncoordinated actions should be avoided.”<sup>50</sup>*

President Alija Izetbegovic was also fully aware of the risk of an anticipated recognition of its neighbor countries and tried to work on the negotiation of an agreement with the EC and the Serbs<sup>51</sup>. The attempt was vain and the plan proposed by the Europeans was

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<sup>49</sup> Burg Steven L., Shoup Paul S., *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999, p.94.

<sup>50</sup> Europe Journée Politique, no,5626 (December 11, 1991), p.3.

<sup>51</sup> Burg Steven L., Shoup Paul S., *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999, Shoup p.96-97.

rejected. From then, the leader of Bosnia knew that avoiding the independence was not an option any more.

The recognition of the independence of Croatia accelerated the precipitation of Bosnia in that it only gave the Bosnian government two choices: on the one hand, Izetbegovic could decide to follow Croatia and ask the recognition of the Bosnian independence with the risk of witnessing afterwards his country falling apart because of an ethno-political fragmentation. On the other, he could reject the idea of independence with the implication that Bosnia would stay in a “Serb-dominated Yugoslavia”<sup>52</sup>. In addition, before the decision was made, Radovan Karadzic, leader of the Bosnian-Serbs warned that the independence would be far from bringing peace as the United States and the European Community thought it would happen, but rather bring the worst in term of conflict.

In December 1991 the war broke in Croatia opening the door to several threats from JNA generals and Serbian supporters. A “Convention for a New Yugoslavia” stated the same month with the aim of drafting the new functioning of the Yugoslav Federation. The goal was to set up changed to preserve the continuity of the federation. Thus the Serbian government was asking Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to remain in the federation<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> Silber Laura, Little Allan, *Yugoslavia, Death of a Nation*, Penguin Books, New York, New York, 1995, p.205.

<sup>53</sup> Burg Steven L., Shoup Paul S., *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999, p.98

In parallel, the Badinter Commission<sup>54</sup> initiated in August 1991 was trying to define the status of Yugoslavia following international law and thus concluded in November that the secession of several member of the federation was confirming the process of dissolution of Yugoslavia. Along those lines, early 1992, the commission established that Serbian population in Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina were recognized as ethnic minority and that the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina should not be internationally approved until the country held a referendum on independence as Croatia did<sup>55</sup>.

The referendum on the independence of Bosnia was thus announced on August 16<sup>th</sup> 1991 by president Izetbegovic. At this point, Bosnia chose independence and what was feared occurred; the tension between Serbs and the Muslims of Bosnia, or Bosniaks<sup>56</sup>, dramatically increased and the War broke in Bosnia after the SDA snipers killed an Orthodox Serb in the heart of Sarajevo.

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<sup>54</sup> Also called the Arbitration Conference of on the Peace on the Former Yugoslavia. Burg Steven L., Shoup Paul S., *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999, p.100.

<sup>55</sup> Burg Steven L., Shoup Paul S., *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999, p.100.

<sup>56</sup> It is important to understand that by “Bosniak” is characterized the Muslim population living in Bosnian territory and not the ensemble of the nationals of Bosnia given that, as mentioned previously in this paper, Bosnia technically never existed as a proper state until its independence in 1992. Consequently, the composition of the people of Bosnia includes Croats Catholics in majority, Serbs generally orthodox and a minority of Muslims descendant of the people of the Ottoman Empire, that conquered the now called territory of Bosnia during the middle age. The term “Bosnian” is the generic name used only to refer to the citizens of Bosnia. However, it is necessary to keep in mind that “Bosnian” is technically inaccurate to in that there is no real Bosnian population but rather a mix of different ethnicities with specific religious, geographical, and cultural features that, since the creation of the state, have been fighting to differentiate from each other without any intention to form or even work on the high valued (by the West at least) concept of nation usually contributing to the cohesion of the people and thus the stability of the considered state. Susan Woodward in *Balkan tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, on page 298, explains that not making the difference between the two populations led to strong misunderstanding and inappropriate political responses.



Thus a complex mix of internal and external factors caused the collapse of Yugoslavia, and likewise led to the outbreak of the Bosnian war. Moreover, the stability of the country seemed already compromised in that it was inheriting most of the tensions accumulated by the old Yugoslav Federation. However, the attempts to control, if not to stop, both conflicts, were manifest among the great powers. The question of foreign intervention seems therefore to be more meaningful and determining in the evolution of these conflicts, in this case the dismantlement of the federation and its aftermaths. These interventions now form part of a broader dynamic replicated in areas such as Kosovo, Georgia, Central Asia, Libya, and Syria. The forthcoming section provides interesting clues to explain what happened to Bosnia and raises the question of the motivations of foreign powers.

### **C. Why Bosnia? Foreign Involvement: incoherence of a game**

- **From a European matter...**

The foreign intervention in the Yugoslav territories occurred early in the conflict, even though, officially, foreign military intervention began in the fall of 1991. Yet, the international community hesitated before being really active and was not clear about its position in the region.

The vacillation was attributable to deep divisions among the great powers. While the concern among some powers was to avoid escalation of tensions and its spread throughout the region, other powers pursued policies that were designed to make sure there was a war in Yugoslavia as Lord Peter Carrington, the former EC special envoy,

has remarked on several occasions.<sup>57</sup> Some Balkan experts argue that foreign intervention and the “premature” recognition of Croatian independence actually precipitated the conflict and increased ethnic in the region. Our goal is now to see whether the facts support this argument and understand why the West did intervene.

Mediating and managing the crisis were the two main reasons that brought the west to Yugoslavia. However this decision came late, probably too late given that the tensions in the federation started in 1989 and that the west got involved only two years later. According to Susan Woodward, the combination of European intervention, more precisely its mediation, and the proceeding disintegration of the Yugoslav federation catalyzed the conflict in that they recognized the implicit definition and paradigms given to the Yugoslav conflict by its protagonists without taking in consideration the opposing forces<sup>58</sup>.

By intervening, the European Community gave more credit to the nationalist powers than to the Federal and decentralized one and thus weakened the Yugoslav government which was already struggling to maintain its republics united. These reactions seem indubitably at odd with the initial goal: stabilization. Why would the European community intervene then if the task was too delicate and the timing not convenient?

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<sup>26</sup> Misha Glenny in *Yugoslavia, the Avoidable War*: “If the Lisbon plan had been adopted, the war in Bosnia probably would not have happened”, *Yugoslavia, the Avoidable War*; Frontier Theatre and Film, Princeton, New Jersey, Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 2001, 52’50”.

<sup>58</sup> Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p.147.

At that time, the European Community wanted to show the extent of its common foreign policy in the context of the coming signature of the Maastricht treaty in December 1991<sup>59</sup>. But, unable to find an agreement regarding the intervention the European community became more vulnerable to the influence of Germany and the United States that slowly demarked themselves from the group. Led by Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Germany was the first country to recognize Slovenia and Croatia by the end of the year. The lack of coherence among European countries reflected on their actions and led to ambiguity regarding their moves and position in the region.

Susan Woodward argues that “the struggle to create new states out of the Yugoslav federation was a struggle to get international recognition; the fight for international opinion had been and would continue to be as important as the fight on the ground.”<sup>60</sup> She goes further by explaining that the Yugoslav case was more likely a test of the unification of Europe in terms of security and defense before the creation of its institutions rather than a genuine humanitarian intervention<sup>61</sup>. This way, Yugoslavia proved to be sacrificed for the sake of a greater security stakes that concerned European countries.

Two main conferences illustrate the beginning of this European involvement: the Brioni Agreement and the Badinter Commission. The Brioni agreement was signed in Croatia on July 7<sup>th</sup> 1991 by representatives of Croatia, Slovenia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and aimed to stop the conflict on the Slovenian ground. The European

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<sup>59</sup> Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995.183.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid, p.198.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid p.162.

Community, represented by the foreign ministers Hans van den Broek for the Netherlands, Jacques Poos for the Luxembourg and Joao Deus Pinheiro for Portugal was overseeing the meeting. This agreement accepted the preventive recognition on which Germany had insisted and thus amputated the already fragile Yugoslav Federation from its most legitimate and natural rights: sovereignty and self-determination. The approval of the secession process was the equivalent of what one could define as interference in what Susan Woodward qualifies as an “internal constitutional conflict.”<sup>62</sup>

A month later, on August 27<sup>th</sup> 1991, The Arbitration Commission of the Peace Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, or Badinter Commission, was established with the goal of providing legal advice to the Yugoslav federation and of defining the conflict according to international public law principles. As explained earlier in this essay, the consequences of this commission were in complete opposition to its original purpose: the arbitration of the conflict. Recognizing the status of dissolution of the federation and the right to self-determination of the ethnic minority was an absolute coup de grace for Yugoslavia.

The several actions attempted in order to slow down the dismantlement of Yugoslavia and to arbitrate the conflict proved to be worsening the situation and accelerating the collapse. Intervening or not was the main question asked by European governments who when finally taking action were still unclear on their position on the issue. Their decisions and advices were contradictory and as a result, the aftermath, dramatic. Susan Woodward understands with perspicacity the situation and does not forget to remind,

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<sup>62</sup> Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p.200.

with some sharply-worded comments, that (referring to the Europeans): “they asked whether they should intervene and what interest would justify their engagement, as if they were not already actively involved. Critics of Western governments denounced the ineffectiveness of their diplomacy to stop the fighting with the charge, which began to circulate near the end of 1991 that the crisis was a result of too little, too late. They failed to appreciate that they had been internal players all along”<sup>63</sup>.

If the European Community intervened to test their own security organization as well as to demonstrate the capability of the recently created Commission in Security and Cooperation in Europe; one can also wonder what the interests of the United States were to be involved in the region.

- **... To the American foreign policy agenda**

Since the end of the Second World War, the spread of communism was the principal concern for the United States. However, the conflict also revealed interestingly changing policy priorities for the United States not to say incoherent political positions for the United States. Initially, the collapse of Yugoslavia, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, did not fit into the American agenda and was actually considered as a European matter as long as president Bush was in office. For this reason, the United States did not judge it necessary to get involved. Nevertheless, the American power got caught into the Balkan quagmire. This section will examine how and under what circumstances this occurred.

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<sup>63</sup> Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p.147.

1991 was a key year in international relations insofar as it is related to the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation but also to the collapse of the USSR. Likewise, it represents an interesting turning point in terms of balance of power and international order. Both elements were crucial to the United States which, at that time, was asserting its status of hegemon in a post Cold War framework but was also active on another front in the Middle East where the first Gulf War was taking place. Reinforcing hegemony was the driving force of the United States foreign policy and is revealed by Joan Hoey as the U.S 'Great Game' in Bosnia. For her, "[...] the only thing that has been consistent in the U.S. approach to Yugoslavia is a determination to bolster America's authority at the expense of its rivals. Thus the initial pro-Yugoslav policy in 1991 was an attempt to slow down the dissolution of the cold war order upon which America's ascendancy depended."<sup>64</sup> In that sense, US intervention was never a question of humanitarianism but simply a move in a game of chess.

Getting involved in Yugoslavia required careful handling because the fragmentation of the Soviet bloc, gain the support of the international public opinion in its favor but also, to manage its national public opinion<sup>65</sup>. In addition, the reunification of Germany was another concern for the United States that had to make sure that no resumption of the hostilities with the former soviet army would happen. Consequently, American foreign policy in 1991 with President George H.W. Bush at the helm avoided complicating issues with Moscow. The deal was that Moscow would withdraw its forces from the Warsaw

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<sup>64</sup> Hoey Joan, *Policy Without Principles, The U.S. 'Great Game' in Bosnia*, The Nation, January 30, 1995, p.130-132.

<sup>65</sup> Brzezinski Zbigniew, *Second Chance, Three Presidents and the Crisis of American Superpower*, basic Books, New York, New York, 2007, p.48.

Pact countries, Moscow would not oppose German reunification, in exchange for which NATO would not expand its operations outside the confines of Western Europe.<sup>66</sup> Brzezinski also specifies that “forestalling the dismantling of either the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia became a priority that the Bush administration was loath to acknowledge publicly.”<sup>67</sup>

The violence and the rapidity of the escalation in the Yugoslav conflict caught the United States off guard. In an unusual move the CIA went on record with the New York Times saying that diplomatic recognition of former Yugoslavian republics was a mistake that would lead to bloodshed.<sup>68</sup> Realizing that the European intervention was inefficient, the United States decided to take part in the mediation process which should have prevented the conflict from contaminating the recently fallen east bloc. As former National Security Advisor, Brzezinski mentions that: “one has to assume that Bush would have focused on it in a second term, but as it happened, the festering and increasingly violent conflict was bequeathed to his successor as unfinished business”<sup>69</sup> underlying the unexpected silence of the United States at the beginning of the conflict and the little concern it had for it. The passivity of the Bush administration on this peculiar topic and its consequences were going to be even more dramatic with the takeover of President Clinton in 1993.

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<sup>66</sup> Cohen Stephen F., *Soviet Fates and Lost Alternatives: From Stalinism to the New Cold War*, Carnegie Council Lecture <http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/resources/video/data/000326>

<sup>67</sup> Brzezinski Zbigniew, *Second Chance, Three Presidents and the Crisis of American Superpower*, basic Books, New York, New York, 2007, p.48.

<sup>68</sup> Binder David, “Evolution in Europe; Yugoslavia Seen Breaking up Soon, The New York Times, November 28<sup>th</sup> 1990.

<sup>69</sup> Brzezinski Zbigniew, *Second Chance, Three Presidents and the Crisis of American Superpower*, basic Books, New York, New York, 2007, p.66.

Initially considered as a European concern, the War in Yugoslavia proved to be threatening the recent order established by the United States in the former USSR. The unity of the former Soviet bloc was obviously more important to the United States and Europe seemed to be taking care of the Yugoslav mess, first test for the new born European institutions and its common foreign security policy. Nevertheless, American officials such as US ambassador to Yugoslavia Warren Zimmerman, Deputy of State Larry Eagleburger and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, were not taken in by this sudden enthusiasm and quickly understood the inefficiency of the European negotiations.

Zimmerman's visit to Belgrade in 1991 and meeting with the representatives of the six republics marked the intrusion of US power in the conflict but also the beginning of a long series of incoherencies and ambiguity in the American foreign policy in the region.

Fact often forgotten, Washington called in its IMF loans to Belgrade and officially withdrew recognition of the SRFJ. CIA analysts were appalled and that prompted their extraordinary approach to go on record with the *New York Times* with seminal facts other news outlets were not including in their reportage. When the international community withdrew diplomatic recognition of Belgrade, on Washington's recommendation no less, Yugoslavia went the way of all flesh. It should be remembered that there was a great deal of support for Yugoslavia that the Western press simply ignored. Instead, the press gravitated toward secessionist politicians as though they had monopoly on sovereignty. That left peoples, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, who were now forced to carve out nation-states for themselves. In places like Kosovo and Bosnia where ethnic communities overlap each other like a palimpsest, that was a recipe for tragedy. While US officials



were sent to Yugoslavia to prevent its disintegration, at home, the Bush administration seemed committed to an ostrich-like approach, taking care of ignoring any warning concerning a forthcoming collapse<sup>70</sup>. Interestingly, President Alija Izetbegovic had stressed the danger of the Croatian independence for Bosnia and internally, even the CIA, in late 1990 had assessed the intricacy of the situation reporting that “the Yugoslav experiment has failed. The country will fall apart. That will probably be accompanied by acts of violence and unrest that could lead to a civil war.”<sup>71</sup>

The United States also referred to the United Nations to justify their low profile on the Yugoslav question. In February 1992, James Baker, Chief of Staff mentioned that “The United Nations has been of the view that recognition (of secessionist republics) now by the United States would move us in the wrong direction and would not enhance the prospects of putting together a peacekeeping operation.” When the United States woke up, they could only grasp the scope of the European failure and try to pick up the pieces, at least for what was left<sup>72</sup>.

Initially fearing that the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia would allow the war to reach Bosnia and the Southern Balkans, potentially triggering the wrath of the then wealthy Arab allies of the Bush administration, Washington waited for any decision of the Badinter Commission on the question. Then, in 1992 the United States announced that they would recognize Croatia, rump Yugoslavia (Serbia Montenegro), but also Bosnia

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<sup>70</sup> Cohen B., Stamoski G., *With No Peace to Keep, United Nations Peacekeeping and the War in the Former Yugoslavia*, Grainpress Ltd, London, United Kingdom, 1995, p.148.

<sup>71</sup> Idem

<sup>72</sup> Cohen B., Stamoski G., *With No Peace to Keep, United Nations Peacekeeping and the War in the Former Yugoslavia*, Grainpress Ltd, London, United Kingdom, 1995, p.150.

and Macedonia by the end of April. These “preventive recognitions” were supposed to contain the ambitions of the nationalists but as the fights intensified the fear of a bursting war became real. The Bush administration thus turned against the European Community it considered as fully responsible for this catastrophe and opposed the airlifting assistance to the local populations<sup>73</sup>. The EC for its part blamed the Bush administration for undercutting important negotiations headed by its special envoy, Lord Carrington. Carrington, an old Tory who seldom minces words, blamed the United States and Germany for making sure there was going to be a war that was entirely preventable.

Not only the United States closed its eyes on the conflict but when it decided to act, it was only for the purpose of its own interest that is to say preventing the conflict from reaching neighboring allies countries. Such rambling demeanor is clearly summarized by General Charles Boyd, a former high-ranking commander of NATO, in its article *Making the Peace with the Guilty, The truth about Bosnia*: “I believe that the U.S Approach to the war in Bosnia is torn by a fundamental contradiction. The United States says that its objective is to end the war through a negotiated settlement, but in reality what it wants is to influence the outcome in favor of the Muslims.”<sup>74</sup>

This second chapter demonstrated that Bosnia has never been a state in the Westphalian meaning of the notion and the leitmotif of this section is that Bosnia is a microcosm of Yugoslavia, an entity born of the struggle between the East and the West for political ascendancy. The irony is that Yugoslavia was forged by Washington with an abiding

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<sup>73</sup> Cohen B., Stamoski G., *With No Peace to Keep, United Nations Peacekeeping and the War in the Former Yugoslavia*, Grainpress Ltd, London, United Kingdom, 1995, p.150.

<sup>74</sup> Boyd Charles G., *Making Peace with the Guilty, The truth about Bosnia*, Foreign Affairs, Vol74, No 5, September/October 1995, p.33.

interest to contain communism, ironically by fostering a Western-style Communism of its own creation. Viewed from the aforesaid perspectives the “artificial” nature of this state does not seem that strange.

The tormented historical background of the country raises the question of the nature of the Bosnian war that took place right after the “birth” of the country as well as the nature and the reasons of the foreign involvement. Even if the Cold War was technically over some whiffs of the old East-West dynamics are still perceptible and suggest that, the underlying tensions between the United States and the former Soviet bloc are still present.

The patterns in the foreign behavior for both conflicts were actually the same with some shades but in the end the concept was really the same: hinder the recrudescence of Russia (the USSR) Russia by isolating it with a series of micro-states carved from former Westphalian entities. Thus the fall of Yugoslavia can be simply interpreted as an orchestrated play off minorities against majorities, and a division of governments and territories by external elements (for this matter, the United States with the unavowed help of its European allies), in a way that is reminiscent of great power tensions before World War I, tensions that interestingly reminds of a famous motto used in warfare theory and by the School of Realism: Divide to Conquer. From these inferences one can suggest the war was maybe just overshadowing another dimension of the conflict; the greater strategy behind, very likely the New Great Game.

### **Chapter III: Getting involved: story of an intervening non-intervention.**

The historical background of the conflict covered in the second chapter of this paper depicted the context that led to the outbreak of war and gave readers the keys to understanding the reasons for foreign intervention in Yugoslavia. It also revealed several elements that not only explain the collapse of the federation as a whole but also highlight the dynamics that triggered the Bosnian war. Having focused on the internal history, it is necessary to pay attention to the question of foreign intervention by the EC and the United States. More particularly, we suggest reassessing the actions of NATO and the United Nations, but also reviewing the actions of the so-called Contact Group, an entity specifically created during the war.

#### **A. The Contact Group**

- **A new approach to the conflict**

The end of the previous chapter established the failure of the West to manage the conflict in Yugoslavia and demonstrated that the challenge of collective security initially advocated by the EC could not be maintained. Moreover, none of the international organizations which mobilized to that end, such as the UN, the CSCE/OSCE, the EC/EU were capable of taking action in this unstable situation bathed in Cold War ashes<sup>75</sup>. Such observations served as a poignant reminder to some of the powers that NATO intervention was an option of last resort. Given the rapid escalation of the conflict, NATO seemed the only effective solution and this under the condition that the alliance be willing to change its goals and modus operandi.

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<sup>75</sup>Kaufman Joyce P., *NATO and the Former Yugoslavia, Crisis, Conflict and the Atlantic Alliance*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, Maryland, 2002, p.111.

As Joyce Kaufman states in her book *NATO and the Former Yugoslavia*, the new objectives of NATO would be to “engage the United States directly in the situation, foster communication and cooperation among the major players, and at the same time, ensure an ongoing and active role for the European Union in the decision-making process.”<sup>76</sup> Such observations made the co-chairs of the ICFY<sup>77</sup> decide in April 1994 to create the Contact group, which the following members: the United States, Russia, France, Germany and Great Britain. One of the group’s goals was to negotiate with the United States and convince them to work on a common political solution rather than using force unilaterally and preserving the European central role and influence and presence in this conflict<sup>78</sup>. The inclusion of Russia in the group was mainly a symbolic gesture because of the country’s ties with Serbia. France also had links with Serbia however Germany was closer to Croatia. The creation of the Contact Group thus ended the mediation role of the ICFY and indirectly gave the leadership role of the foreign intervention in Yugoslavia to the United States and also to Russia.

As the group was formed, critics rose mentioning that a group featuring countries that had “permanent seats at the UN Security Council had traditional security concerns in Europe and the Balkan region or that were prominent members of the EC”<sup>79</sup> would keep strengthening the bias that intervening parties already had in this conflict. Instead of having a discussion aimed at resolving the conflict or finding an agreement that would

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<sup>76</sup> Kaufman Joyce P., *NATO and the Former Yugoslavia, Crisis, Conflict and the Atlantic Alliance*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, Maryland, 2002, p.111.

<sup>77</sup> International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, also called Badinter Arbitration Committee.

<sup>78</sup> Burg Steven L., Shoup Paul S., *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999, p.300.

<sup>79</sup> Aybet Gulnur, *A European Security Architecture after the Cold War: Questions of Legitimacy*, Macmillan Press, New York, New York, 2000, p.173.

suit the fighting parties, the goal would shift towards western satisfaction. The group was somehow a sweet compromise between United States which wanted to be able to demonstrate its major involvement and reinforce its interventionist agenda, and the European countries that, while wedged in deadlock, still wanted to prove that they were great contributors to the peace process. With time, this “battle of egos” led to the rise of tensions between the members of the group adding another variable to the whole peace process.

- **The Atlantic Rift**

In spite of the aforementioned issues, the Contact Group seemed to remain the most efficient option left to direct intervention and until 1995 became the central actor in the negotiation process for Bosnia. Nevertheless, Kaufman considers that the group: “helped but also thwarted the process of trying to end the war”<sup>80</sup> in the sense that it revealed tensions among the group and more precisely between allies. For Kaufman, the nature of the group “contributed to the growing rifts among the allies by separating out those that were directly involved in the decision making and those that were not yet but were expected to participate in and accept the decisions that were made”<sup>81</sup>. In an already tense situation, this additional variable was condemning in advance the way out of this quagmire.

In May 1994 the group proposed its own peace plan suggesting a territorial division of Bosnian territory in such a way that 51% of it would go to the Croat-Muslim federation and 49% would be attributed to the Serbs. The parties at war rejected the offer and the

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<sup>80</sup>Kaufman Joyce P., *NATO and the Former Yugoslavia, Crisis, Conflict and the Atlantic Alliance*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, Maryland, 2002, 112.

<sup>81</sup> Idem.

group had to issue an ultimatum in order to coerce the belligerents<sup>82</sup>. Once the plan was approved, the question of the way the Bosnian war would be handled afterwards remained. Unable to agree on how to proceed, the Contact Group underwent a political schism. On the one hand, the United States was skeptical towards the idea of sending its own troops over there and were thus more in favor of a NATO air power intervention against the Bosnian Serbs. On the other hand, the allies who had troops on the ground as part of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFR), were advocating a diplomatic resolution of the conflict. The internecine struggle among the members of the group dramatically slowed down progresses towards peace<sup>83</sup>.

This Atlantic rift kept growing in 1995 when the Contact Group met and once again to settle the matter. Once again, the United States was still reluctant to send their troops in Bosnia. Such inability for the allies to agree on the question of intervention is described by Kaufman as “[...] one of the most dramatic examples of a case in which allied interests diverged since the end of the Cold War and perhaps in the history of NATO.”<sup>84</sup>

Going back to history, one remembers that during the Cold War, there had been universal agreement on the mission of NATO's meaning, the containment of the Soviet Union and of the spread of communism. The fight against communism was actually what since 1949 had been consensus determining the use and the significance of NATO. However, the case of Bosnia was for NATO like going off the beaten track which slowly spread confusion among its members it also ended up challenging the whole institution.

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<sup>82</sup>Kaufman Joyce P., *NATO and the Former Yugoslavia, Crisis, Conflict and the Atlantic Alliance*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, Maryland, 2002, 112.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid. p.116.

<sup>84</sup>Idem.

The early disagreements, in terms of the means to be used to put an end to the Bosnian war, were deeply questioning the role of NATO itself and regarding the conflict, led to speculation about the ways to share the costs. Bosnia was a wake-up call for NATO in that NATO as it was known was not useful anymore and to conserve it, the Alliance had to undergo change if it wanted to survive or at least maintain its status.

- **Impact of the Contact Group**

The formation of the contact group transformed the nature of the international endeavor towards a potential resolution of the Yugoslav conflict. Instead of direct discussions with the parties to the conflict, that is to say instead of conducting “direct, multilateral negotiations among the warring parties” as Shoup and Burg state it, the dialogue was made between representatives of the Contact Group and each of the parties independently. The idea was to provide, in such manner, another opportunity for discussion and presentation of individual demands<sup>85</sup>. In May 1994, the Contact Group met with all its members to submit an early proposition of settlement.

The pitfall of this process was that neither the members of the group nor the parties to the conflicts had changed their position. Thus, the United States were still in favor of a strong military action against the Bosnia Serbs along with sanctions towards Serbia, whereas the Russians were still supporting the Serbs. In addition, Russia strongly despised NATO’s use of air power against the Serbs without being consulted. As regards the Europeans, they were in favor of a lifting of the sanctions against the Serbs in

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<sup>85</sup> Burg Steven L., Shoup Paul S., *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999, p.300.



exchange for an agreement, and were then opposing the Americans who still wanted to maintain the sanctions until complete resolution of the conflict.

Kaufman concludes that “the creation of the Contact Group therefore changed the dynamics regarding the negotiation process and set a precedent that would continue into discussions about Kosovo later in the decade”. The facts explored in this part confirm the shift she expresses regarding the international community’s approach to the conflict and to some extent the change of strategy it implied. Besides, the allusion to Kosovo is quite meaningful and actually supports the argument of this entire paper, that is to say that the Bosnian War, as part of the disintegration the Yugoslav Federation, was not trivial but rather part of a plan, or as we call it, a “bigger strategy”, whose final aim is to open the road to Central Asia. Yugoslavia led to Bosnia which led to Kosovo, all three wars with roughly a decade of interval interestingly looking like a chain reaction if not some kind of “Domino Theory<sup>86</sup>” whom the west and its supporters would be the instigators.

### **B. NATO’s preemptive war: why was NATO in Yugoslavia?**

The impact of the Contact Group on the conflict was definitely significant regarding the evolution of the conflict and the peace negotiations. However, it was not the only group or organization involved in Yugoslavia. Indeed, as already mentioned, NATO’s presence on the ground was important even though its use was challenged by the international community and more particularly (as explained previously) by some members of the contact group. This choice to turn to NATO seems legitimate given the context however

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<sup>86</sup> Galen Carpenter Ted, *The Domino-Theory Reborn: Clinton’s Bosnia Intervention and the “Wider War”* Thesis, Cato Foreign Policy Briefing n.42, August 15, 1996.

we can wonder whether it was the escalation of the conflict that was the only reason for the west to appeal to NATO or if there were other stakes.

- **Renovating and Expanding NATO**

As mentioned earlier in this essay, NATO's intervention was requested by Washington given the inability of the European Union to make the parties to the conflict agree on a diplomatic settlement to the war. In addition, it is necessary to remember that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was created in 1949 in the context of the cold war and with the very specific aim of containing the spread of communism. The collapse of the Soviet Union was removing the aforementioned mission from the organization making it purposeless and diminishing its prestige.. In this case, the United States was not benefiting any more from its connection with the alliance and could not use it as a medium for world domination.

The reality of the situation allowed for few options regarding the future of NATO, and the only way to make the organization survive was to adapt its goals to the modern global challenges. One of these challenges was to monitor the former Soviet states and make sure that they would not become another kind of threat for the United States. For this reason the expansion of NATO was crucial. In this sense, it would mean more allies or potential partners for it, and fewer allies for Russia, the long time rival of the United States and the West. But, the collapse of the Soviet Union occurred a bit before the signature of the Maastricht treaty, founding accord of the European Union. At that time, in 1992, the Union was both in the process of strengthening and developing its structure and its institutions but was also looking to reach out to new members that would lead to the expansion of the alliance. .

As a matter of fact, the initial members of the European members were also members of the alliance, and the expansion of the Union would likewise certainly lead to an expansion of NATO. This is the logic on which the United States was relying hoping to see thus a growth of the alliance in parallel to the redefinition of its goals. The Americans thought that the new members of the European Union would naturally follow the path of the founding members by joining the alliance thus multiplying the number of allies the United States would have but also erecting a natural rampart encircling their direct rival: Russia.

A small NATO would mean for the United States loss of its international podium and means to exercise international domination. It would also mean a free way for Russia's ambitions, a situation that couldn't be allowed to happen. Also, if the European Union was growing, then NATO had to grow; it was a simple matter of proportionality in order for NATO to keep its effectiveness but also its international standing.

As John F. Kennedy's former economic advisor, Sean Gervasi mentions in his article "Why is NATO in Yugoslavia?" NATO had a large task force in Yugoslavia and the sending of its troops was the result of pressure for the extension of the alliance eastwards. Under the appearance of a simple renovation lay the hidden ambition to destabilize the former USSR while avoiding as much as possible tensions with Russia about the status of the semi-collapsed states. Initially created to protect the west from potential military aggression from the east, at the end of the Cold War the alliance saw its "raison d'être" literally vanished. This led to the aforementioned process of renovation with the intent of reestablishing ties between the United States and the Europeans.

Still according to Gervasi, from the creation of the organization and during the cold war, NATO represented proof of American domination on European affairs and the modernization of NATO was a way for the US to maintain its position as hegemon. The Yugoslav conflict was a test for both the alliance and the United States<sup>87</sup> in that the alliance could display its new mission and this allowed the United States to reassert its hegemonic position. Gervasi precisely states that:

*“[...] NATO was working to create a major “out of area” mission almost from the time the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina began. The recent dispatch of tens of thousands of troops to Bosnia, Austria, Hungary, Croatia and Serbia is thus simply the culmination of a process which began almost four years ago. It was not a question of proposals and conferences. It was a question of inventing operations which, with the backing of key countries, could eventually lead to NATO’s active engagement “out of area”, and thus to its own renovation.”*

In the process of its transformation, NATO created new internal agencies that would handle specific issues such as the North Atlantic Cooperation Council whose goal was to foster the cooperation between NATO powers and members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, that is to say the former members of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union. As reported by the Working Group on NATO Enlargement of the North Atlantic Assembly in October 1995: “The security task for NATO is no longer limited to maintaining a defensive military posture against an opposing force. There is no immediate military security threat to Western Europe. The political instability and insecurity in Central and Eastern Europe, however, greatly affect the security of the NATO area, NATO should help to fulfill the Central and Eastern European desires for

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<sup>87</sup> Gervasi Sean, “Why is NATO in Yugoslavia?”, Institute of International Politics and Economics Belgrade, *Conference on the Enlargement of NATO in Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, Prague, Czech Republic, 13-14 January 1996, p.3.*

security and integration into western structures, thus serving the interests in stability of its members.”<sup>88</sup>

Realizing that this improvement was not sufficient to bring peace to Bosnia, the United States launched the idea of a Partnership for Peace to soothe the underlying distrust between members of the alliance, former soviet satellites and other European countries as mentioned by Richard Holbrooke, US Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs: “This time, the United States must lead in the creation of a security architecture that includes and thereby stabilizes all of Europe—the West, the former soviet satellites of Central Europe and, most critically, Russia and the former republics of the Soviet Union.”<sup>89</sup>

Even though the members of the European Union could have been considered as default allies of the United States given their membership to the alliance, the Americans were wary of the German aspirations. Indeed, the dismantlement of the Yugoslav Federation was wished by both countries, however for different reasons. Where the United States wanted to promote democracy, Germany was hoping to revive the old “Mitteleuropa” referring to the German dominated central-Europe established by Bismarck in the 1870’s, and thus reassert its domination in the region as an appendix to German territories. Moreover the Americans were careful to thwart German aspirations who weretrying to gain access to the Adriatic Sea and the Black Sea.

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<sup>88</sup> Napolitano Giorgio, Voigt Karsten, Waschler Tama, “The enlargement of the Alliace”, special report of the Working Group on NATO Enlargement of the North Atlantic Assembly, NAA International Secretariat, October 1995.

<sup>89</sup>Richard, Holbrooke, “America, A European Power”, Foreign Affairs, March/April, 1995, page 39.

Thus, for both Germany and the United States the expansion of NATO to the East was crucial in that it would strengthen on one hand the German leadership in the European Union and allow the United States to use the Union as buffer zone between the east and the west.

- **NATO: a tool for the New Great Game**

The enlargement of NATO was definitely a necessity given the new world configuration that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. The United States quickly understood the challenges of this new situation in terms of security but also in terms of strategy. However, the changes carried out in the functioning of the alliance had more U.S driven purposes and long term goals. Beyond NATO expansion, the United States needed to get involved with Russia for security cooperation, cover the entire Eurasian continent and become its arbitrator<sup>90</sup>. Yet, if we recall Brzezinski's words in *The Grand Chessboard*, he insisted on the fact that "Eurasia [was] the World's axial supercontinent"<sup>91</sup> and he also mentioned that NATO was probably the best tool for the United States to reach its outcomes. In that sense, the alliance would be a way for the United States to implement their greater strategy and thus reach the key region of Central Asia then gaining access to those so coveted natural resources<sup>92</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup> Gervasi Sean, *Why is NATO in Yugoslavia?*, Institute of International Politics and Economics Belgrade, *Conference on the Enlargement of NATO in Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, Prague, Czech Republic, 13-14 January 1996*.

<sup>91</sup> Brzezinski Zbigniew, *The Grand Chessboard, American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, New York, 1997, p.31.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid

What Gervasi calls this “new race for world resources”<sup>93</sup> and what we more precisely identify as a struggle to access the desert plains of Central Asia is interestingly close in its description to the Great Game fought between the British Empire and czarist Russia. Instead of the British, the Americans are part of the brawl, this time facing another empire that has been trying for a long time to exploit the resources of the region: Russia.

Such parallel was made in February 1998 by Doug Bereuter, Chairman of the United States House Committee on International Relations Hearing before the subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific of the Committee on International Relations. Bereuter reminds that: “One hundred years ago, Central Asia was the arena for a great game played by Czarist Russia, Colonial Britain and Napoleon’s France, and the Persian and the Ottoman Empires. Allegiances meant little enduring thus struggle for empire building, where no single empire could gain the upper hand” and that now, “One hundred years later, the collapse of the Soviet Union has unleashed a new great game, where the interests of the East India Trading Companies have been replaced by those of Unocal and Total, and many other organizations and firms.”<sup>94</sup>

Referring to the Caspian Sea and to Central Asia, Bereuter pursues stating that “Stated U.S policy goals regarding energy resources in this region include fostering the independence of the States and their ties to the West; breaking Russia’s monopoly over oil and gas transport routes; promoting Western energy security through diversified suppliers; encouraging the construction of east-west pipelines that do not transit Iran and

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<sup>93</sup> *Gervasi Sean, “Why is NATO in Yugoslavia?”, Institute of International Politics and Economics Belgrade, Conference on the Enlargement of NATO in Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, Prague, Czech Republic, 13-14 January 1996.*

<sup>94</sup> Bereuter Doug, “U.S Interests in the Central Asian Republics”, Hearing before the subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific of the committee on international relations, House of Representatives, One Hundred Fifth Congress, Second Session February 12, 1998, Washington D.C, p.7.

denying Iran dangerous leverage over the Central Asian economies.”<sup>95</sup> This quest for natural resources definitely follows the pattern described in the chapter one of this paper regarding the New Great Game and the Mackinder’s *Geographical Pivot of History*. Moreover the tendency to classify most of American foreign policy in Eastern Europe and Eurasia since the collapse of the Soviet bloc, a New Great game, is also underlined by Jacob Heillbrunn and Michael Lind in the article their published in the New York Times in January 1996, pertinently entitled “The Third American Empire”. For the authors, “the disintegration of the Soviet Union has prompted the United States to expand its zone of military hegemony into Eastern Europe (through NATO) and into formerly neutral Yugoslavia. And... most important of all... the end of the cold war has permitted America to deepen its involvement in the Middle East”.

It seems then that the whole NATO renovation process combined with the expansion of the European Union was not only a security matter as it can be first understood, but rather a key step of a great strategy that would prepare the “terrain” and allow an easy but above all legitimate access for the allies and more particularly for the United States to the Balkans thus opening by extension the “route” to Central Asia an starting a New Great Game. If the impact of NATO on the conflict is clear now, another actor and probably factor to the conflict needs to be studied to fully grasp all the dynamics of this conflict: the United Nations.

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<sup>95</sup> Bereuter Doug, “U.S Interests in the Central Asian Republics”, Hearing before the subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific of the committee on international relations, House of Representatives, One Hundred Fifth Congress, Second Session February 12, 1998, Washington D.C, p.7.



### **C. The United Nations**

After NATO's intervention in Yugoslavia proved to be a general failure, the intervention of the United Nations was hoped to bring the humanitarian dimension that was missing so far. The participation of the United Nations raised the expectations of all parties and of all foreign countries intervening in the country parts of the intervention. Unfortunately, once again, like the European Community and the Alliance, disappointments were here. Understanding the pitfalls of the missions of the United Nations from the beginning of the conflict is necessary to grasp the extent of the damages caused on the ground and the anticipated condemnation on peace this meant.

- **Embargo on arms or embargo on peace?**

The collapse of the USSR in 1991 was significant in the evolution of the Yugoslav conflict. The weapons accumulated during the cold war were now spread all over the former Soviet territory creating pockets of armaments and leading to the proliferation of weapons in countries like Croatia. The inability to monitor and watch the use and spread of weapons in the republics was an issue for the west in that it put the peace process in jeopardy. To hamper the effects of this traffic the United Nations Security Council, in September 1991, met and voted at the unanimity the imposition of a country-wide embargo in Yugoslavia<sup>96</sup>.

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<sup>96</sup> Durch William J., *UN Peacekeeping, American Politics and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s*, ST. Martin's Press, New York, New York, 1996. p205.

Initially aiming to stop the escalation of the conflict the embargo brought “further chaos in the system of defense”<sup>97</sup> according to Susan Woodward. As a matter of fact this sanction rushed all kinds of groups towards the local stockpiles of ammunition and armaments and led the local governments to relocalize their domestic defense plants and start their own production of weaponry<sup>98</sup>. As Woodward actually explains it, this embargo gave advantage to the countries and regions which, while the USSR and the Yugoslav Federation still existed had been accumulating these weapons. She continues stressing the fact that “the initial disproportion in access to domestic stocks and the uncertainty and higher risks and costs attached to foreign supplies encouraged a local arms race.”<sup>99</sup>

Consequently, the establishment of the arms embargo had the opposite effect to the one expected and dramatically unbalanced the conflict in that small areas such as Bosnia were highly dependent on their neighbor countries in obtaining of weapons already before the embargo. The organization of the embargo thus increased this interdependence but also created a gap between the different countries’ military capability. Once the embargo was enforced, most of them were able to obtain light armaments, however their suppliers in heavy weapons were not able to fuel them due to the impossibility of using the main routes of transportation.

As a matter of fact the population that suffered the most from this embargo was the Muslim people from Bosnia, also called Bosniaks.. As previously mentioned the embargo

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<sup>97</sup>Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p.263.

<sup>98</sup>Idem

<sup>99</sup> Idem

blocked access to these routes and thus prevented the shipping of heavy armaments. The groups unable to obtain these kinds of weapons were thus left vulnerable facing greatly armed neighbors. The development of black market and the smuggling of weapons tremendously increased, along with the rise of tensions. Instead of improving the relationships between groups it actually created an imbalance.

Realizing the side effects of the initiatives the United States and the European Union officials suggested lifting the embargo and in addition launching air strikes against Serbia which was considered as the main aggressor in the conflict. The mix of approbation and rejection prevented any concrete decision from being taken on this subject, at least not until the Dayton agreement in 1995 which actually ended the whole conflict<sup>100</sup>.

- **UNPROFOR: a humanitarian dimension of the conflict**

The embargo was not the only “attempt” for peace launched by the United Nations during the Bosnian war. Indeed, the disagreements among the European Community regarding the actions that had to be taken in Yugoslavia actually undermined the role of the community and let the way free for the United Nations to intervene.

To observe the evolution of the situation in the country and the development of humanitarian efforts, UN secretary general Javier Perez de Cuellar appointed former US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance as his personal envoy to the region. The involvement of the United Nations seemed at that time to be the best option given the inefficiency of the Europeans and the chaotic intervention of NATO. Moreover the perception of the United Nations as a “non-biased” organization in the sense that, its members were not only

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<sup>100</sup>The elaboration of the Dayton Accord will be covered in the fourth chapter of our paper.

representing the west, was giving good credentials for the operation. The Yugoslav Republics were foreseeing the intervention as a “more impartial and less imperial” action in the region compared to what they had witnessed so far<sup>101</sup>.

Initially, the mission of the UN was assimilated to peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention coupled with field operations. This operation had a significant advantage on NATO or the European Community, in that the UN had the authorization to resort to any tool needed to meet the challenges of this mission. The UN forces were thus pressuring the Yugoslav parties toward a settlement using an interesting mix of technique and strategy. Indeed, in addition to the embargo on arms, economic and political sanctions were taken to support field operations and thus alleviate the populations. This partial intervention was far from being the best but was considered as the “least unacceptable option among a range of unsavory choices.”<sup>102</sup>

The first UN peace keeping troops sent to support the attempted agreement and the aforementioned sanctions were deployed in February 1992 in Croatia under the name of the UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force) and established by the resolution 743 voted by the United Nations Security Council. The mission was initially created for a 12 months operation in order to reaffirm the goals of the forthcoming peace keeping plans<sup>103</sup>. The creation of UNPROFOR marked a turning point in the conflict and brought the hope to see in the warring parties some kind of military restraint.

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<sup>101</sup> Durch William J., *UN Peacekeeping, American Politics and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s*, ST. Martin's Press, New York, New York, 1996. p205.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, p.206.

<sup>103</sup> Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p.402.

Unfortunately, it soon appeared that the cease fire agreement sponsored by Cyrus Vance, former US Secretary of State under President Carter, named Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Croatia, was following the path of the EC initial project. The same issues and thus failures were to be expected. According to Boutros Boutros-Ghali, successor of Javier Perez de Cuellar as General Secretary of the United Nations, “The danger that a United Nations peacekeeping operation will fail for lack of cooperation from the parties is less grievous than the danger that a delay in its dispatch will lead to a breakdown of the cease-fire and a new conflagration in Yugoslavia.”<sup>104</sup>

The scenario was thus similar to what the Badinter commission led to, that is to say, confusion, incoherence, delay and by extension an increase in tensions on the ground. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the UN military forces were sent not to monitor the cease fire, nor to impose peace but rather to protect the population from ethnic fights and as Durch underlines it, “UNPROFOR’s multilayered mandate in Bosnia was the end product of the Security Council efforts to reconcile the national objectives of the four permanent members (The United States, Great Britain, France, and Russia), who are active players on most international security issues.”<sup>105</sup>. The problem is that once UNPROFOR joined the conflict even as a protection force it ended up being part of the conflict. Providing surveillance, but also, goods and using weapons triggered the indignation of the parties ensnaring UNPROFOR in the conflict and against its will.

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<sup>104</sup> Report of the Secretary General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/35, The Situation in Bosnia- Herzegovina, The Fall of Srebrenica, United Nations General Assembly, District General, 54<sup>th</sup> session, Agenda Item 42, 15 November 1995, p.8.

<sup>105</sup> Durch William J., *UN Peacekeeping, American Politics and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s*, ST. Martin’s Press, New York, New York, 1996. p.223.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the Yugoslav experience in terms of foreign and humanitarian intervention but also in terms of failures<sup>106</sup>. The slow establishment of UNPROFOR's intervention and its "cascade of operations" as Durch calls it is responsible for most of the confusion and inefficiency on the ground. In addition, the fact that the UNPROFOR got caught in the conflict and was prone to attempted manipulations from local belligerents tarnished its reputation and hurt its legitimacy. Third, as Durch clearly states it, "every action taken by outsiders in a civil war situation affects the local balance of power", that is to say that the intervening parties will take the side of the "weak" thus unbalancing the relationships between powers and altering the initial configuration of the conflict. Finally, the Yugoslav conflict demonstrated that it is a doomed task to carry out a mission relying on both mandates based upon the common agreement of parties and mandated suggesting a side-taking peace operation. Either way, the operation seemed disaster-prone.

- **UN-safe Areas**

The dilemma of objectivity and partiality expressed above is more precisely illustrated by the Safe Areas that were established by the United Nations in 1993.

Under chapter VII of the UN Charter, the Security Council passed resolution 819 on April 16<sup>th</sup> 1993 declaring the city of Srebrenica and its surrounding territories UN-protected "safe area" free "from armed attack or any other hostile act"<sup>107</sup>. The resolution implied the withdrawal of Bosnian-Serbs paramilitary units with the permanence of ABiH garrisons in crucial areas . Yet UNPROFOR was in charge of ensuring this

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<sup>106</sup> Durch William J., *UN Peacekeeping, American Politics and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s*, ST. Martin's Press, New York, New York, 1996. p.253

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, p.230.

security; however, the resolution never stipulated that the protection force had to technically defend the town of Srebrenica. UNPROFOR was allowed to take the necessary measures in case of self defense and in order to ensure the success of the mandate. The confusing mission assigned to UNPROFOR put it in the complicated position of leashed watch-dog, on the ground to watch but restricted in its ability to take action.

Three weeks later, on May 6<sup>th</sup> 1993, the Security Council passed resolution 824 which established Sarajevo, Bihac, Tuzla, Zepa and Goradze also as safe areas. On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, resolution 836 passed and the council extended UNPROFOR's mission to the deterrence of attacks on all six safe areas, the promotion of the withdrawal from them of all but government forces, to the monitoring of the cease fires, and to the occupation of "some key points on the ground"<sup>108</sup>. Thus, UNPROFOR was allowed to take the necessary measures in case of self defense and in order to ensure the success of the mandate and its missions giving UNPROFOR the complicated status of leashed watch-dog. By allowing such freedom to UNPROFOR and by nominating the Bosnian-Serbs as common enemies, the Security Council gave the protection force a mandate that was biased by definitions thus driving the whole Institution into taking sides in the conflict.

The organization of the Safe Areas was probably one of the most controversial choices made by the United Nations. The resolutions setting up those zones were incoherent and lacked detail as regards to the modus operandi the UNPROFOR was supposed to follow in order to defend Srebrenica and the other areas. A diplomatic quagmire followed this

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<sup>108</sup> Durch William J., *UN Peacekeeping, American Politics and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s*, ST. Martin's Press, New York, New York, 1996. p.230.

decision where intervening countries were more inclined to agree with the concept of safe areas than actually do everything necessary to transform this idea into reality.

This third step of our study consolidates our initial hypothesis that the different stages of foreign intervention kept demonstrating that the actions of the west in Bosnia deliberately aimed to fuel the state of chaos already existing. They used ethnic tensions as pretexts to allow foreign intervention and establish mandates that would allow them to access the region, thus preparing the ground for greater stakes such as the New Great Game.



## **Chapter IV: A Paper Peace**

The collapse of Yugoslavia was definitely influenced by foreign intervention. The previous chapter has shown the extent to which external entities found their way in the Yugoslav quagmire and how the general outcomes of the conflict, from the dismantlement of the federation to the Bosnian war, was a pure blend of cynical brinkmanship for strategic gain led by unscrupulous government officials and their factional support. International institutions such as NATO, the European Community, and the United Nations were also involved, used as tools of the intervening powers to occupy the region and play balance of power in their favor.

One aspect this “manipulation” requires further elucidation; it is essential for readers to grasp the idea that certain powers and belligerents in Bosnia sought to internationalize the conflict by prolonging it to their diplomatic and strategic advantage. In other words, the peace process became hostage to a power concept as individual powers maneuvered to gain clout and influence over their rivals by creating peace plans and cease fires that offered various actors on the international stage in their capacity as “honest brokers”. Therefore, this chapter will examine four major Bosnian peace plans that could have ended the war sooner rather than later; however, great power interventions undermined those initiatives and sustained a conflict that need not have taken place in the first place.

### **A. The Lisbon Agreement: avoiding peace**

The question of the international recognition of Bosnia became a concern for the United States for two reasons. First, as mentioned earlier in this essay, the United States was in competition with an erstwhile ally, Germany and was actually wary of its aspirations

astride *Mitteleuropa*, aspirations that drove Germany to expansion for the first time since World War II. Scholars have given this issue short shrift, and Germany literally got away with a form of aggression against a sovereign state in blatant violation of Helsinki Accords. An independent Bosnia would mean a Bosnia likely to join the European Community and escape the German vacuum. Second, at that time, late 1991 and early 1992 the United States was already preparing for presidential elections. The “horrific events” of Yugoslavia had a telegenic effect that grew in the minds of American public opinion, and officials were well aware of the consequences an unfortunate “faux-pas” would have on the outcome of the election. Indeed, at that time the United States had a significant Croatian minority whose opinion on the conflict could easily alter the order of things as a potential swing vote. Most Croats considered Bosnia an integral part of Croatia. The independence of the country would have been an historic opportunity for Croatia to regain it<sup>109</sup>. Thus for the United States, the recognition of the Yugoslav republics became an all-or-nothing proposition.

The Europeans steadfastly opposed this idea given the instability of the situation in Bosnia which could only augur ill for a potential sovereign state. Thus, with the hope of pursuing their mediation, the Europeans held an independent EC meeting on Bosnia-Herzegovina, with the hope of bringing the three ethnic parties to an agreement on guaranteeing the territorial integrity of Bosnia. The negotiations were led by Lord Carrington and Portuguese ambassador Jorge Cutileiro. Significantly, on March 18<sup>th</sup> 1992 all parties signed at Lisbon (hence the so-called treaty) “a document outlining the

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<sup>109</sup>Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p.196.

political principles of a republic composed of three constituent nations, each with the right to self determination, and of the regional cantonization of its territory along ethno-national lines (laid out on a compromise map proposed by the EC).”<sup>110</sup>

In parallel to these negotiations, the US ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmermann, met with Alija Izetbegovic and suggested him that he rethink decision to agree on the Cutileiro plan. What could be called the US double game was revealed by *The New York Times* in August 1993 where Zimmermann was quoted as saying “Our views were that we might be able to head off a Serbian Power grab by internationalizing the problem. Our hope was that the Serbs would hold off until it was clear Bosnia had the recognition of Western countries. It turned out we were wrong.”<sup>111</sup>

A few days after this exchange Izetbegovic reneged on his decision to approve the plan followed by Mate Boban, Bosnian-Croat leader and Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnia-Serb Leader who represented the two other leadership parties. This gave more time to Secretary of State James Baker to convince (or simply pressure a bit more) the allies to approve the recognition. Paradoxically, United States Secretary of State met in Brussels with Haris Silajdzic, Alija Izetbegovic’s foreign minister, assuring him that the United States was supportive of the EC plan.

The United States was pressuring the European Community to proceed with Bosnian recognition, and given that there were no signs of any kind of agreement coming between Muslim, Serbs and the Croats after the collapse of the Lisbon Accords, the EC simply

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<sup>110</sup> Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p.196.

<sup>110</sup> The New York Times, August 29<sup>th</sup> 1993, p.10.

approved the recognition Bosnia along with Slovenia and Croatia without trying to define the status of three constituent nations. These machinations undermined the Cutileiro accord which experts agree would have prevented the war and considerably decreased ethnic tensions in Bosnia. The duplicitous nature of U.S. diplomacy shocked the Europeans and signaled a new era in international relations.

That said, the plan was far from being perfect. Indeed, as Woodward underlines it, the cantonization of ethno-national parties was revealing a problem regarding the link between “[...] ethnicity and national rights to territorial governance and its denial of a separate Bosnian national identity and political representation.”<sup>112</sup> The amalgam between national, ethnic, and territorial sovereignty was still in the air and clearly reflected in the ignominious failure of the Lisbon accord. Woodward goes further criticizing the United States for its “lack of interest in the constitutional issues surrounding the talks [...]”<sup>113</sup>. The confusion of both Croatian and Slovenian wars was responsible for this, and the obvious misunderstanding of the context of each conflict demonstrates once again that in the end very few efforts were put into the peace process; these were empty diplomatic gestures.

While the Croatian war was about territory, the conflict in Bosnia laid down the question of the very existence of a state properly speaking, and by extension, the question of the existence of a Bosnian people. Jose Cutileiro saw this failure as the loss of a unique

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<sup>112</sup>Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p.281.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid, p,124

opportunity to bring the region closer to peace, referring to the United States as “well-meaning outsiders who thought they knew better.”<sup>114</sup>

The intervening parties were playing their cards in their best interest sacrificing the Yugoslav cause. Sadly, this event spawned a series of peace initiatives built on sand and subject to failure.

### **B. The Vance-Owen Plan: redefining the borders for a better fragmentation of Bosnia**

The disappointment that stems from the failure of the Lisbon agreement was significant and kept the “diplomatic jockeying” between the United States and the Europeans an ongoing and increasingly inimical dynamic. The western powers were still incoherent regarding their strategy to establish peace, and remained committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Given the pace at which territorial division, fragmentation, and ethnic cleansing had occurred, the plan was already obsolete by the time it was announced. It became the last proposal that sought to salvage a mixed, united Bosnia-Herzegovina; subsequent proposals either re-enforced or contained elements of partition. The international community entered the quagmire when the UN refused to respond to Izetbegovic's desperate call for help asking for the deployment of UN troops in Bosnia. Undersecretary General for Peacekeeping, Marrack Goulding, declared that the UN would not be able to

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<sup>114</sup>The Economist, Dec 9<sup>th</sup> 1995, p.6.

carry out such a mission in a context exempt of political settlement<sup>115</sup>. Secretary General Boutros-Ghali also rejected Izetbegovic's pleas and so did UN special envoy to Yugoslavia Cyrus Vance<sup>116</sup>. In short, the United Nations was as reluctant as the great powers to be dragged into the Yugoslav mess because it recognized the political principle suffusing the crisis: that the recognition of former Yugoslav republics was incompatible with the idea of self-determination. The belligerents in this conflict went to war for a principle: the Serbs for a decentralized Bosnian state, the Muslims for a centralized Bosnian state that maximized their political dominance by virtue of demographics--the Muslims were the city people, the Serbs were mostly farmers spread out over the landscape.

The position of the West changed in May 1992 when Secretary of State James Baker declared the situation in Bosnia critical and insisted that the European Community take immediate action. In accordance with the wishes of the United States, the Europeans decided progressively to enforce sanctions against Serbia. In parallel, the United Nations supported the creation of a "security-zone" around the Sarajevo Airport to allow the easy transit of humanitarian air-support. The set of sanctions imposed on Belgrade was clear evidence of involvement by the international community in the Yugoslav conflict. Nevertheless, effort does not always mean success, and the international community

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<sup>115</sup> Burg Steven L., Shoup Paul S., *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999, p.203.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p.204.

suffered one more setback as the recognition of Bosnia definitely eliminated any hope left in the moribund Cutileiro negotiations<sup>117</sup>.

In July, the representatives of the three warring parties (Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, and the Bosnian Government) were supposed to meet in London with Lord Carrington, the mediator of the European Community, but they refused to meet although they did keep the dialogue open by maintaining communication via Lord Carrington. Understanding that the imposition of a settlement by outside mediation would be doomed, the international community resolved to keep the warring parties at the negotiating table. Such an atmosphere led to the creation of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) in August 1992, based in Geneva, and co-chaired by former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and former British foreign secretary, Lord David Owen<sup>118</sup>.

The goal of the conference was to reach a political agreement that would put an end to the conflict but at the same time to safeguard Bosnian borders by pleasing each community in such a way that it would end the fighting through the implied use of outside force, the recognition of sovereignty, and the guaranteeing of the territorial integrity and borders of the state. The weakness of the conference was the absence of any enforcement tool, and rather than promoting dialogue it actually provoked further outbursts of violence.

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<sup>117</sup> Burg Steven L., Shoup Paul S., *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999, p.209.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid, p.211.

The ICFY negotiators tried to come up with a solution to the multi-layered conflict but lacked a key element in this regard: the understanding of the underlying constitutional issue. Legally speaking, Bosnia maintained a double definition of “nationhood”. On the one hand, was what Shoup and Burg identify as the “ethnic definition” tied to the idea of “constituent nation”; on the other hand, was the “civil definition” of Bosnia which depended on its territorial integrity<sup>119</sup>. The negotiators obviously missed this element. The question was thus to find a way to redraw the borders of a state whose geographical definition was a juxtaposition of ethnic, religious, and constitutionally grounded map. The challenge was tricky and very likely not a good omen given the negotiators’ misunderstanding of the situation.

In October 1992, the ICFY proposed a draft that included what were judged the five most viable options for Bosnia. According to Shoup and Burg these alternatives were: first, a centralized state; second, a centralized federal state with significant functions carried out by 4 -10 regions; third, a federal state of three ethnic units, without geographic continuity; fourth, a confederation of three ethnically determined republics with independence; fifth, a Muslim state with the partition of territory between Yugoslavia and Croatia<sup>120</sup>. Vance and Owen based their plan on the second option which they redefined as a decentralized state of ten regions based upon geographic, ethnic, historic and energy and natural resources factors<sup>121</sup>.

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<sup>119</sup>Burg Steven L., Shoup Paul S., *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999, p.215.

<sup>120</sup>Idem.

<sup>121</sup>Burg Steven L., Shoup Paul S., *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999, p.215.



None of the warring parties were agreeing on the proposals extended to them in January 1993; all the delegations offered their own map along with reviewed proposals concerning the political and constitutional organization of the state after resolution of the conflict. The plan was promoting the slow demilitarization of Bosnia and the implementation of a cease fire only three days after the signing of any agreement. Vance and Owen were both confident that the plan would be approved until the Clinton administration stated that the plan would be too hard to implement, that it “gave insufficient land to the Muslims<sup>122</sup>, and that consequently they would not support it<sup>123</sup>.”

The negotiations were even more compromised when Bill Clinton, after few months in office, decided to reexamine the entire peace process and see how this fitted into the American Foreign Policy Agenda. This slowed down the negotiations almost to the point of stagnation. Moreover, the American whims to enforce economic sanctions and take their “lift and strike” policy to trial exasperated the Europeans quickly, and deepened the rift between the United States and the European Community.

The chaotic discussions continued and ostensibly reached the point of signature by the Bosnian Croats and the Bosnian Government. But in the end the Bosnian Muslims refused to commit and the United States paradoxically responded by threatening

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<sup>122</sup>Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p.306.

<sup>123</sup>One wants to recall that to contain the Soviets during the Cold War the United States had sponsored and armed the Mujahidin, an Afghan group opposing the soviet invasion. There were also the same to come to Bosnia to help the Muslim Brothers resist against the Serb assailant. Therefore, it would have been, for the United States, like shooting its own feet not to support the “Muslims” in the Vance –Owen negotiations.

Milosevic with new sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro if by the end of April the pact was not signed. These sanctions, mostly economic, were seen as a complement to political negotiations in the sense that the United States thought that it would be costly for Milosevic to support the war in Bosnia with such restrictions and that consequently he would be more inclined to induce the Serbs in Bosnia to approve the cease-fire and respect the “republican borders”<sup>124</sup>.

In parallel, Russia accused the west of sabotaging the peace process and for its lack of global leadership, leading Russian Foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev to initiate a new conference of world powers. As a result “a joint meeting of the UN Security Council and Western foreign ministers in New York” was set up “to coordinate and devise a new plan of action.”<sup>125</sup> The offer was rejected by secretary of State Warren Christopher who instead convoked foreign ministers from the countries contributing to the UNPROFOR troops (Britain, France, Russia and Spain) in Washington, from which emerged a “joint action program”.

In early June after the negative result of the Bosnian Serb referendum, the Security Council allowed the use of air power to defend the safe-areas leading to the deployment of additional troops on the ground. The United States jumped on the occasion to ask for air strikes against Bosnian Serb forces, a resolution later approved by NATO to support UN peacekeeping missions, a gesture that scoffed at the UN principle of impartiality, neutrality and consent: it also irritated to the nth degree the Europeans who after all had

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<sup>124</sup>Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p.290.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid, p.309.

troops on the ground in Bosnia. During the third week of May, Owen, co-chairman of the conference, pronounced the Vance-Owen plan a failure and suggested the beginning of a new plan with Thorwald Stoltenberg, Norwegian Foreign minister, who had replaced Cyrus Vance after his angry resignation on April 1st.

Thus one can assert that, like the Lisbon Agreement, the undermining of the Vance-Owen Plan represented another cynical gesture to prolong the conflict long enough for Washington to intervene militarily and eventually to obtain favorable terms for its proxy in theater, the Bosnian Muslims. The plan was a disavowal for the United Nations which over-stepped the mark when maintaining its own principles and spinelessly allowed itself to be manipulated by the United States to reach its ends.

### **C. The Owen- Stoltenberg Plan**

The resignation of Cyrus Vance clearly symbolized the death of the Vance-Owen plan but did not mark the end of efforts towards conflict resolution. To the contrary the takeover of Stoltenberg initiated a new phase in the negotiations that started in July 1993 with the three warring factions. A month after the beginning of the negotiations the two U.N mediators came up with a proposal whose map was the main element. Instead of the initial ten “districts” suggested by the Vance-Owen plan, the Owen-Stoltenberg sketch proposed the partition of Bosnia into three ethnic micro-states where the Bosnian Serb forces would be given 52 percent of the territory, the Muslims would be allotted 30 percent and Bosnian-Herzegovina Croats would receive 18 percent.

The plan relied on the same foundations as the one of the Lisbon Agreement, that is to say, the division of the Bosnian state into 3 ethnic states. Likewise, the Owen-

Stoltenberg map was only approved by the Bosnian Serbs and Croats and naturally rejected by the Bosnian government which claimed the Muslim population was denied its legitimate territory. In addition, Susan Woodward explained that the main stake for the Bosnian government was to access the Adriatic Sea and the Sava River on the North. After Izetbegovic understood that crossing Croatian territory (what his request precisely was) could not be realistically attained and he suggested his people to make a smart choice<sup>126</sup> the plan was rejected in Sarajevo.

The rejection of the plan on August 30<sup>th</sup> 1993 led to another global conference in Geneva that aimed to bring peace via the resolution of local conflicts. Unfortunately it was too late for the great powers to take another direction or try another strategy. The Izetbegovic government recklessly decided, at odds with Bosnian Muslim public opinion advocating the end of war, to shift from diplomatic discussions to military actions that, at this very moment, seemed to be the most appropriate way to gain back the lost territories that became Croats and Serbs. As a response to the failure of the negotiations and the shift of policy of the Bosnian government, the Muslim forces, armed by Washington, proceeded on a campaign of ethnic cleansing. Local skirmishes turned into a wider war in the fall of 1993.

Pressured by neighboring countries such as Hungary, the European Community started planning the lifting of economic sanctions and threatened to withdraw their troops given the continuation of the conflict. Countries like France asked for NATO to resort to air – strikes to put an end to the conflict. Following this new step in the peace-process, the

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<sup>126</sup>Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p.310.

ICFY imposed a cease-fire on all three parties from December 1993 to January 1994, a so-called “Christmas truce”. After the end of this short moment of “peace”, tensions rose again culminating with a tragedy that operated as a catalyst on the international community. On February 6<sup>th</sup>, a mortar was fired in an open-air market in Sarajevo killing about 70 people and wounding 200 of them.

The shock pushed UNPROFOR to negotiate a new cease fire for the city, and NATO to issue an ultimatum against the Bosnian Serb Army in order to “end the siege of Sarajevo”<sup>127</sup> by having them remove all heavy weapons present in Sarajevo, under UNPROFOR control. The cease fire created what Woodward calls “a momentum toward peace in the basis of coordination at all levels and organization [...]”<sup>128</sup>. This opened the road to a new perspective on the peace process where by negotiations would be supported by the succession of short cease-fires combined with talks, the proceedings pressured by the menace of air-strikes. This new strategy was called by Special Representative to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Yasushi Akashi, who called it the “piecemeal peace”<sup>129</sup>.

The United States on their side had been working on the Washington Agreement that endeavored to re-create a unified Bosnia as the Bosnian government was calling for, thus affirming a clear opposition towards the work of the ICFY. Washington was also in favor of the Bosnian government military actions during the Spring 1993 confirming that the Serbs were at war with NATO. The negotiations ended up once again in the same

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<sup>127</sup>Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p.314.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid

<sup>129</sup>Ibid

configuration where the Bosnian government and the Bosnian Croats were willing to sign the plan whereas the Bosnian Serbs refused. Understanding the recurring pattern and the risk of a forthcoming deadlock in the peace process, Owen and Stoltenberg suggested the elaboration of a separate committee for negotiations regrouping this time France, Russia, the United States, Britain and Germany to work on the issue that had not been addressed so far in the conflict and prevented any settlement. The Contact Group was born.

The similarities between the Owen-Stoltenberg proposal and its predecessors, the Lisbon Agreement and the Vance-Owen Plan highlighted a recurring failure of the peace process due to a misunderstanding of the inherent causes of the conflict but also the incoherence in the will to satisfy every party while supporting (in the case of the United States) one warring entity in particular, tied to specific national interests. Likewise, the use of the same canvas to draw each new peace plan, that is to say a partition along ethnic, religious and constitutional lines, seems to explain the repeated disappointments. Susan Woodward refers to the faults of the Western approach to the conflict as follow”:

*“Those were: a choice of methods to solve the conflict based on a distinction between places that major powers considered of vital national interest or of significance to global security, on the one hand, and those which only justified humanitarian assistance, on the other; and the lack of understanding of the pursuit of national self-determination and its implications for international intervention, which resulted in a constant tension between the view that the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was a “civil” war among “ethnic” groups and the view that this was a war of aggression by its neighboring republics of Serbia and Montenegro (neither view being correct).”*<sup>130</sup>

She further explains that these problems led to the use of inappropriate tools, that is to say, to the use of instruments that were the ones of another conflict from another time:

The Cold War. The West tried to make of the Yugoslav case a replica of the Cold War

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130 Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p.217.

using the same strategies such as containment. In addition the security stakes for the West and the humanitarian questions that were both present in the Bosnia case required two specifically distinct kinds of efforts that, once merged, would lead to a contradictory response. The West fell in the trap provoking predictable results. Finally, the amalgam between national interest (for Germany or the United States) and the wish to intervene without really taking action was responsible for the slow motion, if not the stagnation of the negotiations. These three elements are the reasons why all the plans did not succeed. It was time for the West to change its policy.

#### **D. An Ideal Partition? The Dayton Accord**

Until late 1993, the attempts to bring peace in Bosnia seemed in vain, and whether the West genuinely wanted peace for the country can strongly be challenged. The accumulation of failures of the peace process led to the creation of the Contact Group in 1994<sup>131</sup>, which changed the international approach towards conflict resolution by promoting communication among representatives of the Contact Group and each of the warring parties. The first proposal of the group was submitted on May 1994 and was, like the precedents endeavors to reach peace, was rejected, initiating the “5<sup>th</sup> round” of negotiations, which, in December 1995, would lead to the approval of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina or more commonly known as the Dayton accords.

Initiated in Dayton Ohio in November 1995, the agreement was signed in Paris on December 14<sup>th</sup> 1995, putting an end to the Bosnian war. The conference regrouped the

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<sup>131</sup>The Contact Groups is studied earlier in this paper

following participants: Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic representing the Bosnians Serbs Interests in the absence of Karadzic; Croatian President Franjo Tudjman; and Bosnia president Alija Izetbegovic with Bosnian Foreign minister Muhamed Sacirbeym and lead by the following: Conference led by US secretary of state Warren Chritsopher and negotiator Richard Holbrooke with the two co-chairmen in the form of the EU representatives Carl Bildt and the first deputy foreign minister of Russia Igor Ivanov.

The goal of such negotiation was to reach a settlement for the conflict in Bosnia but also to work this conflict resolution through the regional balance of power and the historical, ethnic, and confessional background of the area. These accords were predicated on the American strategy that combined political pressures and the threat of military action, and therefore aimed to bring the warring parties closer to a consensus. On paper, the agreement was structured in two parts; first a map, second a constitution.

- **The map: a territorial battle**

The map proposed split the territory of Bosnia Herzegovina in two entities: The Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina (FBiH) that represented 51% of the country and the Republika Srpska (RS) which represented 49% of the country. The FBiH included Croats and Bosniaks divided in ten cantons as follow: (1) Una-Sana (with Bosniac majority), (2) Posavina (with Croat majority), (3) Tuzla (Bosniac majority), (4) Zenica-Doboj (Bosniac majority), (5) Bosnian Podrinje (Bosniac majority), (6) Central Bosnia or Srednjbosanski (mixed), (7) Herzegovina- Neretva (mixed), (8) West Herzegovina (Croat majority), (9) Sarajevo (Bosniac majority) and (10) Canton 10 or Herzeg-Bosnia (Croat majority) whereas the RS was occupied by Bosnian Serbs and was administrated in



municipalities<sup>132</sup>. Such geographic fragmentation had been impossible before 1995 given that the Bosnian territory was dominated by Bosnian Serbs, but after the summer of 1995 Milosevic resolved to work with Tudjman to work on issues which resulted in the map previously described.

Yet, the map was satisfying for Bosnian-Serbs and Bosnian Croats, however, once again, the Bosnian government was reluctant. Irritated by Izetbegovic's ploy, Holbrooke warned him, explaining that if his government was not able to agree, the mediations between parties on the territorial question would be ended. The threat was serious since a few days later Secretary of State Christopher sent to Izetbegovic a sketch for a declaration of failure they was planning to make. The use of pressure turned out to be once again the adequate method since the Bosnian delegation ended up approving the map. This progress made, the negotiations could continue, and the means for such a result was, for the United States, an equivalent of a debt towards the Bosnian Muslims to whom they had promised military assistance in order to defend themselves against Serbs attacks.

Keeping their commitment, the Americans developed the “train and equip” program that supplied the Bosnians with heavy weapons and by extension allowed them to pursue their objectives of regaining control of their former territory (almost all of the Bosnian territory)<sup>133</sup>. Such “underground” agreement between the United States and the Bosnian government was probably what had permitted the signature of the accords, and finally

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<sup>132</sup> Burg Steven L., Shoup Paul S., *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999, p.366.

<sup>133</sup> Burg Steven L., Shoup Paul S., *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999, p.366.

end the military struggle. Nevertheless, it was essentially reinforcing the American status of free rider in the view of the Europeans, thus widening even more the rift between both entities.

- **The constitution: a structure for a new state**

The second part of the Dayton Accords provided a Constitution for the new state of Bosnia Herzegovina. Yet the map had been the most tedious task and the longest to obtain; however, the constitution was crucial for the survival of the state in that it was providing the structural framework of Bosnia and was thus going to be the glue that would (or not) keep the country unified.

As Shoup and Burg state it, Dayton redefined “the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina” as a state constituted by two bodies: the Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska and “institutionalized the political concessions to the Bosnians Serbs that were essential to the U.S strategy for halting the fighting.<sup>134</sup> Because the constitution was recognizing, thus legitimizing the Bosnian Serbs, and giving them the same right and weight in the negotiations, which they never have had before. The constitution established the state as decentralized with only little power remaining in the hands of the central government. The state would be internationally recognized and therefore enjoy an “international legal status.<sup>135</sup>” The constitution also suggested the principle of ethnic

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<sup>134</sup> Burg Steven L., Shoup Paul S., *The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1999, p.367.

power-sharing governance, but the technicality made the process much less power-sharing than suggested.

The parliamentary assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina as established by Dayton was composed of two chambers, the House of the People and the House of Representatives. Both chambers were making decisions based upon the simple majority vote of the members present and voting. The possibility of veto existed with a vote by the two-thirds and was in fact easier to reach than the constitution shows. The problem of such veto was that it permitted each ethnic group to veto one another or with the consequences it implies: tensions in the decision-making process. Ethnicity was defined as the key determinant in the institutionalization of the country. It was the case for political identity representation and voting. As a matter of fact, the presidency consisted of three members, one of each ethnicity.

By using ethnicity as the foundation for the construction of the new state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Dayton constitution institutionalized this principle and made it the base of every decision making process in the country and national institutions. The consequence of such standards would mainly lead to tensions within the government and throughout all the national institutions. From this observation one can stress, once again, the incoherence of the actions taken: institutionalizing the ethnic partition of the country that would very likely trigger tensions; as regards to the initial goal of ending a three-year long war fueled by ethnic struggles. To complete this recipe for disaster it is good to question the efficiency of a highly decentralized state in a peace keeping process. Once again, these are more than enough elements to doubt the genuine humanitarian intervention and the western will to end the war.

These last observations coincide with Warren Christopher's comment dating from February 1993 (2 years before an actual Bosnian state even existed), that Bosnia was “a test case of America’s ability to nurture democracy in the post cold-war world”<sup>136</sup>. The real interest of the west was not humanitarian intervention but rather to shape the post cold war order according to their own interests and stakes. Bosnia was a test case of this new strategy. So, to quote Michael Mandelbaum “from 1993 through the middle of 1995, Britain, France, the United States and Germany were not willing to make the kind of effort necessary to stop the fighting in Bosnia because stopping the fighting in Bosnia was not crucial for any of them.<sup>137</sup>” The idea was never to save Bosnia and bring peace; it was a paper peace that only legitimized a three year extension of the western presence in the region.

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<sup>136</sup> Woodward Susan L., *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C, 1995, p.307.

<sup>137</sup> Mandelbaum Michael, *The Dawn of Peace in Europe*, Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1996.

**Conclusion:**

Bosnia is a microcosm of Yugoslavia in that the political and economic dynamics inherent in the latter were present in the former on a different scale. The result was a surge in ethnic and religious tensions in Bosnia that culminated in foreign intervention. The players on the international stage aimed to reach their own interest by constructing an intricate web of “rules” that empowered them to pull the strings and predict the outcome of the conflict, which ended in debacle. Was the war in Bosnia a natural consequence of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia? No, it was not. This war was the perfect pretext for western countries to get involved and thus to enhance their strategic and national interests. Putting an end to this dynamic prematurely was not affordable in this situation and would have suppressed any valuable, but above all, any legitimate reason for countries like Germany followed by the United States to resolve the crisis because that would have forced them to withdraw from Croatia, and more particularly, Bosnia-Herzegovina. Germany and the United States worked together to dismantle Yugoslavia and yet, after its collapse, they disagreed on how to manage the broken pieces.

These two powers repeatedly undermined peace initiatives from Lisbon and Vance-Owen to Owen-Stoltenberg; that strategy reached its climax in 1995 with the signing of the Dayton Accords that institutionalized ethnic divisions which caused the war in the first place. Tito's cynical policy of playing ethnic groups against each other became a legacy that trapped Bosnia and helped ensure its permanent instability. But why did the powers create an unstable state whose viability the West and in particular the United States had “supposedly” work for? The answer seems to be to ensure that there would be recurring

conflicts in the future that would cast foreign powers in the guise of honest brokers. In 1995, Joan Hoey had revealed for the first time the underlying complexities of this deadly game by commenting on the rationale behind foreign intervention: “the more this happens, the more the actions of the international community will be revealed for what they really are... the self-interested exercise of power by competing states.”<sup>138</sup>

The logic sounds Machiavellian but makes even more sense when we ask why: the Balkans? Well, as Sean Gervasi mentioned in his seminal article “Why is NATO in Yugoslavia?” published in 1996 (Dayton Bosnia was barely a year old): “In fact, there is considerable jockeying for influence and commercial advantage throughout the Balkan” he notes: “most of this competition is between Germany and the US, the partners who tore Yugoslavia apart.”<sup>139</sup> That is to say, the dismantlement of Yugoslavia was planned the same way the Bosnian war was because it responded to the international context and order of that time, meaning the reunification of Germany after the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the USSR. The United States needed to reassert its position as hegemon while watching the moves of Germany in Western Europe in order to prevent a recrudescence of the old *Mitteleuropa*, not to mention isolating Russia and quashing its regional aspirations vis-a-vis the Balkans and beyond, particularly in Central Asia.

Back to Hoey: “Above all, American policy in Yugoslavia has been reactive -reactive not to what is happening on the ground but to what the other world powers are doing at any

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<sup>138</sup> Hoey Joan, “Policy Without Principle: The U.S. ‘Great Game’ in Bosnia”, *The Nation*, January 30, 1995, p.130-132.

<sup>139</sup> Gervasi Sean ‘Gervasi Sean’, “Why is NATO in Yugoslavia?”, Institute of International Politics and Economics Belgrade, *Conference on the Enlargement of NATO in Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, Prague, Czech Republic, 13-14 January 1996*.

particular time.”<sup>140</sup> Therefore Yugoslavia was the opening act of the New Great Game, a drama that cast the Balkans as geopolitical backdrop, a recrudescence of MacKinder's old “geographical pivot of history.” Brzezinski explicitly confirms this pattern in his *The Grand Chessboard*:

*“[...] how America manages Eurasia is critical. Eurasia is the globe's largest continent and is geopolitically axial. A power that dominates Eurasia would control two of the world's three most advanced and economically productive regions. A mere glance at the map also suggests that control over Eurasia would almost automatically gain Africa's subordination, rendering the western Hemisphere and Oceania, geopolitically peripheral to the world's central continent.”*<sup>141</sup>

Nowadays access to Central Asia remains the Holy Grail of modern Empires; the New Great Game is still in play throughout the world, and when we look at the involvement of the United States successively in Afghanistan, Libya and Syria, we tend to think that the geographical focus has merely shifted south to consolidate other pivots as gateways to Central Asia. Far from trying to predict outcomes in the Middle East, especially in the wake of the recent popular upheavals from Tunisia to Syria, it may be safe to surmise that these national struggles represent a foil masking a new chapter in “The New Great Game”.

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<sup>140</sup>Hoey Joan, “Policy Without Principle: The U.S. ‘Great Game’ in Bosnia”, *The Nation*, January 30, 1995, p.130-132.

<sup>141</sup> Brzezinski Zbigniew, *The Grand Chessboard, American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, New York, 1997.p.31

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