THE BALKANS AFTER THE COLD WAR
From tyranny to tragedy
Tom Gallagher

Also available as a printed book
see title verso for ISBN details
The Balkans after the Cold War

At the end of the Cold War, the Balkan states of South-East Europe were in crisis. They had emerged from two decades of hardline communism with their economies in disarray and authoritarian leaders poised to whip up nationalist feelings so as to cling to power. The break-up of Yugoslavia followed in 1991 along with prolonged instability in Romania, Bulgaria and Albania.

The Balkans after the Cold War analyses these turbulent events, which led to violence on a scale not seen in Europe for nearly fifty years. It asks why the Atlantic democracies grouped in NATO and the European Union did not use it’s strength and credibility to prevent the Yugoslav conflict or build an enduring peace that would uproot the power structures of nationalist forces which had fuelled warfare mainly directed against civilians.

Tom Gallagher offers a detailed critique of Western policy towards the region, identifying a failure to create new policy instruments designed to manage the post-1989 crises, and to respond to the difficulties faced by countries that stayed at peace in managing the transition from totalitarian forms of communism to open and representative political systems. By analysing a wealth of diplomatic, military, economic and political evidence, this hard-hitting book shows how the West’s political elite lost its nerve when confronted with the Yugoslav crisis, contributing to prolonged instability in Europe’s most volatile region. This volume follows on from the recently published Outcast Europe: The Balkans, 1789–1989—From the Ottomans to Milošević, also by Tom Gallagher.

Tom Gallagher holds the Chair of Ethnic Conflict and Peace at Bradford University in the UK. He has published widely on the role of nationalism in South-East Europe. Experimenting with democracy and on individual countries, particularly Romania.
Outcast Europe

Volume I: Outcast Europe
The Balkans, 1789–1989—From the Ottomans to Milošević
Tom Gallagher

Volume II: The Balkans after the Cold War
From Tyranny to Tragedy Tom Gallagher

Volume III: The Balkans in the New Millennium (forthcoming)
Tom Gallagher
The Balkans after the Cold War
From Tyranny to Tragedy

Tom Gallagher

LONDON AND NEW YORK
Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

© 2003 Tom Gallagher

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library


Contents

Introduction 1

1 Challenges and crises after the communist era 9
2 The international dimension of the escalating crisis in Yugoslavia 33
3 The war in Croatia and the countdown to the Bosnian conflict, July 1991–May 1992 54
4 Genocide and dispossession in Bosnia and the international response 80
5 The Bosnian endgame: survival amidst tragedy and international rancour 113
6 International intervention in the Balkans, 1995–7: limited goals and capabilities 148
7 Authoritarian rule in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia 175

Conclusion 190

Notes 198
Bibliography 213
Index 223
All of the states located in the Balkan peninsula, with the exception of Greece, had been under communist rule during the Cold War. When East-West confrontation subsided at the end of the 1980s, it did not open up an era of peace and plenty for the region. Instead, authoritarian political forces enjoyed considerable staying power and the scale of economic problems led to a severe decline in living standards almost everywhere. Romania, Bulgaria and Albania were affected by periodic unrest as scant progress was achieved in overcoming a backlog of problems inherited mainly from the communist era, as well as new ones attributable, in no small way, to the misrule of their post-communist rulers. But it was the collapse of Yugoslavia which focused worldwide attention on the Balkans during the 1990s.

Ethnic tensions, usually manipulated by opportunistic leaders from the communist era who were keen to preserve their influence in post-communist times, led to confrontation between several of the main territorial units in the federal state created by Marshall Tito fifty years earlier. This audacious experiment was undermined for many reasons. But its reliance on a flawed system of communist economics produced increasing infighting among communist elites at republican level, which paved the way for the dissolution of the federation. In Romania and Bulgaria, similar policy failures led ambitious rulers to promote antagonistic forms of nationalism as a survival strategy so as to divert popular attention from the abundant failings of the system. This type of opportunistic politician, ready to use nationalism as an anaesthetic to divert citizens from opposing an imposed political system that was failing society, was prevalent across the region. The violent way in which the communist system had been introduced and then consolidated, and the importance accorded to ideology in order to ensure an unswerving adherence to communist orthodoxy, meant that pragmatic figures never gained the influence that they enjoyed in the communist states of central Europe, particularly Poland and Hungary.

The presence of leaders who licensed ethnic intolerance did considerable damage to the international reputation and domestic equilibrium of states such as Romania and Bulgaria. But the reckless manipulation of nationalism proved fatal for the survival prospects of Yugoslavia, a union of many nationalities that needed to rise above the ethnic principle in order to survive. Serbia’s leader Slobodan Milošević was the first post-Tito figure to flagrantly manipulate nationalism in order to nurture his own particular power-base. The resistance from other republics, and the triumph of implacable nationalism in Serbia’s traditional rival, Croatia, paved the way for the violent break-up of the state.
A companion volume to this book, Outcast Europe: The Balkans, 1789–1989—From the Ottomans to Milošević (published in 2001), described in detail the circumstances leading to the collapse of Yugoslavia. It argued that Yugoslavia broke up from within, not as a result of any unfriendly external actions. This successor volume examines the extended crisis from the outbreak of fighting in Yugoslavia in 1991 to the peace agreement signed at Dayton in 1995 and its implementation over the next two years. The convulsions affecting what had been the largest state in the Balkan peninsula inevitably dominate the book, but there is also a separate chapter examining developments in those Balkan countries which averted major internal conflict as they exited from communism. Their ability to remain at peace should not divert attention from the fact that the shared communist history bequeathed Romania, Bulgaria and Albania a series of problems that greatly complicated their efforts to join the already existing community of Euro-Atlantic democracies.

So Yugoslavia unravelled as a functioning entity between 1985 and 1991 largely as a result of decisions taken by internal political actors, not as a result of unfriendly external actions. At crucial moments, the confusion and neglect of well-placed states did not help matters. But Tito’s federal system only had international well-wishers as it entered its twilight years. The international consensus over Yugoslavia receded as it became clear, in the second half of 1991, that the prospects of restoring a united Yugoslavia were increasingly hopeless. The European Community (EC) became a major arena for disagreement about what should replace the broken federation. This is not surprising. The violent dissolution of Yugoslavia was seen not just as a misfortune for the Balkans but as a disaster for Europe as a whole. The conflict erupted when the finishing touches were being put to ambitious plans for monetary and financial union inside the EC, and also for the introduction of elements of a common foreign and security policy. With Russia preoccupied with its own regional upheavals, it was the first time that Western nations were the sole respondees to a major crisis in the Balkans.

As the Yugoslav crisis deepened, the EC showed that it was unable to act as a beacon of stability in the new Europe. Nationalism triumphed over the search for common European arrangements based around concepts of post-nationalism.

In many ways, local insiders wedded to authoritarian methods were able to adapt more successfully to the uncertainty in their part of Europe than the West and many of its local allies. Slobodan Milošević had his emulators beyond Serbia: local strongmen and their retinues who were part-communist and part-capitalist in outlook and who were prepared to experiment with democracy as long as it didn’t threaten their hold on power.

But nobody played for as high stakes as the Serbian leader. Milošević took advantage of the limited attention span and disunity of EC states to manipulate their leaders as the crisis intensified. During 1991–2 EC states switched from an outright commitment to preserving Yugoslavia to supporting the independence of successor states within the previous republican boundaries, ones which met a set of minimum democratic requirements. The major EC players, Britain, France and Germany, were partial towards rival states in the Yugoslav space for a variety of reasons. But before the crisis was very old, it was the world-view of nationalism that was accepted by the EC as it sought to contain the crisis by brokering various peace agreements. Leaders who issued orders that resulted in rape, massacre and terror on a grand scale were treated as respectable negotiating partners by the emissaries selected by the United Nations (UN) and the EC to
promote peace. Forces committed to multi-ethnic arrangements received little attention from international negotiators. They concentrated their attention on those who wished radically to alter human geography in order to promote ethnic separation and partition. Major states and even international bodies such as the UN and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe acted out a charade pretending that political leaders with whom they were in regular contact had no real connection with men of violence responsible for unspeakable deeds on the ground. Milošević’s links with the Bosnian Serb hardliners, and those of the Croatian leader Franjo Tudjman with his proxy forces in Bosnia, were overlooked for the sake of realpolitik.

Such priorities were justified by arguing that the politics of ethnic nationalism had always been dominant in the region. Outcast Europe showed that such a viewpoint was a highly tendentious one: external interference had often given local disputes over boundaries an intensity which they might otherwise not have had, and local initiatives designed to move beyond nationalist infighting more often than not received scant support from powerful external forces, even ones committed to high standards of justice in their own societies.

By the 1990s Western states were no longer looking for spheres of influence in the Balkans. Instead, their primary concern was to seek to localise conflicts in the region and try to prevent shock-waves, particularly in the form of large movements of population, endangering their own security. However, as with their predecessors at previous turning points in the history of the Balkans, when the great powers played a major role in their affairs, the emphasis was on hastily arranged and short-term solutions designed to contain an immediate crisis with little thought being given to longer-term consequences. Britain and France took the lead in promoting such an international approach to the post-1991 crisis. The pursuit of short-term strategies, perhaps exemplified by allowing leaders such as Milošević and Tudjman to act as guarantors of regional peace, paved the way for greater instability in the long run. The supreme example of such short-termism was the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement. Imposed by the USA, which had intervened in the bloodiest of the Yugoslav conflicts, the 1992–5 Bosnian war, when it was clear that its own geo-strategic interests were being undermined by its continuation, Dayton legitimised enforced partition. Rival nationalists acquired formal legitimacy within a state with three ethnic entities: its multiple tiers of decision-making rivalled Yugoslavia in the late Tito era in its constitutional complexity.

Especially in the way the Dayton treaty was implemented—quick elections giving legitimacy to nationalist hardliners and the failure to prevent further involuntary population movements—US-led policy ratified the effects of warfare directed mainly against civilians. There was thus less of a break with the minimalist approach of Britain and France than had appeared at first sight; transatlantic recriminations at the height of the Bosnian conflict had raised real fears about whether a Western alliance centred around NATO could survive for much longer. But, ultimately, despite its own prestige being tarnished and the liberal internationalism of the Clinton presidency being shown to have strict limits, it was not the USA but Europe that emerged as the chief international loser.

Europe’s response to the Yugoslav crisis greatly undermined belief in its own ability to deal with post-Cold War European security challenges in its own neighbourhood. It also undermined belief in the EC’s own ambitious programme of creating a set of
common institutions around which a single European entity would gradually take shape. This experiment in multi-level governance bore certain striking parallels with Tito’s federal experiment in Yugoslavia (although the contrasts were probably just as sharp since the European project was based on open political and economic arrangements which had not been true of Yugoslavia). Suffice to say, West European leaders did not respond with imagination or boldness to a crisis involving intolerant nationalism of the kind they had apparently contained within their own ranks during previous generations. The quality of statesmanship was mediocre, as a succession of leaders showed that the Yugoslav crisis was beyond their capabilities. The temptation to obtain inspiration from international responses to past Balkan crises, rather than pioneering new strategies for resolving conflict, was deeply troubling; partition and enforced population transfers, supposedly discredited solutions from a bygone age, were tacitly approved and they became the centre-piece of various internationally-sponsored peace plans, despite post-Cold War rhetoric placing greater emphasis on human rights than ever before.

There were, it is true, initiatives and gestures designed to challenge apartheid-type solutions in the Balkans engineered by force: the international community imposed tough sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro in 1992 and, in the years ahead, a UN-sponsored war crimes tribunal came into being. There were also a number of international officials who sought to protect the mainly civilian victims of violence and who tried to alter an illiberal policy based on deferring to nationalist elites which had unleashed a whirlwind of violence in the early 1990s. But there was no attempt systematically to coordinate such efforts and fashion them into a new policy designed to avoid the triumph of intolerance in the region: the UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, along with Britain and France, blocked any such new departure.

The first half of the 1990s witnessed more continuity than change in the great powers’ attitude to the Balkans. In Outcast Europe, a ‘limited attention span and the unwillingness to devote energy, imagination and, if necessary, resources’ to overcome a crisis, were identified as the long-term responses of the European powers to a ‘problem’ region. The longstanding Western tendency to see intolerant leaders as being typical representatives of their populations, and to ignore or downgrade political representatives who aspired to higher forms of conduct, were also reflex actions very much on display after 1989. In such a context, hurried settlements which violated basic norms of political conduct were justified because of ‘Balkan exceptionalism’. The search for stability in the Balkans continued to be viewed as flowing from the need to tidy up the ethnic mosaic of a troublesome peninsula: the transfer of populations to create ethnically compact political units was as much in vogue during the early 1990s as it had been in the early 1920s following the break-up of dynastic empires.

This volume examines the political condition of the post-communist Balkan states from 1990 to 1997, and the response of the international community to crises that erupted there, not merely the ones in ex-Yugoslavia but the Albanian crisis of 1997 when Albania looked like becoming a ‘failed state’, and less critical but extended crises in Romania and Bulgaria after 1989. It offers a detailed critique of Western policy towards the region, identifying a failure to create new policy instruments designed to manage the post-1989 crises, and to respond to the difficulties faced by countries that stayed at peace in managing the transition from totalitarian forms of communism to open and representative political systems. A third volume will dwell on the crises mainly in southern parts of the
Balkans after 1997 and the international response to them. Kosovo experienced an uneasy peace during the years covered by this volume and has not been dealt with in the depth and detail reserved for the crisis points in the western Balkans, but its post-1989 trajectory will be closely followed in the volume under preparation. So will the crises in Macedonia and Montenegro, and the changes of regime accomplished in Croatia and Serbia in 2000. A detailed examination of the role of Greece in the post-1989 Balkan crises will also feature in the third volume, with its emphasis on states adjacent to, or near to, the northern border of Greece. Finally, the conduct and track record of international organisations in the region (including non-governmental ones) will continue to be a central focus of attention, particularly as the degree of involvement increased markedly in the period after the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement.

Chapter 1 of this volume, examines the obstacles which prevented those Balkan states able to remain at peace during the Yugoslav wars from making a decisive break with the totalitarian era. It shows how the policy failures of the communist era continued to cast a dark shadow over the 1990s. The way that the actions of post-communist elites adversely affected the life chances of millions of people in Romania, Albania and Bulgaria is chronicled. So is the decision of the EC and other international bodies to concentrate their energies on assisting the Central European states to exit from communism while neglecting their Balkan counterparts.

Chapter 2 shows why the West was unprepared for the eruption of internal conflict in Yugoslavia. On both sides of the Atlantic there was a lack of awareness about which forces were fuelling it, and a reluctance to devise new policy instruments to try to contain it and empower forces committed to a way forward for Yugoslavia based on consensus and non-violence. Yugoslav policy was shaped by developments in the disintegrating Soviet Union which made the West extremely cautious in its approach to the crisis, and unsupportive of the idea of a controlled rather than a violent break-up of the state until the end of 1991. This chapter shows how Western disarray, and a tendency to view the impending conflict in terms of earlier periods of internal strife in Yugoslavia, greatly assisted Serbia’s Slobodan Milošević in his bid to recentralise most of Yugoslavia around a strong Serbian core.

Chapter 3 concentrates on the inability of the major EC states, and the international organisations they then called upon, to contain the first major conflict after Yugoslavia started to dissolve, that of Croatia from July 1991 to January 1992, or to undertake measures to prevent far worse conflict in Bosnia from April 1992 onwards.

It is argued that Germany’s decision to recognise Slovenia and Croatia as independent states was not a critical factor in paving the way for conflict in Bosnia. The way that the EC’s Badinter Commission decided which Yugoslav republics were deserving of recognition, largely on the basis of pressure exerted by individual EC members, is seen as far more harmful. It was the start of a failure to adopt a consistent and principled approach to a conflict which would undermine and discredit EC efforts in the region during subsequent years. Confusing signals about whether external assistance would be forthcoming in the event of a declaration of Bosnian independence further damaged the West’s standing, allowing the initiative to stay with forces committed to using violence to secure their goals. Overall, a limited attention span and a readiness to allow domestic interests to prevail over the best needs for peace in former Yugoslavia became
established as enduring features of the West’s approach to the crisis from its earliest stages.

Chapter 4 surveys the West’s response to the Bosnian conflict during 1992–3, when the worst violations of human rights seen anywhere in Europe since 1945 occurred. The refusal to enforce peace by sending in an international force to end the systematic attacks on civilians known euphemistically as ‘ethnic cleansing’ is examined in depth as is Britain’s role in shaping a minimalist response to the Bosnian conflict. The explanations advanced to justify non-intervention, such as the persistence of ‘age-old’ ethnic animosities, the allegedly irreconcilable differences to be found in contemporary Balkan societies, and the ‘equivalence of guilt’ with responsibility spread across all ‘the warring factions’ are critically reviewed, as is the preference of Western negotiators for encouraging a marathon talks process in London and Geneva and other centres while ‘ethnic cleansing’ and the shelling of civilians proceeded unabated.

The pursuit of a peace settlement which formalised the internal division of territory on the basis of ethnicity is analysed; it required the rehabilitation of Milošević in order to sell it to the Bosnian Serbs but its only lasting consequence was to stimulate a land grab by Croatian militia in western Bosnia with the collusion of Croatia’s Tudjman.

This chapter argues that the disinclination of Western leaders either to defend or enforce their own professed liberal ideals proved an enormous setback for the still sizeable forces committed to a multi-ethnic existence in the former Yugoslavia. Overall, it did immense damage to peace and stability in the Balkans and time would quickly reveal how damaging it was for the effectiveness of international institutions generally.

Chapter 5 examines the second half of the Bosnian conflict when the initiative gradually swung away from Bosnian Serb hardliners who had seized most of Bosnia in 1992. It shows that the Clinton administration in Washington differed from its European allies only over important policy details, not over peace enforcement, which it failed to advocate. The failure of the UN’s UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force) contingent to offer adequate protection to the civilian victims of conflict, despite having a strong ‘enforcement’ mandate for their humanitarian mission, is underscored. So is the role of the international media in making it difficult to conclude the war on terms that would be viewed as a total sell-out for the Bosnian Muslims. The impact of the Bosnian conflict on public opinion at elite and popular level in those Western countries directing policy is assessed, and it is argued that domestic opinion also became an important constraint preventing a minimalist policy triumphing in the West. The continuation of the arms embargo on the Bosnian government had a powerful effect on public opinion, especially in the USA, and brought relations between the two chief pillars of NATO to their lowest ebb in forty years. The chapter concludes by showing how the manifest flaws of the UN mission were laid bare through its failure to prevent the July 1995 Srebrenica massacre, which, nevertheless, resulted in the advantage decisively swinging against the Bosnian Serbs.

Chapter 6 examines the increasing level of international involvement in the Balkans from 1995 to 1997. The NATO-led bombing offensive of Bosnian Serb positions in the autumn of 1995 appeared to represent a decisive shift of policy, but it is argued here that there were important elements of continuity in the new and more engaged policy: the geo-strategic concerns of the USA, and the domestic agenda of a weak US President, Bill Clinton, took precedence over the need to build an enduring peace in the Balkans. No
sustained effort was made to dismantle extremist power structures or to bring to justice their blood-stained architects. The Dayton Peace Agreement recognised the existence of the Republic of Srpska and amounted to a de facto partition of Bosnia. Milošević was entrusted to police a ‘wild neighbourhood’ rather than forced to account for the massive violence he had orchestrated. The chapter shows that despite lip-service being paid to an integral Bosnia, the 1995 peace agreement rested on a division of territory on a clear ethnic basis. A historic opportunity, it is argued here, was lost to reverse the direction of events in the western Balkans away from ethnic exclusivism and hyper-nationalism towards the restoration of a durable peace based on a shared existence and integration with broader European institutions.

The biggest opponent of the Dayton Agreement during its critical early phases of implementation turned out to be the US defence establishment at the Pentagon. It refused to help implement civilian aspects of an agreement designed to allow people to return to, or stay in, their original homes, and also to prevent further expulsions and intimidation. The attitude of American (and also some British) commanders in 1996 recalled their UNPROFOR predecessors who had a minimalist approach to all aspects of their mandate except force protection.

The chapter also examines the European Union’s (EU) disastrous handling of its first-ever peace-building assignment, in the divided Bosnian city of Mostar from 1994 to 1996. It also shows how EU readiness to turn a flawed leader into a guarantor of local stability disastrously backfired, provoking the Albanian crisis of 1997. It was only contained with difficulty and was another example of the perils of short-termism in the region. However, by now there were hopeful signs that the West was willing to promote the integration of Balkan states which had remained at peace into Euro-Atlantic economic and security structures. But the inability of international institutions and agencies to coordinate their efforts in the region undermined such good intentions. Of particular concern was the often unimpressive performance of international organisations entrusted with coordinating a shaky peace in Bosnia.

Chapter 7 examines how the forces of political authoritarianism benefited from the war conditions in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia. Despite representing rival nationalisms, the regimes of Milošević and Tudjman used very similar methods to entrench themselves in power and block the proper functioning of democracy. The readiness of the West to enable them to act as guarantors of the peace at Dayton consolidated their position in the face of huge policy failures. Authoritarian parties in Bosnia benefited from the Dayton requirement to hold elections within a year of the war’s termination, when political conditions prevented effective challenges to the dominant nationalist elites. The flawed nature of the 1996 Bosnian elections is underscored. They amply revealed the poverty of vision of Dayton’s architects, and would store up considerable trouble for the future when unrepentant nationalists defied stumbling international efforts to stabilise the region.

The Conclusion reviews why the Western democracies failed to use their credibility, as well as the economic and security instruments at their disposal, to promote a democratic and peaceful agenda for change in Yugoslavia. It argues that the West was drifting and only able to respond in an incoherent way to the challenges of the post-Cold War era, the most complex of which was in Yugoslavia.

Uninspiring leaders preferred to revive old policies of containment towards the Balkans; this meant accepting the world-view of nationalism and indeed privileging the
architects of ethnically pure states. Such a threadbare policy offered misery for much of the South-East European region and placed in danger the security of other parts of Europe.

In the previous volume I thanked the librarians, immediate colleagues, fellow Balkanologists, conference hosts, proponents of peaceful and democratic change in the Balkans, and friends whose information, advice and assistance with locating materials helped this project to acquire momentum. I would also like to place on record my appreciation for the useful information provided by the Bosnian Institute, previously known as the Alliance to Defend Bosnia-Herzegovina, in particular from its moving spirits Branka Magaš and Quintin Hoare. I am also grateful to Sir Reginald Hibbert and Marcus Tanner for agreeing to talk to me while research for this book was in progress.
1
Challenges and crises after the communist era

The weight of the past

The states that fell under Soviet communist influence or domination after 1945 belonged to two fairly compact regions. Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia were Central European states with a population of 66.4 million (1998). To the south-east lay Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Albania with a smaller population of 55.6 million (1998 figures) (Dăianu 2001:90). Despite being part of the same Leninist social system, there were important differences between the communist states of Central Europe and the Balkans. These would, in no small way, help shape their evolution when the communist era drew to a close around 1989.


There were few checks on their powers even in Yugoslavia with its elaborate forms of decentralisation. Everywhere, political systems dominated by a single personality whose authority derives from charisma or the ability to intimidate or coerce are more prone to policy errors than relatively impersonal and consensual regimes. Powerful autocrats place their own judgement over that of independent experts. Usually they are not obliged to consult with parliaments or cabinets before taking decisions that sometimes have immense repercussions on their own societies.

Each of the Balkan dictators made colossal policy errors which are likely to handicap their countries long into the future. In each country, there was a much larger industrial sector and a smaller service sector than in Central Europe. Heavy industry was promoted on ideological grounds to create a numerically dominant industrial proletariat in what had previously been over-whelmingly agrarian societies. Despite secondary concessions to capitalism, Yugoslavia still possessed an unwieldy ‘command economy’ based around heavy industry and mineral extraction. These were the economic activities promoted in the poorer Yugoslav republics, ones that accentuated their backwardness and gave rise to political problems. The industrial goods produced in the Balkan states were usually not ones competitive on world markets. Basic manufacturing was becoming technically outmoded and it often consumed energy and materials at enormously wasteful rates.
People were treated like pawns on a human chessboard in Balkan communist states. In Bulgaria in 1988–9 Zhivkov was busy driving out members of the Turkish minority who were vital for the tobacco industry. Nicolae Ceaușescu had already sold many of Transylvania’s well-educated and enterprising Saxons to West Germany, thereby encouraging the disappearance of one of Romania’s best collective human assets.

Human capital was depleted by retrograde policies not just in the economic sphere. In many branches of national life people were promoted not on the strength of merit or technical qualifications but on account of their ideological suitability, or sometimes even their ethnic background. In Yugoslavia, recruitment, promotion and the allocation of resources were often based on kinship and localism (Allcock 2000:366). Local and republican-based power brokers built up machines based around their capacity to deliver rewards and concessions to a retinue of clients and supporters and expected compliance in return. Thus, for all its much-vaunted modernisation, Yugoslavia remained a traditional state the bones and sinews of which were clienteles, not working-class consciousness or a commitment to equality. The same was true in the other states of the region, even in Albania, where behind the fanatical pursuit of egalitarianism a select number of families enjoyed disproportionate privileges.

With little warning, the post-communist Balkans simultaneously faced a series of harsh challenges for which they were ill prepared. The transition from closed and authoritarian political systems to open and competitive ones was bound to be daunting; in few countries were there inspiring democratic traditions from pre-communist times that could be used as a reference point. Unlike their Central European neighbours, the Balkan communist states had witnessed few, if any, political thaws which had enabled groups comfortable with multi-party politics to acquire some autonomy from the regime.

Even Yugoslavia remained a regimented police state, despite freedom of movement and greater private ownership rights unparalleled in the communist world. Civic initiatives which would allow citizens to operate independently of the party were simply outlawed. Civil society remained stillborn, along with those political initiatives which might have enabled successful mobilisations against destructive forms of nationalism to have taken place in the 1980s. Citizenship lacked effective means of expression. Collective identities prevailed over individual ones (Allcock 2000:304).

The rebuilding of administrative institutions was also a massive challenge. At its most extreme, in Ceaușescu’s Romania, the central ministries and the law-enforcement agencies reflected the will to power of the leader and his consort Elena, along with their various obsessions. It would be no easy undertaking to rebuild the public administration and the justice system to enable the state to reflect non-ideological concerns and acquire the ability to meet the needs of its citizens. Nor would it be a simple matter to create an economy that absorbed the population in productive and profitable activities that gradually improved their well-being, rather than wasteful ones based on crude and unrealistic ideological concerns.

Yugoslavia faced an added challenge: a crisis of state cohesion. It collapsed into inter-republican rivalry and war as the unwieldy political structures Tito bequeathed his
successors proved incapable of reforming themselves. But it is wrong to assume that the balance-sheet was all negative for the communist Balkans.

Yugoslavia was not a member of the Soviet-dominated Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CNMEA), which encouraged the proliferation of dysfunctional economic systems geared largely around heavy industry. It had already concluded several preferential trade agreements with the European Economic Community (EEC) by the 1980s and no other communist state could claim, like Yugoslavia, to have the largest share of its trade with the EEC (Uvalić 2001b: 175).

Albania, despite the ruinous policies of Enver Hoxha, had many natural resources, enjoyed an excellent geographical position, and contained much of the remaining pristine coastline of the northern Mediterranean, ideal for tourist development. Romania in 1989 had paid off all its foreign debt (albeit at enormous cost to its people) and was the object of international goodwill as a result of the blood spilt in an effort to remove a hated tyrant from power (assets which a far-seeing leader could have used to attract concentrated economic assistance of the kind Poland would obtain in the early 1990s). As for Bulgaria, it bore the scars resulting from years of misrule, but the mistakes committed in the economic realm were less drastic than in Romania and Albania; and the degree of political repression was of a lesser order, at least from the 1970s onwards. This meant that there was a higher concentration of social capital which arguably enabled Bulgaria to avoid some of the mistakes which in the 1990s still greatly retarded progress in its Balkan counterparts.

But the baleful presence of tyrannical rulers did more long-term damage in the communist Balkans than in Central Europe. Their mistakes were on a more grandiose scale than in the other Soviet satellites, where leaders could usually not override their senior colleagues’ views on policy issues. In Romania, Albania and Bulgaria, close relatives of each of the dictators were catapulted into positions of immense authority. Communism based on clans (in Albania) or the family (Romania and partly in Bulgaria) gave their regimes a personal dimension reminiscent of North Korea. In Romania, propagandists eulogised the exploits of the ruling couple, claiming that they had turned Romania into a would-be superpower (Gabanyi 2000). But, in the early 1990s, once it was possible to see beyond the fake economic statistics, a very different picture emerged. With a per capita income of less than $1,000, Romania was at the bottom end of ‘the middle income economies’, in the same league as Morocco, Jordan and El Salvador (Ronnäs 1995:29). Extreme inefficiency in the use of human and material resources meant that Romania, possessing the economic structure of an industrial country, performed like a pre-industrial one, which, in the eyes of at least one economist, meant that it was on course towards underdevelopment (Ronnäs 1995).

Nationalism increasingly compensated for economic failure across the region. Ceaușescu allowed himself to be portrayed as the genius under whom Romania’s national liberation struggle was reaching its triumphal conclusion. Bulgaria also portrayed the communist regime as one that was the culmination of millennial achievements, though Zhivkov had the restraint not to place himself entirely centre-stage. In Yugoslavia, the manipulation of nationalism would occur at the very end of the communist era as the communist party in Serbia was captured by individuals who sought a new lease of life and clean political identity by issuing uncompromising ethnic appeals.
Except for Yugoslavia, the rest of the communist Balkans had consisted of monolithic states based on the primacy of majority nations. Ethnic minorities lost ground as appeals to ethnicity began to drown out ones to proletarian solidarity. The Hungarians of Romania and the Turks of Bulgaria were subjected to full-scale assimilation in the 1980s. In Yugoslavia the decade witnessed the failure of an ambitious bid to transcend the politics of ethnicity. It had been hoped that a pragmatic brand of Marxian economics, involving some concessions to capitalism, would create the right material conditions to enable the Yugoslav working class to be the main focus of loyalty. Instead, rivalry between the different leaderships at republican level began to seep down to parts of the general population, especially in some rural areas where memories of ethnic antagonism in the Second World War had been slow to fade. A genuinely competitive all-Yugoslav election might have enabled the forces committed to a democratic Yugoslavia based on ethnic parity to mount a fight-back against well-placed figures, headed by Slobodan Milošević, stoking ethnic hatred in order to remain key political players. But instead, separate elections were held in all six Yugoslav republics in 1990, which usually gave the initiative to parties who wanted either to take their republic out of Yugoslavia, or recentralise it around their own ethnic group.

Previously, one of the ways of fostering solidarity in communist Yugoslavia had been to emphasise differences with its communist neighbours (King 1973:187–219). From the late 1980s Milošević changed the rules of the game by substituting internal enemies for external ones, with the Croats and the Kosovar Albanians playing the villainous roles. Soon Croatia would be under the control of nationalist zealot Franjo Tudjman, who would depict the republic’s Serbian minority in the way that Milošević’s media characterised the Croats.

The only significant economic project involving large-scale cooperation between two Balkan states had been the damming of the Iron Gates, a navigational hazard on the river Danube which restricted river traffic. Romania and Yugoslavia agreed in 1956 to build what would become the largest hydro-electric dam in Europe. But it was an isolated gesture: mutual trade between the Balkan states was a negligible part of the overall total and often it involved mediocre-quality goods (Georgiev and Tsankov 1994:61). Two Balkan states, Albania and Greece, were technically in a state of war with one another until 1988.

Suspicions about the reliability of minorities or the intentions of neighbouring states were based on an underlying assumption that the state-building process had not yet been completed in South-East Europe. A 1988 conference of all the Balkan Foreign Ministers, held in Athens, was an unexpected development, but it failed to create more substantial regional initiatives in the post-communist era (Vukadinović 1994:192). With Yugoslavia collapsing in the early 1990s, it would have been too much to expect the Balkans to replicate the Central European initiative of the Visegrad group of countries, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Instead, defence of what was perceived to be core national interests remained paramount until the end of the 1990s, when practical expressions of regional cooperation finally started to occur under the auspices of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development-led (OECD) Balkan Stability Pact.

European integration was widely held to be the best hope of recovery for the Balkan states which remained at peace in the early 1990s. But the intensity of domestic political struggles meant they soon fell far behind their Central European counterparts in bids to
negotiate association agreements and entry terms with the headquarters of the EC in Brussels.

From 1991, Macedonia, a new state in the southern Balkans, found itself locked in an acrimonious dispute with Greece, the only Balkan member of the EC. The southernmost republic in Tito’s Yugoslavia, it had been the only one to secede from the Serbiantominated federation without violence. But, at the start of 1992, Greece intervened to block EC recognition of Macedonia even though it fulfilled the conditions set in Brussels for recognition of states that had been part of the disintegrating federation. Greece argued that the retention of the name Macedonia implied that the authorities in the capital Skopje coveted territory in northern Greece known as Macedonia; Macedonia, in the eyes of public opinion and the main Athens parties, was integral to Greek identity and the adoption of its name by its northern neighbour was deemed an unfriendly act. Greece’s obduracy resulted in a blockade imposed on Macedonia in February 1994 and not to be lifted until September 1995 when diplomatic ties and economic relations were restored. Even though Greek actions were felt to be at variance with the ideals of the peaceful resolution of neighbourhood disputes which had brought the EC/EU into existence two generations earlier, Brussels failed to act energetically to restrain Athens. This meant that negotiations between the EU and Skopje to foster closer ties were frozen and the new financially weak state probably also lost out in terms of aid flows from the EU. In April 1993, the UN General Assembly decided to accept Macedonia as a member under the title of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

Macedonia was fortunate in its first head of state, Kiro Gligorov, an ex-communist official committed to Tito’s pragmatic approach to inter-ethnic issues. He foiled Belgrade’s efforts to derail Macedonia’s independence bid and managed to persuade the UN to make Macedonia the scene of its first conflict prevention initiative, the UN Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) being deployed along its border with Serbia from 1994 to 1999. He also helped to keep in check tensions between the Slav majority and the sizeable Albanian minority without conceding to the Albanian wish to be recognised officially as a constituent nation.

In Macedonia, as elsewhere, institutions capable of mediating conflicts had been mostly pulverised under communism. Given the insistence on political conformity before 1989, there were usually no independent-minded figures able to stand above the political battle and elicit consensus from rival contenders for power. Thus, deep levels of antagonism between those who wished a total break with the communist past and those who preferred continuity over change pre occupied all the states, and the stabilisation of democratic institutions was delayed, or indefinitely postponed, as a result. ‘An environment contaminated with guilt and suspicion’ ruled out the cooperative effort needed for economic restructuring and institutional rebuilding to get underway (Gati 1992:67). Instead, there was an emphasis upon creating wealth by well-placed individuals who had been unable to enrich themselves under a system which espoused (though it never lived up to) egalitarian values. Unscrupulous ex-party bosses often promoted nationalist scares to divert the population’s attention from the wholesale theft of state assets. Nationalism proved to be a political currency which kept much of its value, as other political brands from socialism and liberalism to peasantism and civic politics fluctuated wildly in the political marketplace. In Yugoslavia and, to a lesser extent, in Romania, the exploitation of nationalism was a screen behind which party-states were
rearranged rather than demolished. In Albania and Bulgaria, it proved less easy to manipulate nationalism in a bid to delay sweeping change. But here too important elements of continuity with pre-1989 forms would prevent these countries making clean breaks with the recent past.

The whole region faced similar problems due to the intensity of communist rule, the misuse of resources, the elevation of flawed individuals to positions of absolute power, and the absence of mechanisms designed to regulate conflict. But there were important national variations (not just between relatively ‘liberal’ Yugoslavia and its hardline neighbours) which it is important to identify. They may help to show why some countries in the region have been more effective in building institutions that equip them for the challenges of the future than others.

In Yugoslavia, Soviet-style central planning was abolished early but economic competition was discouraged and political interference became a constant fact of life. In Romania, Ceaușescu intervened obsessively in the management of socialist enterprises. Surprise visits were one of his specialities:

he would descend upon an enterprise in a helicopter, and spend an hour or two at the work floor in the enterprise, whereupon he would give detailed instructions as to how the enterprise should henceforth be run and, typically, revise the production targets upwards.

(Ronnås 1995:21)

Government and party officials were switched from one post to another at regular intervals, Elena Ceaușescu being in charge of personnel matters by the 1980s. The aim was to prevent second-ranking figures amassing a power-base from which they could attempt to dislodge him (Larrabee 1990–1:61, n. 11). The legacy of hyper-centralism was alive and well a decade after his fall, with the signature of a city mayor required in Bucharest for the smallest of alterations to a state-owned flat.

In Bulgaria, centralisation was all-pervasive but not taken to such surreal lengths. Zhivkov allowed close collaborators to stay in the same post for long periods. Petur Mladenov, who was instrumental in ousting him in 1989, had been Foreign Minister since 1971. Andrei Lukanov, Minister of Foreign Trade in the late 1980s, was already working to ensure that adaptable communist figures such as himself would remain important players when the state-led economy began to be displaced by capitalism (Kaplan 1998:5).

Zhivkov tolerated a colleague of whom he was suspicious. Ceaușescu crushed anyone with such heretical thoughts. In the late 1980s he was increasingly absorbed with creating a homogeneous ‘socialist’ population living in flats, in the countryside as well as the cities. It would have meant the demolition of between 5,400 and 6,400 villages (Cartwright 2001:99). Heavy industry was valued for its own sake. Plants were established in a county lacking suitable raw materials merely to soak up the surplus rural population (Ronnås 1991:49). Opposition to private investment was absolute. The size of private agricultural plots was scaled down and permission needed to be obtained from the local police chief if a family wished to slaughter a pig for their Christmas table (25 December of course being a normal working day).
In Bulgaria, by contrast, there were several ‘thaw periods’, allowing for economic experimentation and a relaxation of the media. In early 1989, a law was passed allowing a private citizen to hire as many as ten people permanently and an unlimited number on temporary contracts.\(^1\)

Turning to politics, dissidents, who would have been sent into the harshest internal exile, incarcerated in mental hospitals, summarily expelled by the Romanian authorities, or simply killed in Albania, were usually treated more leniently in Bulgaria. Zhelu Zhelev, the philosopher who was democratic Bulgaria’s first President, suffered expulsion from the party and internal exile in 1965, when he submitted a university dissertation critical of Leninist thought. But many of his fellow intellectuals stood by him and he was appointed a senior researcher in the institute of culture in 1974 (Bell 1997:363). In the Bulgaria of the 1980s, there is some evidence that, quite unlike the situation in Romania, recruitment to the secret police was based on ability rather than ideological zeal and opportunism (Melone 1998:90). In Romania, 700,000 informers were employed and asked to tail a minimum number of citizens on a regular basis (Deletant 1995).

In Bulgaria, the failure of different economic reform programmes initiated political dissent. A rich number of dissident groups existed in the years before communism’s collapse, which gave the nascent democracy movement leadership and experience totally absent in Romania. In many ways, Bulgaria’s close ties with the Soviet Union allowed the dissidents to flourish since many were inspired by the reform wave encouraged by the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. By contrast, in Romania and Albania, the regimes there insisted that orthodoxy was the price to pay if the national road to socialism was to be traversed without sabotage by external forces.

In 1987, Bulgaria saw the creation of the Federation of Clubs of Glasnost and Democracy, the Soviet inspiration being clear from the title. Soon after, the Independent Association for the Defence of Human Rights was established, which was soon publicising repressive acts of the Zhivkov regime. By mid-1989, thirteen independent associations and committees concerned with defence of human rights and the environment were in existence. In that year, the Federation of Clubs supported a petition protesting at the attempted assimilation of the Turks, which it described as against the best traditions of the Bulgarian nation (Larrabee 1990–1:79). If a Romanian intellectual had spoken up on behalf of the Hungarian minority, not only during Ceaușescu’s rule but after it, when the atmosphere of nationalism for a time remained all-pervasive, reprisals would have been likely to follow. But in Bulgaria, many intellectuals preferred to be advocates of independent thought rather than peddlers of nationalist untruths.

It was environmental degradation which was the main issue that galvanised the embryo opposition movement in Bulgaria. Ekoglasnost, founded in 1989, demanded an accounting of economic policies that harmed the environment. Bulgaria had increasingly made nuclear power the centre of its energy policy. By 1989, it ranked third in the world in \textit{per capita} use of nuclear energy. Indeed, the extent of its reliance on a single nuclear power plant was unsurpassed in the world.\(^2\) Before Zhivkov’s fall, the construction of a new nuclear reactor was halted by public opposition following the disclosure that the country’s nuclear power plants were located in earthquake-prone regions.\(^3\)

The greatest policy similarities were to be found in the economic sphere. In Yugoslavia, many of the large-scale economic projects of the 1970s were economically
unsound, with republics creating needless overcapacity in the steel-making and other sectors (Bartlett 1991:33). Production was all in those Balkan economies wedded to the overproduction of obsolete goods. In industries such as metallurgy, chemicals and oil, raw materials were imported and produce dumped in third world countries due to the shortage of reliable international customers (Teodorescu 1991:72–3). Albania was outside the international economy but there was the same fetish for employing resources in basic industrial tasks without taking real costs into account (Pashko 1991:129).

The story of the Kremkovtski heavy metal plant in Bulgaria was duplicated in other Balkan states (the Galati steelworks in Romania and the Chinese-built one in the Albanian city of Ebasan immediately spring to mind). When it was completed in 1963, it turned out that local supplies of good-quality iron ore were much smaller than anticipated (Palaiaret 1995:498–9). Nevertheless, it carried on, using 15 per cent of the country’s total energy output and never making a profit.4 Both Zhivkov and Ceauşescu had a fixation with energy-intensive industries despite the inadequacy of domestic energy supplies. But, in contrast with Romania, real efforts were made in Bulgaria to create a number of modern industries geared for the export market: the sale of forklift trucks, electronic hoisting gear and computer equipment all brought valuable foreign exchange.5

Ceauşescu starved the nascent Romanian computer sector of resources, even though Romania had the skilled manpower to do well in this crucial area of technological innovation. Low priority was given to investment in infrastructure, housing, health and scientific research (Smith 2000:546). In the 1980s, due to halting the importation of machinery and equipment to pay off the foreign debt, industry became increasingly obsolete. But funding was still found for grandiose projects such as the mammoth administrative centre in Bucharest, known as the House of the People, the Danube-Black Sea Canal, and yet more steel and economic plants (Ronnås 1991:52). Yet, despite the emphasis on technologically obsolete and labour-intensive industries, unemployment crept relentlessly into the system, 5–7 per cent of the labour force being unemployed by the late 1980s. This was due to draconian efforts to increase the population by restricting abortion, illegal since 1966. The number of babies born doubled in one year alone from 273,700 in 1966 to 527,800 in 1968. When this age cohort, double the size of the previous one, entered the labour market in 1987, the economy’s capacity to absorb labour was diminishing due to the failure of Ceauşescu’s warped economic strategy (Teodorescu 1991:72–3).

Isolation was another negative feature which prevented Balkan states recovering rapidly from their engagement with forms of communism unsuited for local conditions. Because of its close ties with the Soviet Union, Bulgaria was probably the least isolated of the non-Yugoslav states. Romania’s economic ties with the West failed to open up the country to new ideas, mainly because the West had no interest in imposing political conditionality in return for preferential economic ties. In the 1970s and 1980s a gradual expansion of contacts with the West occurred in Bulgaria. Access to Western films, music and publications increased. Tapes and discs of Western music, available in state music shops, were avidly bought by Czechoslovaks and East Germans. Unlike the citizens of Albania and sometimes Romania, ordinary Bulgarians were not punished for adopting Western lifestyles (Drezov 2000:199).

Albania was by far the most isolated of the Balkan communist states. In 1976 the new constitution had banned all foreign loans. Freedom to cross borders was disallowed, in
The country’s population grew at the rate of 2.1 per cent in the late 1980s, the highest in Europe, but the surplus couldn’t be exported (Kaser 2000:177).

**Political transitions: differing degrees of openness and reform**

Following the abandonment by the Soviet Union of efforts to keep the satellite states attached to a common system, Bulgaria was the first Balkan state to feel the impact of Moscow’s radical change of direction. On 10 November 1989, one day after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Zhivkov was deposed by the central committee. The leadership had been split by his crackdown on the ethnic Turkish minority. Islamic religious practices and cultural traditions were suppressed. Violence was inflicted on some of those who refused to adopt a new Slavic identity. Severe fines were imposed for speaking Turkish in public. Riots and demonstrations by ethnic Turks in 1989 had led to numerous deaths. The regime’s claim that the name-changing programme was a unanimous and voluntary act by the country’s Muslims became increasingly difficult to sustain. A crisis with Turkey ensued as an exodus of up to 300,000 refugees from Bulgaria gathered momentum. Bulgaria found itself increasingly isolated on the world stage at a time of momentous change when a retreat into Albanian-style introspection was simply not a viable option (Synovitz 1999).

The removal of Zhivkov was accompanied with respect for legal forms. If it is true that the nature of an authoritarian regime’s demise can strongly influence the democratic aftermath, then Bulgaria, with its peaceful transfer, was off to a promising start (Diamandouros and Larrabee 2000:41).

In Romania, events took a very different turn just over a month later. When the dictatorship failed to contain popular protests in the cities of Timisoara and Bucharest, second-ranking communists mounted a successful putsch. They executed Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu on 25 December 1989, in a bid to show the world that a genuine break with the old order had occurred (and to remove an awkward pair of witnesses likely to testify in any future trial about their complicity with Ceauşescu’s regime). Following ten days of violence resulting in nearly 1,000 deaths, the vacuum was filled by Ion Iliescu, a 59-year-old former leading party official out of favour for the past eighteen years. He obtained the backing of the vast party and state bureaucracy. The National Salvation Front (FSN) promoted a national forum unifying dissidents with party people who had broken with the dictatorship, but it soon emerged as a contender for elected office, committed to change only if it did not undermine the status and privileges of the pre-1989 communist elite.

Next door, the Bulgarian communists made way for a successor body, the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). It contained a greater diversity of views than Iliescu’s FSN. By the spring of 1990, Zhelю Zhelev, the leading opposition figure, was convinced that totalitarianism was ‘finished’ in Bulgaria (Bell 1997:367). By contrast, his Romanian counterparts were vocally protesting that the FSN was intent on maintaining a monopoly of control while paying lip-service to pluralist beliefs. In 1990, the FSN did not hesitate to use strong-arm methods against poorly organised opposition groups whenever their activities seemed to challenge its grip on power. By contrast, the BSP was willing to treat its opponents as partners, provided there was agreement reached on a set of rules that
would guarantee the right of the ex-communists to exist within a new democratic order (Melone 1998:29).

In Bulgaria round-table negotiations started between the main contenders for power, which culminated in an agreement in March 1990 over political and institutional reform. The BSP and its main rival, the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), agreed to support the election of a Grand National Assembly (GNA) which would sit for eighteen months and prepare a new constitution. Regardless of which party dominated the GNA, the approval of the round table was required before laws could be passed. Finally, all parties pledged to promote ‘a democratic transformation in an unforced, bloodless, and civilized manner’ (Bell 1997:364).

The commitment to show restraint would be sorely tested during the first years of the Bulgarian transition. But, nevertheless, the willingness of the main political players to shape the mechanisms of the transition around negotiations and pacts placed it apart from all other Balkan countries confronted with similar challenges. Bulgaria was also noteworthy due to the reluctance of most ex-communists to play the nationalist card to prolong their influence. Zhivkov’s assimilation campaign had generated passions among Bulgarians susceptible to nationalist appeals, as shown by well-attended anti-Turkish rallies in the first days of 1990 (Larrabee 1990–1:80). Nevertheless, the BSP kept its distance from the Committee for the Defence of the National Interest which had emerged to defend chauvinist policies (Zhelyazkov a 1998:176). Its political wing, the Fatherland Front of Labour, failed to prosper when it contested the 1990 elections. Indeed, at elite level, the BSP and UDF cooperated to defuse ethnic sentiment and to channel it in safe political directions (Drezov 2000:203). Once again the contrast with Romania could not be sharper.

Initially, the multi-ethnic character of the popular revolt in some of the Transylvanian cities at the end of 1989 raised hopes that nationalism would not be a defining character of the new Romania. But nationalist indoctrination as a power-conserving tool had been used far more systematically in Romania than in Bulgaria. It is probably no coincidence that Iliescu started to embrace the language of nationalism within a few days of the FSN’s decision to seek a popular mandate in hastily-called elections. A retreat from a commitment to introduce substantial minority rights occurred. Instead, the FSN formed pacts with ultra-nationalist parties led by, and recruited from, some of the most hardline elements of the Ceaușescu dictatorship (Gallagher 1995a: chap. 3). Intellectuals who had been prominent before 1989 on account of their readiness to promote 1930s-style ultranationalism within the communist system enjoyed a rapid comeback. In Bulgaria, there were no counterparts to Corneliu Vadim Tudor and Adrian Paunescu, who would shamelessly praise aspects of the pre-1989 Ceaușescu era on television and in parliament. Unlike Romania, a virulent nationalist media was conspicuous by its absence in Bulgaria.

National elections took place in Romania and Bulgaria respectively in May and June 1990. The relaxation of living conditions following the grim austerity of the 1980s brought the FSN immense popularity. Both it and the BSP could count on large-scale support from the elderly, many rural dwellers, and inhabitants of small towns who disliked noisy electoral competition and were more comfortable with socialist paternalism. (This was also the support base of Milošević’s Serbian Socialists whose 1990 electoral slogan—‘With Us There Is No Uncertainty’—promised continuity as much as change (Cohen 1993:156).)

The UDF in Bulgaria and its much weaker Romanian counterparts lost support when they advocated a rapid transition to a market economy. In Romania and, to a lesser degree Bulgaria, egalitarian values would remain widespread until the mid-1990s. In one Romanian poll, between 70 and 74 per cent of respondents believed that income levels should be almost equal for all, while in an extensive cross-national poll carried out by Gallup into attitudes to the market economy, more opposition was found in Romania to sharply reducing the role of the state in the economy than in any of the countries polled (which included Albania, Bulgaria and the ex-Soviet Union) (Mihailescu 1993:318; Adevârul de Clujm, 14 February 1992).

The FSN enjoyed a runaway electoral victory on 20 May 1990, obtaining 66.31 per cent of the vote. Numerous irregularities were discovered by electoral observers and the European Parliament condemned the conduct of the election (Papadimitriou 2002:124). But Iliescu’s message of social protection and unabashed nationalism was appealing to the vast majority, who regarded it as a sweeping advance over anything they had been offered by Romanian rulers for a long time. He was elected President with no less than 85 per cent of the vote.

The contest was much closer in Bulgaria on account of the absence of intimidation, the higher calibre of the opposition, and the much stronger desire of Bulgarians to break decisively with the immediate past. The BSP got 47.15 per cent of the vote to the UDF’s 36.20 per cent. Foreign observers and the UDP’s own leaders concluded that the election had been fair (Bell 1997:370). Nevertheless, the BSP’s retention of power sparked off a lively protest in Sofia in June 1990. Protesters erected ‘a tent city’ near the BSP headquarters which radicalised opinion and became a vast public forum about the future of the country. A similar manifestation in Bucharest, lasting from April to June 1990, had been crushed when Iliescu summoned thousands of coal miners to break it up. Afterwards, he publicly congratulated a group destined to act as his shock troops during various crises in 1990–1, saying ‘we know we can rely on you. When necessary we will call upon you’.

In Bulgaria, the authorities retreated before the protests mounted by mainly young urban Bulgarians. In August, a compromise in the GNA enabled a long-standing dissident, but a consensual figure, Zhelu Zhelev, to be elected with the support of both the UDF and the BSP In November 1990, fresh student protests coupled with a general strike forced the BSP’s Andrei Lukanov from office. With the BSP in increasing disarray, the UDF agreed to enter a coalition government and calm gradually returned.

Iliescu and the FSN disdained compromise with their opponents and used violence against the boldest of them. It resulted in the freezing of EU-Romanian relations. A pending trade and cooperation agreement was shelved and Romania was excluded from the EU’s PHARE aid programme. In a speech on 14 June 1990, EU commissioner Bruce Millan announced that a deepening of ties would be put aside until ‘the achievement of an economic and political system founded on the same principles prevailing within the Community’ (Papadimitriou 2002:125). Romania’s leaders thus frittered away much of the international goodwill acquired in December 1989 when the world watched the David versus Goliath struggle on the streets of Bucharest between freedom-loving Romanians and Ceauşescu’s goons. After the June 1990 miners’ rampage, Romania returned to being ‘a strange country’ in Western eyes.
Next door in Serbia, hardliners hoping to recentralise Yugoslavia around its most numerous ethnic groups drew encouragement from events in Romania. There ex-communists had successfully defied the winds of change by promoting nationalist hatreds in order to preserve the privileges of the communist elite, helped by the fact that Serbia was the site of the federal capital and that its leaders controlled the federal army. Policies designed to promote ethnic harmony were discarded, and the road was clear for open hostilities to ensue between Serbia and Croatia (see chapters 2 and 3).

In Albania, the political stakes were not as high in a more homogeneous country. But the communist leadership could draw little comfort from the ability of other authoritarian forces in the region to retain power or influence. Hoxha’s brutal efforts to create a viable industrial state had failed. He had bequeathed his successor, Ramiz Alia, a broken-down economy which failed to provide the barest of subsistence necessary to survive for increasing numbers of Albanians. In December 1989 the first stirrings of unrest were centred on the town of Shkoder, capital of the highland north, a region of pastoral agriculture which was reeling from the economic effects of Hoxha’s warped policies. In 1990 signs of political relaxation increased: freedom of worship and travel were restored; opposition parties were allowed to register in preparation for multi-party elections held on 31 March 1991. The ruling Albanian Party of Labour won over 60 per cent of the vote on a 97 per cent turnout. Alia had played a constructive role in permitting reform when party hardliners were demanding a crackdown on opposition (Vickers and Pettifer 1997:62). But during the rest of 1991 and into 1992, deep-seated alienation, particularly among northerners, the young and city-dwellers, resulted in an increasingly chaotic situation. In March 1991, some 20,000 Albanians arrived in Italy on ships seized in Albanian ports. It was clear that, if given the chance, much of the able-bodied population was ready to walk away from a country which appeared to hold no future for them. By the end of 1991, public property (including many schools and health centres) was devastated in an orgy of destruction. People were trying to reclaim property originally in their family’s possession, but in many cases it was a violent rejection of the state. One student offered his own rationalisation of the rampages: ‘The state has been stealing from us for 45 years. Now it’s our turn to steal it all back from the state.’

Amidst the uncertainty over the security of property and attempts at mass flight, agricultural production slumped by 24 per cent in 1991. In 1992 the urban population and some rural dwellers became dependent on international food aid for survival (Kaser 2000:178). The G24 group of industrialised countries provided more than $150 million in emergency aid after an impassioned plea at its September 1991 summit from Deputy Premier Gramoz Pashko (Vickers and Pettifer 1997:72).

Hoxha’s successors finally abandoned power in March 1992. Fresh parliamentary elections gave the Albanian Democratic Party 62 per cent of the vote and, in April, the new parliament elected its leader, Sali Berisha, President of the country.

But how thorough were the political changes Albania witnessed? The old elite had been supplanted more completely than in Bulgaria and Romania: a rearguard action had been less tenacious, perhaps due to the fact that there was so little to conserve or steal. But, arguably, there was greater attachment to the ruthless forms of control shown by the former leadership than anywhere else in the region. Berisha belonged to the medical profession, which has played an important role in Balkan politics since 1989. Doctors in politics have often been high-handed, and egotistical strangers to democratic methods.
Such was Berisha. He soon established centralised control of the Democrats, forcing out most of the co-founders and anyone else who showed the slightest sign of challenging his authority. He brought thousands of supporters down from his home region in the north-east to take up jobs in the ministries and the security services. Alia was imprisoned on corruption charges in 1992 and the leader of the opposition, Fatos Nano, followed him to jail in 1994, after being found guilty of misappropriating state funds. Local elections in May 1994 were accompanied by violent intimidation and electoral malpractice (Duffy 2000:83). The Left, now dominated by the ex-communist Socialist Party, recovered a lot of its appeal due to the failure of the Berisha regime to improve material conditions. On 6 November 1994, voters rejected, by 54 to 42 per cent, a proposed new constitution which would give the President enhanced powers. A crackdown on the independent media followed, but Berisha’s relations with his international sponsors in the major democracies remained unruffled. Albania illustrated all too clearly the tendency in the West ‘to equate a particular leader with democracy and to assume that steadfast support for that leader is the best means of promoting democracy’ (Carothers 1995:23). It would be a policy that would rebound badly on the main international players involved with Albania during the second half of the 1990s.

Privatisation and market reform: a bonanza for insiders

In none of the Balkan states did international agencies or powerful Western states play such an active supervisory role in domestic affairs as in Albania. Where, by contrast, the opposition to ex-communist rule was feeble, this enabled elements of the former ruling elite (the nomenklatura) to vastly expand their influence, especially in areas of the economy being prepared for privatisation.

In Romania, not a few top businessmen of the 1990s had previously been officers in the Department of State Security. On behalf of the Ceauşescus, they controlled the import-export trade, and thus they acquired a close understanding of how the capitalist system worked. Quite a number were able to amass hard currency in foreign bank accounts. In Bulgaria, Andrei Lukanov, Minister of Foreign Trade from 1989 to 1990, had access to hard currency and he prepared the way for himself and members of his network to establish a strong economic power—base in the 1990s. As in Romania, many former secret servicemen found that their knowledge and contacts enabled them to prosper mightily when ‘the hidden privatisation’ of the state economy got under way (Bell 1997:361).

What this involved initially was the diversion of assets from state firms into private hands, something which became a widespread phenomenon not just in the Balkans. A World Bank report summarised how it was done:

Uncertainty about property rights before privatisation allows insider managers to tunnel assets from nominally state-owned enterprises to newly created spin-offs under managers’ personal control…

These opportunities to take advantage of the distortions of a partially reformed economy are available only to the select few, namely those with control over nominally state-owned assets and those with close ties to
politicians able to award such advantages. As a result these gains are highly concentrated.

(World Bank 2002:92)

State companies were looted but their debts were covered by the state until well into the 1990s. In 1994 the amount state enterprises owed the Romanian state was 19 per cent of GDP, and state subsidies to keep these enterprises afloat were another 10 per cent of GDP (Ronnås 1995:25). There were healthy state companies but their profits were used to subsidise the ailing companies, which meant that they were starved of the investment needed for them to thrive in a competitive marketplace.

Such irresponsible credit policies fuelled inflation, which hit workers’ fixed incomes the most. By the end of 1993, real wages stood at only 63 per cent of their level in January 1990 (Ronnås 1995:20). Some Romanian workers were starting to realise that the beneficiaries of Iliescu’s social paternalism were mainly to be found high up in the system, but it would be some time before such awareness would have any real political repercussions.

In June 1990, Iliescu’s then ally, Petre Roman, formed a government which included economists who supported a rapid transition to a market economy. Roman went ahead and announced a series of reforms meant to oversee a transition to a market economy within two years. The proposals included measures to make the currency fully convertible in the long term and to expose domestic enterprises to international competition; the introduction of a two-tier banking system, incorporating a national central bank and independent commercial banks; liberalisation of both wholesale and retail prices; and the restructuring of industry away from ‘smoke-stack’ industries to modern light industry (Smith 2000:548). But Roman’s approach to reform was inconsistent. In 1990 he set up a range of state companies holding monopolies in ‘strategic’ parts of the economy, particularly in the energy sectors. These monopolies, temporarily exempt from privatisation, were based on the regie concept imported from France. Regies, such as Renel, the electricity monopoly, enjoyed major autonomy from the state which still guaranteed their costs. A law passed in August 1990 allowed the administrators of the regies to establish their own salaries. Ten years later it was found that executives in the regies received salaries as high as $100,000 and that average wages were three to five times higher than those in other state firms (‘Romania’ 2000:33). Renel’s salaries alone accounted for 0.84 per cent of GDP in 1999, while the company registered losses amounting to 1 per cent of Romania’s GDP.

The increased autonomy enjoyed by managers who were still protected by the state just accelerated Romania’s economic crisis. Well-placed insiders took advantage of the uncertainty about who owned what to make vast fortunes. Not only in Romania, these nomenklatura capitalists started to acquire enough political influence to restrict entry into the marketplace and distort competition. The poor implementation of a limited series of economic reforms in Romania created a parasitic business class which profited mightily from the patchiness of economic liberalisation. By 2000, EU reports were stating baldly that Romania still lacked a functioning market economy.

In Bulgaria tinkering with economic reform was a feature of Lukansov’s premiership in 1990. The partial relaxation of prices and interest rates created a fast track to wealth for insiders able to exploit the resulting fluctuations (Wyzan 1991:95). Powerful business
consortiums, such as Multigroup, controlled by Lukanov himself and staffed by former state security agents, were soon able to establish joint ventures with state enterprises (Bell 1998:315). Profits were usually privatised but all losses nationalised (Kaplan 1998:6–7). Typically, these enterprises supplied state enterprises with expensively priced raw materials and bought back finished products at below market prices. Corrupt bank officials and civil servants could be found to issue loans to those loss-making state enterprises to allow another round of looting to get under way. Asset-stripping on this scale led to hyper-inflation in the mid-1990s followed by near economic collapse.

Unlike Bulgaria, Romania had not experienced any moment of economic reform before 1989, so far more people believed that the socialist system could be reformed through gradual change (Teodorescu 1991). The commitment to a modified version of socialism was shown in the strength of the trade union movement, which encompassed a larger percentage of the workforce than anywhere else in Eastern Europe. In Albania, there was little faith in state socialism, however it was packaged. Single-industry towns were abandoned as the young sought to emigrate and the old returned to subsistence agriculture (Vickers and Pettifer 1997:71).

The new oligarchies managed to redistribute wealth upwards in part because what they were doing reflected a deep-seated belief that the state should be an automatic provider of economic benefits. In Bulgaria, where the commitment to a total break with state socialism was stronger than in most other parts of the region, most citizens still appeared ready to use their personal connections in order to extract benefits from it. A 1996 survey found that 55 per cent of respondents had no qualms about using their personal connections to obtain such preferential treatment (UNDP 1998). In Bulgaria, the strength of patron-client relations, with the state acting as a universal provider, enabled the BSP to hold on to influence. In 1991 its deputies blocked parliamentary bills designed to expose industry to competitive practices. The UDF failed to deliver a knock-out blow to the Left which many thought imminent, thanks to splits over secondary issues (Daskalov 1998:15); in new parliamentary elections in October 1991, it drew level with the BSP and was forced into an unstable coalition with a third party. In Romania, the much weaker drive for economic reform was halted a month earlier by radically different means. Convinced that defending their trade union interests was equivalent to defending the welfare of the nation, the miners of the Jiu valley returned to Bucharest, at the behest many believed of President Iliescu. Their target was the reformist-sounding government of Petre Roman, which had fallen out with Iliescu, who disliked its market enthusiasms. Roman was forced from office after the miners stormed parliament.

Iliescu had exploited discontent with macro-economic reform to get rid of a younger rival. His behaviour, not just at this crucial turning-point, showed that he was very much the carrier of mentalities and attitudes associated with the previous regime (Diamandouros and Larrabee 2000:42). He refused to use his popular credibility to build and sustain broad popular support for deep-seated economic change. Instead, he took advantage of Romania’s absence of debt to engage in a pre-election spending spree in 1990. Inflation took off and Romania’s credit-worthiness soon vanished. In 1995, still in charge, he presided over another pre-election spending surge which increased the current account deficit and inflation. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), to which Romania was increasingly indebted, suspended its loan agreement in April 1996.
No future-orientated strategy was outlined by a leader who presided over a get-rich-quick strategy to the benefit of his close associates and his party’s economic allies. The direct cost to Iliescu of irresponsible decision-making was low, thanks to the limited restraint on his power and the weakness of intermediate bodies in Romanian civil society that might otherwise have mobilised the losers from those policies behind a pro-reform movement.

Bulgaria was more fortunate in its first post-authoritarian era President. Zhelu Zhelev had been in opposition for twenty-five years and he showed solidarity with the ethnic Turks during the last phase of Zhivkov’s rule. His powers were less broad than Iliescu’s, but from 1990 to 1995 he ruled impartially, refusing to side with the UDF when it went through a phase of rhetorical radicalism in 1993–4, and offering a counterweight to the neo-communist leaders who were restored to influence from 1993 onwards.

In Bulgaria, leadership was also shown by Atanas Semerdzhiev, a military officer who was given the task of depoliticising and reducing in size the state security services. He won the respect of the round-table participants and succeeded in preventing the intelligence world from being a disruptive force in the anxious years that followed (Melone 1998:86). The same was not true in Romania. The 1991 National Security Law permitted no less than nine intelligence agencies which were attached to different ministries or which, like the main one, the Romanian Information Service (SRI), were self-regulating. The sprawling intelligence community became the scene of feverish struggles among operatives and former operatives to retain relevance and influence and, above all, to acquire material wealth. Virgil Magureanu, the head of SRI from 1990 to 1997, was instructed by Iliescu to ensure that no political skeletons threatened his hold on power. He has also been linked to some of the most controversial incidents of 1990 which helped weaken the opposition and promote inter-ethnic strife. But, when his relations with the President cooled, there is evidence that he played a role in ensuring an orderly transition of power to the opposition in 1996 (Vălenăș 2000:51).

In no part of the Balkans did the effectiveness of the public administration substantially improve in the 1990s. Macedonia remained at peace in the 1990s, but the business of government proved to be a holding operation between recurring crises arising from the instability of the region in which it found itself. Long-term plans to improve the state’s capacity could hardly proceed in such a fraught atmosphere. In particular, there was little inclination at state level to respond to the grievances of ethnic Albanians who were denied access to a wide range of public employment and prevented from having Albanian-language educational institutions at university level.

Weak states inevitably produced negative consequences. These included the reduction in the ability of the state to raise revenue, implement proposed economic reforms, and build a broad consensus around reform goals (World Bank 2002:108). Officials from the communist era, very often promoted on account of their ideological suitability rather than their professional ability, survived various political upheavals. Even in Albania, Berisha retained former officials if they showed unconditional loyalty to him (Vickers and Pettifer 1997:94). Low salaries in mainline ministries and the judiciary in nearly all the countries made officials susceptible to bribery and meant that unscrupulous figures looting the state often faced no sanctions other than exposure in the media.

Sound commercial laws and an effective system of financial regulation were required to protect property rights and contracts and enforce the rule of law necessary if a market
economy was to put down firm roots (Muço 2001:45). Nomenklatura capitalists who had gained a stake in state enterprises opposed improvements in corporate governance that would limit their ability to siphon assets into their own accounts. In Romania, medium- and small-scale enterprises were stunted for years due to the absence of transparent legislation regulating their activities. Even where the legislative framework was in place, duplicity and obstruction from within the ruling elite and its oligarchy friends could choke the market economy. Thus, in Yugoslavia, a company law, several privatisation laws, a corporation law and a law on foreign direct investment had already been passed by 1991 or were in the pipeline. However, very often these laws were implemented in a highly selective way, favouring state and private firms close to the Milošević regime (Uvalić 2001b:181).

Owing to timid experimentation with the market before 1989 and the strength of anti-nomenklatura forces, Bulgaria was the only Balkan country to witness the emergence of an independent small business elite in the early 1990s. But the Lukánov government punished it with high taxes while ignoring, or colluding with, speculative businesses operating in the black economy which were able to pull strings to avoid paying any taxes. Lukánov himself switched to business and, before his assassination in 1996, became head of a group known as ‘the red millionaires’, whose economic power ‘rivalled that of the government’ (Bell 1997:391). A succession of weak governments from 1991 to 1996 encouraged an increasingly lawless environment which allowed organised crime increasing latitude in economic affairs. The local mafia was drawn in large part from former members of Bulgaria’s Olympic wrestling teams. They got control of border checkpoints and hotels along main highways, controlling car theft and prostitution. They also set up insurance companies which obliged citizens with assets coveted by them to pay hefty premiums which amounted to nothing more than protection money (Kaplan 1998:6). It would be an uphill struggle to clean up the customs service and regulate the security industry but progress would start to be made in the late 1990s. An added complication was the presence in Bulgaria of Russian mafia groups who used Black Sea ports as clearing-houses for their operations.

In Romania, the impetus for economic crime came almost entirely from within. Whereas the uncertainty of the transition in Bulgaria had promoted graft, in Romania there was a long and dishonourable tradition of diverting public assets for private benefit. The shortage of essential goods in the lost years of communism encouraged a class of profiteers to emerge. Securitate-controlled trade companies placed their commission on sales in foreign bank accounts and invested in goods for which there was high demand after 1989: video recorders, colour TVs, computers and jewellery (Teodorescu 1991:81). There has been much speculation in the Romanian media about which oligarchs gained control of the vast funds salted away in foreign banks on behalf of the Ceauşescus.

Romania’s new business elite was keen to block foreign penetration of the economy during a time when the state was downsizing its role. Between 1991 and 1996 only eleven companies were sold to foreign investors. Of the total amount of foreign direct investment channelled to Eastern Europe and the Baltic States between 1990 and 1997, Romania only obtained 5.8 per cent compared with Hungary’s 37 per cent and Poland’s 20.5 per cent. The 1992–6 government headed by Nicolae Văcăriou, a former central planner who later launched his own private bank, shared in the unwillingness to open up Romania to the global market. From its creation in 1992 to 2000, the state’s privatisation
agency succeeded in selling off only 44 per cent of the state assets it had been mandated to sell off. From 1989 to 2000, only 19 per cent of the state’s productive capacity had been sold off (Şerbănescu 2002:213). If privatisation had been made a priority in the first half of the 1990s, Romania would have received much higher prices for companies it could only sell off at a fraction of the price after 1998; privatisation was pushed in earnest during the last two years of the troubled tenure of the centre-right government. But the collapse of the Russian currency in 1998 discouraged Western investors from becoming involved in countries with economic structures similar to those of Russia.

Banking fraud and political crises

The struggling private sector in Romania was viewed unsympathetically by the banks (Smith 2000:548); whether private or state-controlled, they were responsive only to the demands of the oligarchy and their political backers. As a result, starved of credit, the service sector expanded in Romania far less quickly than in other transition economies.

Bancorex, the successor of the communist-era Romanian Bank for External Commerce, lent huge sums on a discretionary basis to clients of the new regime, and to state companies which needed constant injections of capital to stay viable.13 In 1999, when the Bancorex scandal finally burst into the open, it was reckoned that 70 per cent of the credits issued by the bank were non-performing and would be extremely hard to recover (and, besides that, were, in many cases, a shadow of their former value).14 Low-interest loans advanced in the early 1990s had been devalued for the creditor by the massive rise in inflation during the Văcăriu years and thereafter. Bancorex had been able to claim enormous sums of public money because of the fear that, if the bank was allowed to fail, it could trigger off the collapse of the entire banking system.15 Its dubious banking practices also escaped investigation because of the practice of offering free credit to judges, prosecutors and senior police officials.16

Private banks and investment funds were even less reliable, a series of crashes occurring from the mid-1990s onwards; hundreds of thousands of investors lost everything, but the directors rarely had to account for their misdeeds before a court of law. In Albania, the laws on banking went little further than generalities on mutual contract, which meant that they became an embezzler’s charter. By 1991 legislation for a system of commercial banks and lending institutions was in effect in Bulgaria. But soft credits continued to be issued to politically influential clients who often had little or no capital behind them.

In 1996, Bulgaria experienced a full-blown financial collapse when one of these banks attempted to call in its ‘soft’ loans to avoid collapse, requiring central bank intervention. But an atmosphere of panic led to a run on deposits and, by the closing months of 1996, many banks had collapsed or were under the supervision of the central bank.

Bulgaria had been back under the rule of the BSP since the end of 1994, when it became the first party after 1989 to win an outright parliamentary majority. The BSP was now under the control of younger members of the former nomenklatura (the Prime Minister, Zhan Videnov, had been born in 1959), who, behind the scenes, worked closely with the economic conglomerates whose diversion of state resources was bringing the country close to ruin (Wyzan 1997:89). In May 1996, the government sought to buy time
by denying credits to, or announcing the closure of, loss-making state enterprises that had been plundered by the conglomerates with high-level collusion. But the currency collapsed and inflation soared, far outstripping wages and salaries by the end of 1996. Public outrage forced Videnov from office in December, but ugly protests resulted in serious confrontations when the BSP attempted to hang on to power under a little-different successor. The crisis subsided when a caretaker government was formed prior to elections in the spring of 1997. The IMF also extended a loan designed to restore Bulgaria’s battered credibility on world markets, but on condition that a currency board was set up to oversee the country’s financial and monetary systems.

In the long run, it might have been better for Romania if it had suffered a similar grim financial reckoning. The looting of state assets had possibly been even more widespread than in Bulgaria. But Iliescu and his party were out of office before the worst effects of their economic misrule became obvious. They lost the presidential and parliamentary elections of November–December 1996 because they had been unable to shelter their working-class supporters from the economic effects of their incompetence and opportunism. The post-communists were replaced by an unwieldy coalition of all the opposition parties minus the ultra-nationalists. They lacked the common ground and clarity of vision to confront the Romanian electorate with the scale of the damage done to the country in the previous six years. Emil Constantinescu, the new President, failed to become an effective rallying force for change. Nomenklatura capitalists continued to divert large amounts of state funding for their own private use under the eyes of incompetent and quarrelsome ‘reformers’ who soon lost the respect of the vast bulk of the Romanian public.

In Albania, large financial losses suffered by individual investors in pyramid savings schemes unleashed a chain of events which brought about a temporary meltdown of the state. These schemes were a magnet for small savers thwarted by the poor interest rates offered by the banks and the ravages of inflation. They offered very attractive returns after a period of several months but the high levels of interest could only be maintained if the amount of investors continued to multiply. In Romania, during 1993, inflation reached 319 per cent in the first nine months of the year and an estimated 3–4 million people, one-fifth of the adult population, enrolled in the Caritas pyramid savings bank. Romania had no legislation to protect consumers from a scheme into which hopeful investors had channelled a large part of the country’s liquid assets before it started to default on repayments in October 1993 (Gallagher 1995a:220–2).

In Serbia, pyramid schemes offered by two private banks with close links to the authorities came to grief in a similar way (Uvalić 2001b:183). But in Albania, there were at least two reasons why the collapse of several pyramid schemes in January 1997 led to such a profound social upheaval. According to some estimates, up to 80 per cent of the population had a stake in them. When they collapsed, the losses were incalculable in an already desperately poor country. Moreover, the incumbent government was deeply unpopular, and many believed that leading figures had profited from the pyramid schemes.

Berisha’s rule had grown increasingly arbitrary as his inability to revive the economy had damaged the Democratic Party’s credibility. A law known as the Genocide Law prevented over one-quarter of the Socialist Party’s deputies standing for re-election on account of their pre-1991 record, and ex-President Alija was once more arrested in 1996.
The electoral law was changed to drive smaller parties from parliament. Many journalists fled abroad as a crackdown on the independent, or opposition, media intensified. A climate of intimidation during the election campaign in May 1996 resulted in the opposition boycotting the poll, giving the Democrats 67.8 per cent of the vote.

Accordingly, Berisha and his ministers lacked the popular credibility to ride out the storm when the financial crisis broke in January 1997. In the south of the country, the army and police disintegrated and their armouries were looted. Berisha’s power melted away as much of the country fell into the hands of insurgents. The crisis only eased when he left Albania and a multi-national force, led by Italy, was deployed to restore calm and oversee new elections.

Agriculture: a last resort for victims of collapse

Agriculture was often the last refuge of citizens who had migrated to the industrial towns during the communist era and had lost much of their livelihood either to financial scams or, more likely, due to being made unemployed. By the end of 1993, 92 per cent of agricultural land in Albania had been distributed to private farmers. But subsistence farming was the rule. In no other European rural economy was there such little use of mechanised power and such reliance on human or animal power (Kaser 2000:178). In Bulgaria, a hastily-passed land reform law in 1991 also encouraged the return to subsistence farming with large areas being left uncultivated (Crampton 2000:238).

In Romania, a similarly poorly conceived land reform deepened the country’s economic woes. Despite Ceauşescu’s frantic industrialising efforts, 27.5 per cent of the population were still employed in agriculture in 1989 (Cartwright 2001:103, n. 16). In 1991, a maximum of ten hectares of land was transferred to some 6.2 million claimants able to show that ownership had previously resided in their families. Disputes over ownership and the absence of a land each register impeded the development of a land market, discouraging investment. State companies still controlled almost 30 per cent of agricultural land, some of it the best quality (Şerbănescu 2002:229). These state farms continued to be as poorly run as they had been in communist times, when, despite having some of the best arable land in Europe, wheat yields were significantly lower than in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria (Cartwright 2001:91).

During the 1990s, a sharp rise in self-employment in agriculture was noticeable due to the closure of unviable factories which Ceauşescu had ordered built in the 1970s and 1980s to absorb much of the rural labour force. By 2000, no less than 40 per cent of the Romanian labour force belonged to agriculture but it contributed only 12 per cent of GDP (Şerbănescu 2002:244). Around 45 per cent of rural proprietors still lived in towns and commuted to their farms at weekends. Two-thirds had properties smaller than three hectares in size and what they produced was largely for their own consumption (Şerbănescu 2002:244). In communist times the labour force had been disproportionately located in unviable smoke-stack industries. Afterwards, post-industrial wage earners were crowded into an agricultural sector unable to compete against foreign competition due to the lack of investment and the small size of holdings. Emigration failed to be an outlet for either Bulgarians or Romanians unable to raise a family on minuscule holdings, due to visa restrictions imposed by the EU until 2000 and 2001 respectively. Proximity to Italy
and Greece meant that it was easier for Albanians to enter the EU, albeit usually as clandestine migrants. By 1997, no less than 30 per cent of the Albanian workforce had moved abroad. The remittances they sent home provided a lifeline for thousands of poor families and helped reduce the large trade deficit (Muço 2001:124).

Not surprisingly, Albania’s previously high annual birth rate (3.3 per cent in 1980) had fallen to 2 per cent in 1996. The decline in fertility was also noticeable elsewhere in the region. In 1996, Bulgaria’s birth rate fell to 1.2 per cent (one of the lowest in the world) and Romania’s to 1.3 per cent. The worsening economic performance of these states also contributed to a rising death rate and a fall in the male life expectancy (Book of the Year 2002:539, 562, 709).

It is not difficult to see how the actions of the post-communist elites adversely affected the life-chances of their populations in Romania, Bulgaria and Albania, throwing millions into poverty. But it was not just domestic factors which made the 1990s ‘a lost decade’ for many of the inhabitants of Balkan states that stayed out of the conflicts raging in ex-Yugoslavia. The economic effects of both these and other wars, as well as the Soviet Union’s redefinition of its economic role, were profound.

**External dimensions: Russian introspection and Western neglect**

The Soviet Union had used the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) to try to integrate the economies of the satellite states of Eastern Europe. Soviet energy and raw materials had been sold on preferential terms in order to encourage industrialisation in mainly agricultural countries. But from January 1991 the Soviet Union sold these commodities to its former economic allies at world market prices and it expected payment in hard currency, not barter. Bulgaria was hit badly by the Soviet decision to wind up a socialist economic community. In 1989, over 50 per cent of its trade had been with the Soviet Union and nearly 80 per cent with the CMEA. The resulting collapse in inter-CMEA trade meant that it no longer had outlets for many of its industrial products. This impaired its ability to pay off a heavy foreign debt. In 1989, the debt service payment already amounted to 14 per cent of the value of its exports (Pishev 1991:108). In March 1990 Bulgaria unilaterally suspended principal repayments on its outstanding debt, and later interest payments were suspended as well. Relations with potential and actual customers in the West suffered and Western lines of credit were immediately frozen.

With the eruption of the Gulf War in the autumn of 1990, worse was to follow. Iraq was one of Bulgaria’s main customers. Zhivkov had granted hard currency export credits to Baghdad, these loans to be repaid with oil. But the international sanctions imposed on Iraq negated this agreement. To compound Bulgaria’s misfortune, further sanctions were imposed on neighbouring Serbia and Montenegro (ex-Yugoslavia) from late 1991 onwards. Yugoslavia was not only an important trading partner but the main route to Bulgaria’s trade with Western Europe. In January 1993, President Zhelev calculated that these sanctions had cost Bulgaria between $40 and $60 million a month, officials claiming an overall loss by then of $1.2 billion.17

Romania was hardly better off. In 1997 its ministry of foreign affairs claimed Romania had lost $3 billion due to the UN embargo on Iraq and a further $7 billion
arising from the loss of trade caused by the conflict involving ex-Yugoslavia (White Book on Romania and Nato 1997: chap. 7, p. 6; Monitorul, 18 February 1998). Neither country was compensated by the international community for any of these losses. The nature of the political systems in Bulgaria and especially Romania meant there was little enthusiasm on the part of the USA or the EC states to cushion these economic shocks.

The relationship with the states of the EC held out the most hope for delivery from isolation and economic decline. Initially, the EC was slow to react to the momentous changes. Until the summer of 1989, only a small unit of around twenty people was responsible for the Community’s relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. A first wave of negotiations for associate membership of the EU went ahead with the Central European states in 1990, but not with Romania and Bulgaria. It is easy to see why the EC was disinclined to include Romania, given domestic events in 1990–1 which caused regular condemnatory motions to be passed in the European Parliament. But despite political squalls, there was general agreement that Bulgaria was establishing a genuine democratic system by the end of 1990. Indeed, it was the first country in the entire communist bloc to adopt a new constitution (July 1991). Czechoslovakia, by contrast, was in the throes of breaking up (albeit peacefully), but this did not put back unduly negotiations with the EC. While the European Parliament established separate delegations for the Central European EC aspirants, it grouped Bulgaria in a single delegation along with Romania and Albania, a clear preference for shunting them into a secondary category, irrespective of their contrasting performances (Papadimitriou 2002:134).

The Central European states enjoyed a more effective EC patron in Germany than the Balkan states, which had to be content with rhetorical encouragement from France. In 1992, Genscher, the German Foreign Minister, predicted they would be inside the Community by the turn of the century,18 while France opposed fast-track enlargement because of the threat posed to its own domestic producers, especially in agriculture. France privileged Iliescu’s Romania, Mitterand in April 1991 being the first Western head of state to pay a visit, but the first top-level contacts with Bulgaria did not occur until 1992 (Gallagher 1995a:234). Bulgaria and Romania were excluded from the East European tours of Britain’s Prime Ministers Thatcher and Major in September 1990 and May 1992 respectively. However, unlike France, Britain supported a rapid expansion of the Community, although it showed no sign of any willingness to help pay for it; the total grants made by Britain to Central and Eastern Europe in 1990–1 amounted to 39.61 million euros compared to Germany’s 2,477.57 million (Papadimitriou 2002:10, table 4.3). France’s cost-free promotion of Romania was in the name of Latin solidarity, but was in line with the patron-client type of relationships to be found across much of Latin Europe. It was Romania’s misfortune that hundreds of thousands of Saxons who spoke German as their first language were fleeing the country in 1990–1 in search of a haven in Germany, thereby cutting a potentially valuable link with a country that might have been readier to offer sustained assistance.

Trade languished with the EC. All the states under discussion lacked a common land frontier with any of the major EC members. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary were able to start diverting their trade westwards because of their proximity to the economic heartlands of Western Europe. Relatively unaffected by the war in ex-Yugoslavia, these Central European countries were able to set up a regional bloc known
as the Visegrad forum and later the Central European Initiative. Although it failed to
fulfil hopes that it would pool national economic energies in the way that had occurred in
Western Europe from the 1950s, such an initiative encouraged the EC to concentrate its
aid on countries that appeared to be pressing ahead with reform. PHARE\textsuperscript{19} aid from the
EU going to the Balkans between 1990 and 1996 amounted to 1,650 million euros,
compared to Central Europe’s allocation of 2,488 million euros. Poland obtained 20.9 per
cent of the total compared to Romania’s (which had only a slightly smaller population)
10.91; Albania obtained 5.8 per cent mainly because of the gravity of the food crisis in
the early 1990s (Nello 2001:82).

Poland received development loans and grants from the West in 1990 alone totalling
$4,120 million, 7.1 per cent of its GDP. In 1991 it secured a further $5,573 million worth
of support, amounting to 7.3 per cent of GDP. The Balkan total for these two years was
$1,822 and $1,504 respectively, 1.4 and 1.6 per cent of GDP for all the ex-communist
states of the region (excerpt Slovenia) (Kekić 2001:92).

In defence of Western countries and the international agencies strongly influenced by
them, it would have been difficult economically to back countries such as Romania and
Bulgaria to the same degree as Poland and Hungary, given the weak capacity of their
states to use the funding in effective ways. In Yugoslavia, the quality of public service at
federal level was arguably on a par with that of Poland and Hungary in 1989, and Premier
Ante Marković’s pleas for assistance to drive forward his macro-stabilisation programme
resulted in large credits being extended by the World Bank and the EC.

The need for external finance to cover balance of payments deficits forced Bulgaria,
Albania and Romania in turn to approach the IMF Since the mid-1940s, the aim of the
IMF has been to maintain the stability of the global economy and encourage emerging
countries to become competitive members of that economy. It offered hard currency
loans to the Balkan states in return for measures designed to reduce the budget deficit,
eliminate central production and resource distribution, promote privatisation, and lift
pricing and currency controls. It often found that its local partners were keen to take the
funding and ingenious at finding ways of avoiding swallowing the tough medicine. But
the IMF, for its part, was often unimaginative in its approach to the Balkans, insisting on
conditions such as the rapid lifting of tariffs or the need to raise separate loans at
crippling rates of interest on the world money markets, which scarcely helped them to
reduce their debts. By 1997, total external debt (much of it to the IMF) as a percentage of
GDP was 22 per cent in Albania, 29 per cent in Romania and no less than 91 per cent in
Bulgaria, which, arguably, had suffered the steepest economic losses since 1989 due to
the severance of Russian economic links and sanctions against some of its major trading
partners.

The only breach in the economic isolation of the Balkans was the formation of the
Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region at the instigation of Turkey in 1992. It was
more a gesture of goodwill than the launching of a significant economic zone. Only two
of the eleven members (Greece and Turkey) had convertible currencies, which impeded
commercial agreements and the free flow of capital.
Conclusion

There were a number of severe obstacles which prevented those Balkan states able to stay out of the Yugoslav wars from making a decisive break with the regimented past.

An emphasis on heavy industry and mining had saddled the Balkan economies with uncompetitive industries which polluted the environment and produced largely unwanted goods. Bulgaria, Romania and Albania, to differing degrees, were isolated from the world economy and dominated by an unskilled labour force suspicious of rapid change.

The incumbent Marxist-Leninist regimes were also more hardline than their counterparts in Central Europe. They had penetrated society more thoroughly, and moulded it to their own implacable image. Even when they lost ground politically, as in Bulgaria, adept and well-placed nomenklatura figures were able to emerge as important players in the economic arena. Often, the most lucrative state assets were diverted into private hands and the preference for speculative activity meant that the subterranean economy thrived at the expense of a transparent one employing large numbers of people in productive activities.

Conflict in ex-Yugoslavia greatly retarded trans-border trade in the Balkans and disrupted communications links with developed European economies. Even if the quality of political leadership had been higher, it would have been difficult to overcome the handicap of belonging to a war zone. Moreover, the degree of mutual tension and suspicion between ex-communist Balkan states was much higher than in Central European ones, which ruled out the creation of a Visegrad-type community. Western states preferred to offer practical assistance to countries prepared to emulate the early cooperative efforts of the post-1953 EEC founder members. They held back from getting involved with states which appeared to lack the capacity to implement recovery programmes but were extremely artful at diverting material assistance from abroad into the wrong hands. Such negative characteristics meant that the EU in particular tended to view the region as a monolith, when in fact there were some important national contrasts on display after 1989. Neo-communist retention of power, aided by the manipulation of ethnic tensions, was evident in Serbia and Romania but largely absent in Albania and Bulgaria. The position of political forces intent on rapid integration with Western economic and security institutions was stronger in Bulgaria than arguably anywhere else in the region. But the tendency to view the Balkans in stereotypical terms meant that Bulgaria lacked active sustainers among the Atlantic democracies. The region was more easily understood in terms of the politically inspired rampages of coal miners in Bucharest in 1990–1, or the collapse of state institutions in Albania when the pyramid banks ran out of money in 1997. These brutal and chaotic images defined the region as problematic and peripheral in the eyes of its edgy Western neighbours. But the depth and duration of the Yugoslav conflict would require a more impressive external response to the problems of the Balkans as the 1990s wore on.
2
The international dimension of the escalating crisis in Yugoslavia

Map 1 Yugoslav successor states
Cold War predictability

The Soviet Union’s decision to end its overlordship of a string of states on its western borders brought an effective end to the Cold War. It had found the burden of maintaining a sprawling informal empire stretching from the north German plains to the Khyber Pass in Afghanistan beyond its means. During the 1980s, 30,000 Soviet troops had lost their lives in a vain attempt to implant the communist system in the tribal and emphatically Islamic society of Afghanistan. The ruinously expensive nuclear arms race proved even more destructive to the Soviet system.

The unravelling of that system in the late 1980s came as a tremendous surprise in the West. It is hard now to recall that in 1975, Helmut Sonnenfeldt, Henry Kissinger’s senior aide, had proposed that not only should the West refrain from destabilising the communist world but that ‘it ought actively to promote the preservation of the Soviet order’ (Almond 1994:38).

The idea that the Cold War ensured a certain predictability in international relations, and that it was not worth pursuing it single-mindedly, could not be expressed too vocally. Nevertheless, the Sonnenfeldt doctrine of wishing to maintain borders and forms of authority in Eastern Europe originating from tyranny and the use of force after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 suited the mindset of not a few leaders in NATO countries.

Britain’s Margaret Thatcher and her American political soulmate Ronald Reagan were unabashed Cold Warriors. But many of their colleagues in allied countries lacked their ideological fervour and welcomed the continuity and stability which the Cold War provided in domestic politics. It made the business of politics easier in important respects. Faced with an external threat on the scale of the Soviet one, electorates were usually moderate and predictable in their behaviour. Poorly performing or downright corrupt ruling parties (as in Italy) were not punished as severely as they might have been had the need for national solidarity in the face of an external danger been less pressing. Alternative political voices, such as separatist, communist or radical right-wing ones, found it difficult to challenge the forces of moderation occupying the political foreground. Certain recurring issues dominated politics: the need to promote welfarist policies within a mainly, but not wholly, free enterprise system, and to find the revenue to provide a strong defensive capability in order to repel threats from the East. The Soviet danger also provided much of the momentum behind the need to press ahead with the strengthening of the European Community (EC) and perhaps even create an eventual federation of politically free European states.

Only in Spain’s Basque region and in Britain’s ethnically divided province of Northern Ireland were West European governments confronted with serious internal unrest. Generally, the political agenda did not vary enormously from country to country. Some electorates showed more enthusiasm for privatisation than others or gave more priority to maintaining high employment rather than controlling inflation. But the domestic challenges confronting West European leaders were manageable ones compared with those in the period between the two world wars and earlier ones in the long era of gradual democratisation from 1848 onwards. The mainly technocratic challenges of West European governance in the last decades of the Cold War produced not a few grey and unimaginative politicians. They were at their element in EC summits, agreeing to price
mechanisms and the pace and extent of the next round of economic convergence. But, in most cases, they had never been tested by having to respond to the disintegration of state boundaries or the sudden rise of politicians prepared to use mass violence as a routine way of securing their political objectives.

With few exceptions West European democracies which had possessed colonial empires in the third world had preferred to decolonise as rapidly as possible rather than defy local demands for independence. This experience predisposed major states against intervening directly in Yugoslavia’s internal conflicts; Britain’s experience in India and Palestine also made partition as a means of separating conflicting groups appear superficially very attractive. There was little imperial nostalgia, given the increasing absorption with questions of European integration as well as domestic preoccupations.

There had also been little active solidarity with East European nations which tried to break out of the Soviet orbit. George Schöpflin is not the only informed commentator who argues that, over Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, the West ‘did not do enough’ and effectively ‘gave the Soviet Union a free hand’ (Schöpflin 1990:15). There were still lingering memories in the political class about how Western Europe had been destabilised after the First World War owing to the upheavals in the eastern part of the continent. At least the triumph of communism in much of Central Europe and the Balkans had prevented a recurrence of the nationalist disputes which, in the popular imagination, had greatly contributed to the eruption of the Second World War. Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe and the creation of regimes which lacked popular legitimacy could not be condoned, nor was it, despite Sonnenfeldt’s indiscretion in 1975. Nevertheless, there was a tendency to view the subjugation of Eastern Europe as a permanent state of affairs. No innovative thinking had been devoted to devising strategies suitable for a post-communist Eastern Europe. It would soon turn out that there was no enthusiasm, or ready agreement, for upgrading security institutions developed primarily for Cold War purposes. Nor, after the euphoria of the Berlin Wall’s demolition in November 1989, was there a ‘generosity moment’ when Western Europe showed itself ready to make even small sacrifices so that the East could start to share a few of its material gains.

Edward Mortimer complained in 1992:

> no West European has the authority to demand the sacrifices required from domestic vested interests, notably the farmers and other producer lobbies, which oppose the opening up of the West European market to the most competitive East European products: coal, steel, textiles, and food.¹

A European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) had been set up in 1991 to channel economic funds to the East in order to strengthen the democratic process and promote a competitive economy (Hyde-Price 1996:195). But its first head, Jacques Attali, was complaining by September 1992 that:

The treatment the European Community has reserved for those nations of central and eastern Europe that have been most successful in their emancipation from communism, appears designed to keep them at arms length from Western markets. Rather than being treated as new member-
states of Europe, they are regarded as potential economic rivals to rich Western Europe. Why else should the EC, in the association agreements with Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, have insisted on trade restrictions in areas like agriculture, textiles, coal and steel—the very areas that promise the east its highest earnings in scarce foreign exchange?

It is not the small shrinking economies sheltered under newly born democratic structures in the East who are seeking protection against powerful Western interests. Rather the West is seeking protection against them!2

It would be the French President, François Mitterand, the chief sponsor of the EBRD, who turned out to be most unwilling to allow the EC to waive tariffs on imports from the East that amounted to less than 1 per cent of EC output in these areas (Bideleux, and Jeffries 1998:621).

In 1993, the Czech President, Vaclav Havel, would warn that ‘Twice in this century Europe has paid a terrible price for the narrow-mindedness and lack of vision of its democracies… Democratic Europe cannot afford a third failure’ (Havel 1994:42–3).

**Introspection of the victors**

As Eastern Europe was affected by economic depression and, in places, inter-ethnic tension, the malaise in its western half was seen as extending beyond the absence of innovative statesmen. Stjepan Mestrović, a US-based sociologist of Croatian descent, has argued that a culture of narcissism (first referred to by the philosopher Christopher Lasch in 1979) accounted for the narrow self-interest of the West towards the problems of Eastern Europe (Mestrović 1994:75). He and others have also drawn attention to the advance of post-modern thought, which prefers to substitute competing narratives for fact or objective truth. This theory, critical of the Enlightenment and ‘modernist’ projects ranging from democratic capitalism to communism, had become sufficiently influential in the USA, Australia and parts of Western Europe to have given its name to ‘the post-modern age’. Violence in a collapsing Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, directed mainly at unarmed civilians, would be subjected to ‘the impulses of the post-modern age: disbelief, deconstruction, questioning, and ambivalence’ (Cushman and Mestrović 1996:12).

At the end of the Cold War, Francis Fukuyama published an influential work, at variance with post-modernist assumptions, which took its inspiration from the Enlightenment faith in progress which had previously shaped much of Western thought (Fukuyama 1992:12). He argued that one universal history now operated in a world in which a social system based on liberal democracy and the capitalist free market was unassailable. The Western idea ‘had become universal: liberal democratic institutions provided the norm for states everywhere’ (Gray 1998:151). By 1992, when the scale of state-sponsored violence was casting a deep shadow over Fukuyama’s ‘New World Order’, his response was to emphasise ‘the need to insulate Yugoslavia from larger questions of American security’. (Fukuyama 1992:274).
No innovative thinking had occurred about Yugoslavia as conflict between the leadership in Belgrade and mainly non-Serbian republics and provinces had intensified from the mid-1980s. The preservation of a united Yugoslavia was seen as crucial for a post-Cold War Europe. The rise of a communist nationalism under Slobodan Milošević did not sound alarm bells, nor did his crack-down in Kosovo, nor did the willingness of most of the army leadership to support his bid to reconstruct the federation around Serbia. Yugoslav studies was a poor relation of Soviet studies, into which enormous funds were channelled during the Cold War. An entire discipline called Sovietology, or Kremlinology, emerged but no Yugoslavology accompanied it (Conversi 1998:8). In the West, most academic writing on Yugoslavia was by international relations specialists. They often emphasised international causes as leading to a break-up of the country and as dangers to peace and security (Conversi 1998:8). Susan Woodward, the author of perhaps the most influential and widely reviewed academic study of the Yugoslav crisis during the first half of the 1990s, has argued that pressure from international capitalist bodies on Yugoslavia to transform itself into a pluralist democracy and free market economy contributed in no small measure to the crisis that overtook the federation at the end of the 1980s (Woodward 1995). Internal factors were neglected which greatly helped Milošević. In their published statements, diplomats and policy-makers expressed concern about Slovene and Croatian separatism, but there was little understanding that ‘under Milošević’s stewardship, the Serbs…were the key secessionists’ (Silber and Little 1996:xxiv).

At least for the duration of the Persian Gulf crisis (1990–1), Western leaders had the excuse of being preoccupied by a major threat to stability in the Middle East. Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 detonated a crisis which culminated in the sending of an expeditionary force, mainly consisting of US and British troops, which drove Saddam Hussein forces back to Iraqi territory in February 1991. The victory was an impressive display of Western military might. But the conflict, and its build-up, revealed strains and uncertainties which would influence the Western response to the fast-escalating Yugoslav crisis. Disputes had flared up between the British, French and Germans, and between some of them and the USA, about the nature of their contribution to ‘Operation Desert Storm’ (Woodward 1996a:165). More significant was the uncertainty in Washington about what to do next after Iraq’s defeat. President George Bush decided not to move on to Baghdad and remove Saddam Hussein. Saddam’s apparatus of repression was left largely intact along with his ability to manufacture chemical and biological weapons that, in some eyes, posed as grave a threat to Western security as the Soviet nuclear arsenal had done. Reluctance to precipitate the collapse of multi-ethnic Iraq along with pessimism about the ability to replace Saddam Hussein with a viable successor regime were seen as reasons for American hesitation (Almond 1994:37). However loathsome Saddam appeared to be, he was regarded as a figure representative of his people. James Baker, the US Secretary of State during the crisis, showed little enthusiasm for American-directed democracy-building in a society that seemed to be natural terrain for dictators and fanatics of different stripes. He would display similar pessimism towards Yugoslavia.

Unlike in Western Europe, the crisis does not appear to have caught Washington unawares. In November 1990 the New York Times had reported that ‘US intelligence is predicting that Federated Yugoslavia will break apart, most probably in the next 18
months, and that civil-war in that multi-national Balkan country is highly likely’. David Gompert, a junior member of the Bush administration, argued subsequently that his superiors concluded it was not in the interests of the United States to intervene decisively in this particular crisis because ‘no vital interests’ were at stake (Gompert 1996:140). Interviewed in 2000 after the US did intervene in Kosovo, James Baker showed that his views about the US role in the western Balkans had not changed. He openly doubted that there would ever be a peaceful multi-ethnic society in Bosnia or Kosovo, and stated that ‘there is no overriding national interest, as far as America is concerned, with our intervention there [Kosovo]’:

I don’t know what the solution will be. The people in the region have been fighting each other for many, many, many hundreds of years. It may be that partition is the only solution. But we’re certainly not successful in establishing multi-ethnic democracies.5

The admission that the USA was not very good at promoting multi-ethnic democracies in a world where less than twenty states were ethnically homogeneous does not suggest that the US foreign policy chief at the end of the Cold War enjoyed confidence in the durability of a widespread democratic world order. His tone suggests that this devout Christian churchgoer viewed the politics of Yugoslavia as simply beyond redemption.

The Balkans viewed through a Soviet prism

For Washington, Yugoslavia remained a sideshow during the last months and years of its existence. Once the Gulf War was over, the Bush administration concentrated on preserving the Soviet Union in the face of strong support for separatism in the Baltic states and the Caucasus. Max Jacobson, a former Finnish Foreign Minister, commented that ‘in the dying days of the Soviet empire, President George Bush and the Western leaders preferred stability—helping Mikhail Gorbachev to stay in power—to encouraging East Europeans to seek their freedom’.6 Bush’s preservationist instincts were fully articulated at a speech in Kiev delivered on 1 August 1991. Discussing the strained relationship between Moscow and independence-seeking Soviet republics, he expressed his hope that ‘the republics will combine greater autonomy with greater voluntary interaction—political, social, cultural and economic—rather than pursuing the hopeless course of isolation’ (Halverson 1996:5).

The US administration was persuaded that such a policy would be undermined if it didn’t also maintain its commitment to preserving the Yugoslav federation irrespective of which forces were promoting its break-up. The parallels between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union were seen as very close. They were the only two communist federations in existence, but whereas Gorbachev was a genuine Soviet non-nationalist perplexed by the rise of nationalist tensions, his Belgrade counterpart Milošević was proving a genius at fomenting them.

The Bush line was supported in Europe. When a Soviet crackdown occurred in Lithuania in January 1991, Giulio Andreotti, the Italian Prime Minister, assured the Kremlin that Italy accepted its action (Almond 1994:46). In October 1990, the European
Council’s heads of government summit in Rome, which Andreotti presided over, expressed commitment for ‘the preservation of the unity and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia’ (Almond 1994:44). There appeared to be no readiness on the part of the leaders of the Atlantic democracies to ask whether unity and democracy were compatible in Yugoslavia or whether insistence on unity, almost at all costs, was simply playing into the hands of deeply authoritarian politicians relying on armed might to prevail.

France’s President Mitterand showed how willing he was to condone an illegal power-grab if it could halt the disintegration of the Soviet bloc, after the briefly successful coup attempt of 20 August 1991. In an interview on French television shortly after the news broke, he declined to condemn it, describing the putschists as ‘the new Soviet leaders’ and saying they would be judged ‘on their actions’. According to Radio Free Europe, Mitterand’s statements were ‘generally interpreted as a sign that he was tacitly supporting the plotters’.7

The failed Soviet coup occurred several weeks into the Yugoslav war. The extent of the West’s hostility to border changes, as shown by Mitterand’s behaviour at this time, as well as by the statements of other senior Western leaders in the previous years, was bound to have been reassuring to Milošević and his generals. The British Prime Minister, John Major, told the House of Commons after the Bosnian war had started that ‘The biggest single cause of what happened in Bosnia is the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disappearance of the discipline that that exerted over ancient hatreds in the former Yugoslavia…’ (Almond 1994:43).8 He did not to explain how the Soviet Union had managed to restrain these hatreds, nor has he ever explained how the Soviets could have continued to exercise a restraining role if their state had survived, presumably under the hardliners whose power-grab failed in August 1991.

Milošević benefited from the fact that the West usually adopted a very cautious approach to the idea of altering borders. Indeed the international community has usually been deeply hostile to secessionist efforts and boundary changes. Only at rare moments has the right of small countries in Europe to independence and self-determination had influential champions. Alain Finkelkraut, one of the few French intellectuals publicly to champion the Croatian cause in 1991, has pointed to the disdain in which small countries were held by authoritarian ideologists and totalitarian regimes. He has quoted Friedrich Engels in support of this view: ‘I am authoritarian enough to consider the very existence, right in the middle of Europe, of such small primitive peoples to be anachronistic.’ In the same vein, he quotes from the wartime journal of the French extreme right-winger, Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, dated 15 May 1940: ‘No more Holland. The number of small obsolete countries is shrinking in Europe’ (Finkelkraut 1999:xxvii).

Henry Kissinger’s preference for ‘a world run by a very few all-powerful states’ was widely shared (Almond 1994:39). Edward Heath, the Prime Minister who took Britain into the EEC in 1973, recalls Kissinger saying to him:

Why do I have to go round to all these different capitals [e.g. Paris and London]? I just go to Moscow and I settle the whole thing with one chap. When I come here [to Western Europe], I have to traipse around every little capital.

(Almond 1994:39)
The lofty and disdainful attitude of the leaders of NATO countries to the Baltic states’ bid to restore their independence showed that small countries were viewed as being guilty of sowing disorder in newly liberated Europe (Finkelkraut 1999:72). From a distance, the demands of the Balts or the Armenians and Georgians appeared as provocative as the unruly and sometimes violent separatism of the Basque and Lombard militants which periodically disturbed the calm of Spain and Italy. David Owen, the EU negotiator in Bosnia, would echo these views when complaining about the Kosovar Albanian’s insistence on independence: ‘It’s like talking to Scottish nationalists. These are not people you can do business with’ (Doder and Branson 1999:240).

Leaving aside the centralising instincts of some West European leaders, the West was constrained by the conflicting principles underlying European security. The 1975 Helsinki Final Act, signed by all European countries except Albania and which gave rise to the permanent Conference on Security and Cooperation in Eastern Europe (CSCE), highlighted the lack of international rigour concerning the practical meaning of self-determination all too clearly (Woodward 1995:165; Silber and Little 1996:161). It laid down that ‘inter national borders should not be altered through the use of force and that any alteration should be voluntary’ (Steinberg 1994:254). But an accord meant to be the bedrock of European stability (and its successor the Paris Charter of 1990) proved to be wanting when Serbia was unwilling to agree constitutional changes in Yugoslavia that would allow two of its constituent members, Slovenia and Croatia, to secede. The Yugoslav crisis exposed ‘the tensions between stability based on existing borders and non-interference in internal affairs, on the one hand, and the broad commitment to self-determination on the other’ (Steinberg 1994:269).

Preceding their declarations of independence in June 1991, the only state prepared to act as a strong advocate of the Slovene and Croatian cause was Austria. It was handicapped by its non-membership of the EC and NATO, and also by the fact that, as an empire decades previously, it had possessed much of what later became Yugoslavia. Alois Mock, the Foreign Minister in Vienna, consistently tried to raise awareness of the impending explosion a few hours’ drive south of his capital, but he was disregarded in other Western capitals.

At the start of the 1990s, the Iron Curtain appeared to be being replaced by ‘an indifference curtain’. Central European states had to be kept at arms’ length because of their capacity to disrupt Western markets. But the Balkan lands were seen as dangerous because of primitive attitudes and behaviour patterns. Sir Peter Hall, British ambassador to Belgrade at the start of the conflict, told John Major: ‘Prime Minister’ the first thing you have to know about these people is that they like going around cutting each other’s heads off’ (Seldon and Baston 1997:556). The view that desperate or criminally minded leaders simply reflected the outlook of the populations they ruled soon became an article of faith for leading Western statesmen. Henry Kissinger, writing in 1999, would declare:

Ethnic conflict has been endemic in the Balkans for centuries. Waves of conflict have concealed divisions between ethnic groups and religions... Through the centuries these conflicts have been fought with unparalleled ferocity because none of the populations has any experience with—and essentially no belief in—Western concepts of toleration... Milošević is less the cause of the conflict in Kosovo than the expression of it...
Until events such as the siege of Sarajevo and concentration camps in Bosnia horrified Western public opinion, the aggression begun in Slovenia and Croatia failed to rouse civil society in countries such as Britain and France. Alain Finkelkraut has contrasted the outrage in France which greeted the declaration of martial law in Poland in 1981 with the low-key response to the far more violent state-sponsored actions in Croatia:

In the days following 13 December 1981, all our intellectuals had denounced at once the coup d’etat in Poland and the complacency or temporising of French politicians. Let’s remember the unanimously indignant reaction to the declaration made by Claude Cheysson, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, ‘Of course, we shall do nothing’. During the years that followed, we spared no support for the Polish struggle for their freedom. Had Slovenia and Croatia benefited today from the same fervour that just recently supported Poland, I would probably not have given this cause so much of my time and energy. The aggression had to reach Bosnia-Herzegovina for us to see a little sympathy towards the victims. But neither the war imposed on Croatia, the razed villages, and cities, the occupation of a third of its territory, nor the displacement of populations, not one of those atrocious facts shocked anyone who had been moved to act because of the state of siege imposed upon Poland.

(Finkelkraut 1999:13)

Anglo American complacency

Given the pronouncements of Western ambassadors, there is little sign that Foreign Ministers in Western Europe were being kept informed about the rapidity with which the situation was deteriorating in Yugoslavia during the last years of its existence. In his memoirs, John Major wrote: ‘The conflict in Bosnia …took us almost unawares… Its roots were bewildering’ (Major 1999:532). If British Embassy staff had been encouraged to circulate beyond the Yugoslav capital on a regular basis, high-level ignorance about the worst conflict to erupt in Europe since 1945 might have been dented. As it was, even the undiluted chauvinist views appearing on Serbian television news and in much of the print media do not appear to have rung alarm bells. The tendency of British ambassadors in Yugoslavia to rely on information from Belgrade sources normally representing a Serbian viewpoint has prompted one retired head of the British Foreign Office, Sir Reginald Hibbert, to write a pamphlet entitled ‘Why are British ambassadors at Belgrade pro-Serb?’ A successor as Foreign Office head, Sir John Coles, has suggested that the lack of strategic thinking in the Foreign Office can partly account for the British débâcle over Bosnia:

We were trying to do too much of everything—and the casualty was policy. I believe that if we had more time and better mechanisms for strategic thinking, policy would have been better conceived. We would
have addressed the fundamental issues arising from the disintegration of Yugoslavia more effectively.

(Coles 2000:205)

Cutbacks in departments such as the East Adriatic one (covering Yugoslavia) also meant that Britain had fewer diplomats permanently on the ground in the early 1990s than twenty years previously (Coles 2000:147). The lack of high-grade information from well-informed diplomats provided opportunities for informants with an engaged viewpoint to try to shape the perceptions of policy-makers. A pro-Serb outlook was already to be found in MI6, the foreign intelligence service and the Conservative Party. In the mid—1990s, alarmed at the amount of sympathy for the Bosnian cause among the British public, MI6 tried to alter perceptions by planting articles in the British press by agents writing under pseudonyms.11 Beforehand, the well known consultancy firm run by Westminster lobbyist Ian Greer had obtained £96,250 from a Serbian source in Belgrade at the highest level. Parties and receptions were held at Westminster at which supporters of the Serbian political cause were able to mingle with MPs from all parties (Hodge 1999:11–12). The authors of an exposé on how lobbyists such as Greer trafficked influences and favours during the Major premiership have argued that he was being paid to reinforce latent sympathy for the Serbian cause (Leigh and Vulliamy 1997:110).12 Certainly, Milošević would not have been the only head of an authoritarian regime to try to shape the Western democratic process to his own liking; the inability of shrinking party memberships to provide the financial support that major parties required for their election campaigns opened up a space which enabled regimes such as the one in Peking to fund top political contenders in countries such as the USA.

Belgrade-based Serbs were not the only protagonists in the Yugoslav conflict who would try to mobilise support in Western countries in order to win the ear of policy-makers unsure of how to respond to the Balkan conflict. But, as the war was incubating, they may have enjoyed a crucial advantage in Britain due to the initial weakness of alternative viewpoints. Until after fighting erupted in Slovenia, John Major was still prepared to say that ‘the first prize is to hold together the Federation in Yugoslavia’ (Silber and Little 1996:175). On 27 June 1991, Mark Lennox-Boyd, the British Foreign Office minister with responsibility for the Balkans, told the House of Commons that though ‘the government would deplore the use of force… I must add however that the Yugoslav federal army might have under the constitution a role in restoring order’ (Almond 1994:13). Such a statement was made when there was already abundant evidence that the Yugoslav federal army (JNA) had evolved from a multi-national force to a Serbian army under Milošević’s direct control (Mesić 2001:7). In August 1990, it had aligned itself openly with hardline Serbs in the Knin area of Croatia by blocking access to the region by Croatian police instructed to re-establish Zagreb’s control over it (Bennett 1995:131). In November 1990 the JNA’s senior leaders came together with unrepentant civilian communists to form the League of Communists—Movement for Yugoslavia, a sign that the political views of the upper echelons of the army reflected many of those held by Milošević and his supporters (Bennett 1995:133).

The tendency to view Slovenia and Croatia as the chief instigators of the instability allowed optimistic views about the constructive role of the army to linger on long after
any supporting evidence had effectively vanished. As late as 31 December 1990, Gianni de Michaelis, the Italian Foreign Minister, bluntly warned the leaders of both republics that only a ‘united’ Yugoslavia could hope to enter a forthcoming ‘united Europe’ (Almond 1994:46). In May 1991, with the crisis much further advanced, the US government spoke in a similar vein. The State Department issued a statement at the end of the month opposing any move to turn republican frontiers into international boundaries, supporting the ‘territorial integrity of Yugoslavia within its present borders’, and declaring that ‘the US shall not encourage or reward secession’ (Almond 1994:40). There is no evidence of any concern on the part of the USA or its allies about how such emphatically pro-Yugoslav statements would be interpreted in Belgrade as Milošević was effectively goading his opponents to declare independence (Bennett 1995:14).

Blaming the Germans

Germany was the European power which had the longest land frontier with the former communist Eastern bloc, and it appeared to be most vulnerable to upheavals on the other side of the former iron curtain. But it endorsed the position of its NATO partners on the Yugoslav crisis throughout the first half of 1991 and beyond. However, the sudden unification of West and East Germany, accompanied within a year by the collapse of the communist DDR regime in October 1989, was unsettling above all to Bonn’s Western allies. Mitterand feared the emergence of a central Europe (Mitteleuropa) under German tutelage and was persuaded that the break-up of Yugoslavia was a crucial step in that direction (Tardy 1999:119–20). Gorbachev’s Russia appeared to have less concern about a supposed German domination of Central Europe than allies such as Britain or France. Both their leaders opposed early unification. They were faced with the sudden realisation that, in terms of land mass (349,520 sq km) and inhabitants (90,767,591), Germany was now the dominant member of the EC (Conversi 1998:38). The fact that German unification was accomplished unilaterally without a formal treaty with the Second World War Allied powers which had vanquished Nazidom bred resentment. Nicholas Ridley, a senior British government minister, had to resign in 1990 for publicly declaring his belief that Germany planned to ‘take over Europe’ (Conversi 1998:26). In the past, Britain and France had been able to use psychological pressure (such as thinly veiled warnings about Germany’s Nazi past) to prevent Bonn from taking a separate position on security issues (Conversi 1998:50). It was noted that German leaders spoke about ‘the victory of the principle of self-determination of peoples as an act of democratic will’ (Woodward 1995:153). A unification movement which had resulted in most Germans uniting in one state might have given encouragement to those Serbs who were pressing for a re-ordered Yugoslavia which placed all Serbs in the same territorial entity. Instead, Belgrade began to argue that Germany was throwing its weight behind the secession of north Yugoslav republics in order to expand its influence south-eastwards, something that had become an article of faith for Milošević by 1993 (Cohen 1993:283).

Milošević had very good cause to promote the idea that the impetus for the break-up of Yugoslavia was coming from beyond its borders, since this drew attention away from his own actions. Austria and the Vatican were also frequently added as accomplices in a Catholic conspiracy to suborn Yugoslavia (Woodward 1996a:163). But whereas Austria
had been engaged in a fruitless awareness-raising effort which had more in common with conflict prevention than conspiracy, Germany had stayed fully in line with its Western partners. Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the Foreign Minister, spoke against a Yugoslav break-up five days before the outbreak of fighting in Slovenia (Simms 2001:18). As the crisis escalated, Germany supported each EC communiqué and, as late as 4 September 1991, Chancellor Helmut Kohl called publicly for the preservation of Yugoslavia (Almond 1994:51). Except perhaps Italy, Germany had more to fear from the unravelling of a state less than half a day’s drive from the city of Munich. It would be German public opinion, shocked by the atrocities that unfolded in the second half of 1991, which pressed for a change of policy towards Yugoslavia, favouring self-determination for republics which wished to escape from Serbian aggression.

A poll conducted across Western Europe in December 1991 showed that by then public opinion in Britain and France was overwhelmingly in favour of self-determination (Kumar 1997:176, n. 41). It seemed difficult to avoid the culpability of well-placed Serbs for the unravelling of the federation. But, looking into the future, several West European officials chose to echo the Belgrade line that Yugoslavia had been destroyed by hostile external actions: for example, Roland Dumas, the French Foreign Minister, on 19 June 1993, said that ‘the responsibility of Germany and the Vatican in the acceleration of the crisis are overwhelming ones’.14

Many Western commentators, and even some politicians entrusted with peace missions, sought to understand what was happening in Yugoslavia by seeking an explanation in the Second World War. Sir Bernard Braine MP, the longest-serving member of the British House of Commons in 1992, believed it significant that:

during the two world wars, the Serbs were our gallant allies from the beginning... We cannot be unsympathetic to the Serbs. We must remember that Croats in Nazi uniform massacred vast numbers of Serbs. The memory of that is still vivid in Serbian minds.15

In the same vein, Tony Benn, the leader of the left wing of the British Labour Party, complained in 1995 that ‘the Croatians who fought on the Nazi side’ had been invited to the celebrations in London commemorating the end of the Second World War.16 Not unnaturally, Serbian military officers pressed home claims that Serbia and Britain had been allies in the last major European conflict. Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Riley, the commanding officer of the Royal Welch Fusiliers based at Gorazde when it was a Bosnian ‘safe area’ under siege from the Serbs, described his impressions of these men in a revealing diary entry: ‘I felt them easy to talk to, and most Serb officers are patriotic men of honour, very much aware of the military traditions of two world wars fought in alliance with us’ (Riley 1995:14).

The Croatian crisis

Franjo Tudjman, Croatia’s President, whom Benn was seeking to exclude from the London ceremony, had actually fought with Tito’s Partisans in the Second World War and would attain the rank of general in the JNA. Far more Croats had fought with the
Partisans than identified with the movement which had carried out bloody pogroms against Croatia’s Serbs, the Ustasa of Ante Pavelić, whom the Nazi Germans installed as Croatia’s leader from 1941 to 1945. But Tudjman had become a dissident by the late 1960s because of what he saw as ‘anti-Croat bias in official pronouncements about World War IF (Cvić 1993:373). After the suppression of the 1971 ‘Croatian Spring’, in which liberals and technocrats had pressed for more autonomy from Belgrade, politics increasingly revolved around the assertion of national rights. A contrast could be made with Slovenia, where early democratic initiatives in favour of greater Slovene autonomy were combined with ‘non-national ones stemming from concerns with the environment, anti-militarism, sexual freedom and other expressions of civic politics’ (Cvić 1993:373).

Nationalist feeling in Croatia had been stoked by a barrage of anti-Croatian sentiment emanating from the Serbian media in Belgrade. Tudjman’s Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) duly won the two-round election held in Croatia in April–May 1990, even though it was only ahead of the reform communists, renamed the Party of Democratic Change (SDP), by 300,000 votes. A shrewder leader with a longer-term perspective would have cultivated the Serbs who made up 12 per cent of Croatia’s population. But 67-year-old Tudjman was a man in a hurry, embittered by his treatment under the communist regime and obsessive about the need to paint the Croatian past in the most favourable possible light.

The vast majority of Croatia’s Serbs lived in the cities and appeared well integrated into Croatian society. There were concentrated Serbian populations only in two parts of Croatia: Eastern Slavonia, next door to Serbia’s Voivodina province, and southern and central Dalmatia. It was the Dalmatian Serbs living in and around the town of Knin who would become a serious thorn in Tudjman’s side. In this upland and mainly barren region, 77 per cent of the population were Serbs, but they comprised only 15 per cent of Croatia’s Serbian population (Bennett 1995:134–5). As he took up the trappings of power, Tudjman probably found it hard to imagine how they could be an obstacle in his path. But while willing to license nationalism in his own state, he was only dimly aware that others in Serbia might be prepared to unleash nationalist passions there, initially mainly at Croatia’s expense. He underestimated the ingenuity of Serbia’s President Milošević in this respect and was outmanoeuvred by him as the conflict between the two main South Slav components in Yugoslavia escalated in 1990–1.

In 1989 cultural associations formed to assert Serbian rights staged rallies in Croatia of the kind which had enabled Milošević’s allies to take over in Montenegro, Voivodina and Kosovo. But the turnout among Croatian Serbs had been very meagre (Bennett 1995:125). A pragmatic leader newly installed in office and facing a daunting task of building up a viable Croatian state even in peacetime conditions might have chosen to conciliate the Croatian Serbs and give them a strong incentive to remain moderate. In the late 1930s an alliance of Croatian nationalists and the Serbian minority, who are known as precani Serbs, had been formed to press for autonomy in monarchist and heavily centralised Yugoslavia. But Tudjman showed no such restraint, perhaps under the influence of Croatian émigrés who had financed his election campaign and whose ardent nationalism was shaped less by love of country than by hatred of Serbs. Upon being installed as President, Tudjman quickly set to work to produce a draft constitution. Ready in June 1990, it defined Croatia as the state of the Croatian nation. The Serbs who, under the 1974 constitution, had been a constituent nation of Croatia, were dropped, and they
found themselves treated as a minority on a par with the Hungarians, who made up less than 1 per cent of the population (Silber and Little 1996:103). Even more provocative was the decision to make the HDZ party flag the new official flag of Croatia. It was based on the distinctive red and white chessboard, and all socialist insignia were removed from it. The similarity of the flag to that used by the wartime Ustasas was a propaganda gift to opponents of Croatian independence, and the clamour failed to abate even when it was modified months later in favour of another traditional Croatian design (Bennett 1995:141).

These insensitive actions provoked a robust response from Serbian radicals. Their vehicle was the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), formed in Knin on 17 February 1990 (Silber and Little 1996:101). It won only a handful of seats in the Croatian Assembly elections held in the spring. Most Serbs opted for the ex-communist SDP. But it soon benefited from the clamour over the adoption of national insignia suspiciously close to that used by wartime Croatian fascists. At a time when Serbian policemen were being dismissed across Croatia, the force in Knin refused to don new uniforms with this insignia. In May 1990, a delegation sent by Tudjman to win over the Knin police was run out of town. The political initiative increasingly lay with Milan Babšić, a local dentist and president of Knin municipal council, who squeezed out the SDS’s founder, Jovan Rasković, whose goal in founding the party had been cultural autonomy, not political secession (Silber and Little 1996:107). In an increasingly feverish atmosphere in an area which had witnessed bloody attacks on Serbs in the early 1940s, and with the propaganda barrage from Belgrade able at last to seize upon concrete evidence of Zagreb’s ill-intent towards dangerously exposed Serbs, the Serb revolt mounted by Babšić gained steady momentum. He used strong-arm tactics in those mainly Serb parts of Dalmatia that backed the SDP and were unenthusiastic about the prospect of secession. Separated from Serbia proper by Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Serbs in the Knin area were bound economically and through transportation links to the rest of Croatia. In Korenica, for instance, the governing SDP had hopes of developing the tourism potential of the spectacularly beautiful Plitvice National Park on its doorstep. But the politics of symbolism increasingly swept aside rational economic calculations, and Babšić used armed intimidation to drive these moderate Serbs from office (Silber and Little 1996:104).

By August 1990, a full-scale rebellion against Zagreb rule was in progress. When Tudjman sent armed police to bring Knin to heel, they were intercepted by the JNA, an unmistakable sign of the backing Babšić’s secessionist movement enjoyed in Belgrade (Bennett 1995:131). The JNA’s head, General Velijko Kadijević, refused to lift the barricades and road blocks being mounted by armed Serbs. He exclaimed: ‘Do you really want the Serbs to say that the JNA is against them’ (Tuš 2001:42). In September 1990, Babšić was installed as head of the SDS at Milošević’s instigation. On 28 February 1991, a Serb National Council of Serb Autonomous Regions of Krajina issued a ‘Declaration’ on ‘Separation from Croatia’. The Serbian media had begun referring to the areas around Knin as ‘the Krajina’ in 1989. The name derived from the military frontier created by the Hapsburgs to defend their frontier in the seventeenth century (Allcock et al. 1998:148). By the time war broke out in the summer of 1991, the Krajina Serbs were well armed, the Serbian Interior Ministry having supplied them with weapons acquired from the army (Bennett 1995:136).
The politics of symbolism, increasingly based on avenging past wrongs, had been allowed to flourish thanks to the political ascendancy in Belgrade and Zagreb of radical nationalists or opportunists such as Milošević, prepared to license nationalism for his power-conserving ends. The international community was oblivious to the dangerous passions that were being stoked up. Much later, Western officials would be able correctly to gauge their impact. Peter Galbraith, the US ambassador from 1993 to 1996, has recognised the appeal of the view that guilt for past crimes carried out by extremists in the name of an entire people is both hereditary and collective. He points to the failure of crimes carried out between 1941 and 1945 to be properly investigated:

Tito came to power, killed as many Ustashe as he wanted to, the door was closed and everyone got on with their lives; but a line was not drawn beneath the crimes that had been committed, which allowed the Serbs, instead of saying that Ante Pavelić was responsible, to say: ‘The Croats are responsible’.18

Tudjman, who wrote several historical works dealing with recent Croatian history before coming to power, did an immense service to radical Serbian nationalism by revising downwards the numbers killed by the Ustasa in the Second World War (Bennett 1995:129). These writings started to appear as contacts with Croatian émigrés, many of whom looked with favour on the Ustasa, were being solidified. Perhaps the least controversial findings on this sensitive topic were produced in the 1980s in separate research by two men, Bogoljub Kocović, an émigré Serb, and Vlasimir Zerjavić, a Croat:

Both of their investigations were based not on body counts or survivors, recollections but on computer analysis of census returns and demographic indices. According to Kocović, whose figures are marginally higher than those of Zerjavić, a total of about 1,014,000, or 5.4% of Yugoslavia’s population, died during or in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War on all sides. According to their figures, in absolute terms, Serbs were the biggest losers, with 487,000 dead.

(Bennett 1999)

Barriers to understanding

The most authoritative claim that, in many ways, the unfolding Yugoslav conflict was a re-run of the Second World War was made at the end of December 1991 by France’s President Mitterand. Invited to clarify France’s position on the war then raging in Croatia, he told journalists on the Frankfurter Allgemeine zeitung.

You ask me who is the aggressor and who is the victim? I am incapable of telling you. What I know is that for a long time Serbia and Croatia have been the scene of many such dramas, especially during World War II, when large numbers of Serbs were killed in Croatian concentration camps. As you know, Croatia was allied with Nazi Germany, but Serbia wasn’t.
After Tito’s death, the latent conflict between Serbs and Croatians was bound to erupt. And this is what happened.

(Tardy 1999:118; Finkelkraut 1999:80)

The philosopher Alain Finkelkraut slammed Mitterand for espousing ‘point by point the racial and misleading propaganda of the Serb aggressor’ (Finkelkraut 1999:80). It is true that the existence of a wartime puppet state in Serbia, where resistance to the Nazis was conspicuous by its absence, is usually overlooked by those who wish to obtain a frame of reference from the Second World War. But the willingness of statesmen and military peacemakers, as well as many journalists, to invoke such explanations, however simplistic, shows their powerful appeal in adjacent Western countries, where political elites struggled to make sense of an otherwise perplexing conflict.

Politicians of the left and the right were prepared to accept historical images emanating from Belgrade because they blended in with their own preconceptions. But it was mainly politicians and activists on the European Left who were prepared to endorse official Yugoslav perspectives, largely because of the nature of the social system there. George Schöpflin has written that ‘many in the West regarded verbal commitment to socialism in Eastern Europe as real. This was even more true of the Yugoslav variety’ (Schöpflin 1990:3–4).

In similar vein, Alain Finkelkraut has written:

On the Left Yugoslavia benefited for a long time from a positive image because of the challenge it had given Stalin, because of its worker management and its place in the movement of non-aligned nations. The Yugoslav experience allowed all those disappointed with the Soviets not to abandon hope in the revolution.

(Finkelkraut 1999:20)

The reconstruction of Yugoslavia after 1945 inspired many on the international left. Four hundred and fifty Britons were among a worldwide group of communist volunteers who helped construct the Sarajevo-Samac youth railway in the late 1940s (Thompson 1992:118–19). There was an understandable tendency for some of them to argue, even after Yugoslavia had been transformed into a personal despotism, that the country embodied some of the best hopes and ideals of socialism. In France, the idea of workers’ self-management acquired enormous appeal on the Left, and in 1970, Michel Rocard, a future French Prime Minister, provided a preface for a book on the subject, one that was forgotten when the socialists came to power in 1981 (Gard 2000:30). Left-wing intellectuals in France were unwilling to abandon the idea of Yugoslavia even as the JNA was pounding cities like Dubrovnik and Vukovar. In November 1991, a manifesto calling for ‘new forms of association among peoples compelled by force of circumstances to live together’ was issued, and among its signatories were Bernard-Henri Levy, Claudio Magris and Jorge Semprun.19 Jean-Pierre Chevenement, a leading left-winger, declared in September that ‘peace is unimaginable if the renovation of the idea of Yugoslavia, even in a very flexible form, is abandoned… France…is now in a position to act efficiently in constructing a third Yugoslavia’ (Finkelkraut 1999:107).
The Praxis school of intellectuals in Yugoslavia, which interpreted Marxism in a radical way, enjoyed strong links with Marxist publications and intellectual circles in Western Europe and North America. Several members of the school became committed nationalists in the late 1980s and sought to transmit their interpretation of events to their Western contacts. Mihailo Marković, a leading Praxis philosopher, became Vice-President and chief ideologist of Milošević’s party, arguing in 1994 that ‘it is necessary to reintegrate territory of the former Yugoslavia wherever Serbs constitute a majority of the population’.20

Left-wing thinkers who made common cause with Milošević drew on anti-imperialist themes and rhetoric from Yugoslavia’s era of non-alignment, which the regime adapted to new circumstances. The imperialists placed in the dock were no longer the superpowers but Germany and Austria, intent perhaps on carving up the Balkans between them. Slovenia was depicted as a stooge of Germany, a strange role for a country which directly suffered more from Nazi Germany than perhaps any other part of Yugoslavia. Many Slovenes were sent to concentration camps, and 60,000 were packed into freight cars and dumped in Serbia, their homes and farms handed over to German colonists imported from elsewhere (Wolff 1974:204). Memory of such experiences helped to ensure resistance to granting the dwindling number of Germans in Slovenia minority status even after independence (Reindl 2002).

Latent sympathy existed for Serbia in Western Europe because of the interpretations given to recent historical events that were invoked in the early stages of the Yugoslav conflict. In France, a pro-Serbian outlook was found among soldiers, diplomats, and anti-European strands of opinion (communists, Chevenemenists, certain Gaullists) (Gard 2000:34–5). In Britain, a succession of diplomatic envoys to Belgrade would advise John Major that, without a strong Serbia, there would be no peace in the Balkans (Sharp 1996:8). Milošević consulted the Soviet military to see what the likely Western response would be if a massive attack was launched on the secessionist republics. General Kadijević, the Defence Minister, was despatched to Moscow in March 1991 for a briefing. According to Borislav Jović, a Milošević supporter and Vice-President of Yugoslavia, he was given details of a Soviet intelligence report which ‘showed that the Yugoslav army was safe to ignore Western warnings’.21

Perceptions among French diplomats and military officers that ‘Bonn wished to carve out a zone of influence in the north of the Balkans’ justified support for Serbia, and there were British counterparts who shared similar views, though perhaps in not as great numbers (Gard 2000:33). Milošević was well able to appeal to the latent nationalism to be found among West European leaders and to exploit rivalries between them, which, by necessity, had to be restrained during the Cold War. He sought to mix nationalist utterances with calls to Yugoslavs that they overcome ‘their unfounded, irrational and primitive…fear of exploitation’ by foreign capital, which would have been reassuring for Western diplomats (Cohen 1993:56). Even as the bloody deeds he ordered became impossible to ignore, he emerges as a plausible and even engaging figure from the memoirs of the Western envoys who dealt with him. Well-travelled, fluent in English, and relishing a Western lifestyle of whisky, cigars and American middle-brow music, he did not, on the surface, appear to be an ogre. He was certainly more personable than the obsessive and cranky Tudjman. It scarcely dawned on Western leaders that a communist
bunker with legal training could deliberately set in train a range of conflicts in his own country in order to further interests that were essentially personal ones.

Writing in 1993, when much of the damage had already been done, the Polish journalist and former dissident, Adam Michnik, acknowledged Milošević’s success:

He correctly recognised the weakness of the democratic world; its inability to take risks, its failure to recognise the seriousness of the threat; and lastly, its cowardly egoism have created a situation in which fanatical nationalism and cynicism seem to be triumphing. What is more Milošević has infected others in the Balkans with his idea of an ethnic state.22

The American commentator William Pfaff drew even more sombre conclusions about the failure of the democracies to respond quickly and effectively to the threat posed by Milošević:

In the 1930s there certainly was no popular clamor for the democracies to block Hitler from remilitarizing the Rhineland, or annexing Austria, or partitioning Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain and Daladier were the popular politicians, calm and reasonable men who refused to take risks over distant issues and improbable dangers. The public turned to Churchill and De Gaulle only after all the combinations of appeasement (and collaboration) had been tried and had failed…

Democracies, as a general rule, are incapable of dealing with long-term threats requiring the sacrifice of lives, or even the serious risk of lost lives, even when a reasoned case can be made that this will save lives in the longer term.

They can mobilise sacrifices only in war itself, or in exceptional circumstances of perceived imminent threat, as during the cold war. American and European opinion supported the Gulf intervention because the threat to Western oil seemed palpable, but popular support for that war was also understood by the Western governments to be extremely fragile.

The fact is that democracies compete badly with despotisms. Democracies don’t like sacrifices, or the politicians who demand them. Democracies are no good at looking after their security interests when a gun is not pointed at their heads. Democracies don’t like to listen to bad news. Democracies don’t want to think about bad possibilities in the future. Democracies don’t want their comfort or profits interfered with. Democracies may or may not win out in the long-term. It is entirely possible that until now they have merely been lucky.

(Pfaff 1993)
Wishful thinking in the face of catastrophe

The US government had been informed by the CIA eighteen months before hostilities that war in Yugoslavia was on the cards. But neither the USA nor the European Community intervened with incentives or threats to restrain those elements, primarily the leaderships in Serbia and Croatia, who were behaving with increasingly intransigence. The fact that the JNA was particularly interested in discovering likely Western responses to hardline actions it was actively planning suggests that the army leadership would have heeded a more organised and coherent response to what was effectively an elite-led crisis. There is no indication that governments were receiving advice from their policy advisers urging innovative thinking designed to safeguard human rights or promote leaderships with an alternative outlook to those of ethnic hardliners.

Only in May 1991 did the worsening crisis in Yugoslavia obtain a commensurate response from the EC. Clashes resulting in the killing of a number of Croatian policemen were followed on 15 May by Serbia’s decision to obstruct the regular annual rotation of the post of Federal President, which was to go to the Croatian representative, Stjepan Mesić. Five days later, in a referendum with an 84.94 per cent turnout, 93.24 per cent of Croatian voters gave their backing to ‘a sovereign and independent state’. The arrival, on 29 May, of the EC President, Jacques Delors, was very much a last-ditch effort to stave off the Slovenian, and now Croatian, declarations of independence being put into effect (Kumar 1997:46). Delors promised to request $4.5 billion for Yugoslavia in return for economic reforms aimed at turning it into a free market, and political reforms aimed at maintaining territorial unity (Woodward 1995:160; Kumar 1997:175, n. 27).

What was lacking was a declaration to the people from the EC head setting out the alternatives Yugoslavia had between finding a materially secure future in the EC and descending into bitter ethnic strife at undreamt-of cost. An appeal directed particularly at the young, who were less affected by past nationalist quarrels, might have produced a surprising amount of solidarity transcending the republics; they, after all, would have been expected to do the fighting in any war. But appeals above the heads of politicians designed to prevent conflict were not made by European leaders. Perhaps for politicians usually grappling with technocratic issues, it would have been difficult to know what to include in them. Even champions of a European civil society such as the British academic, Mary Kaldor, head of the anti-nuclear European Nuclear Disarmament (END) movement, could only see the negative side as Yugoslavia teetered on the brink of collapse: ‘Like all of Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia is a patchwork of tribes…and all of Yugoslavia has experienced a long bitter and bloody history of conflict between different cultural, religious, linguistic, or ethnic groups’.24

Later, as head of the Helsinki Citizen Assembly, Kaldor would seek to establish a bridge between civil society in east and west, but the verdict of a Yugoslav author referring to the disowning of groups committed to peaceful resolution of problems in the initial phase of the war is not unreasonable: ‘Groups and individuals who, at great risk to themselves, worked for minority rights and tried to find forms of multi-cultural existence amid the chaos of war, received precious little international attention, and were domestically subdued and perceived as traitors’ (Udovicki 1997:302).
The unlikelihood of the Atlantic democracies taking the Yugoslav crisis seriously enough to try to block conflict there had been clear from November 1990, when NATO and the CSCE both agreed to refrain from taking preventative action there (Woodward 1996a:164). Subsequently, the USA and its European allies had been at loggerheads about the shape of an institutional framework for closer European defence cooperation: should it come under NATO or be a prerogative of the new European Union, soon to replace the EC. In the wake of the Cold War, the US administration viewed Yugoslavia as a European problem. However, there were still upwards of 15,000 US troops stationed in Germany to provide stability. James Schlesinger, a US Defense Secretary in the Reagan administration, noted in late 1991 that ‘the US decision to defer the handling of the break-up of Yugoslavia to the Europeans was a political decision that conflicted with our stated rationale for a military presence’ (Franklin Lyttle 1992:313–4, n. 43).

The USA was aware of an impending crisis but, according to Warren Zimmerman, its ambassador in Belgrade, no considerations were given to using force to stop a JNA/Serbian attack on Slovenia or Croatia (Conversi 1998:44). Secretary of State Baker, at the behest of his aides, stopped in Belgrade on 21 June 1991 (Woodward 1995:161). He held eleven meetings with republican Presidents and members of the federal government, to each of whom he repeated that the USA opposed the break-up of Yugoslavia but also the use of force to hold it together (Cohen 1998:144). The USA was signalling its indifference to the problems of a state which it had taken very seriously indeed at earlier times. Baker summed up the official stance by saying that ‘the USA has no dog in this fight’. According to Richard Perle, who had served in the Reagan administration as an Assistant Secretary of State, this was ‘one of the most appalling statements made from someone who claims to be a leader’ (Simms 2001:339). Baker’s own predecessor as Secretary of State, George Shultz, was in no doubt that ‘It could have been stopped at the beginning when the Serbs attacked Croatia in 1991’. Baker’s policy of non-intervention suited Milošević and the JNA, for whom external interference would have been a seriously complicating factor, probably upsetting their military plans. One further effort to save Yugoslavia had occurred in early June 1991, when the leaders of Bosnia and Macedonia, Alija Izetbegović and Kiro Gligorov, had prepared a loose ‘Community of Yugoslav Peoples’, very much a confederal scheme with only economic and some foreign and defence instruments remaining at the centre (Kumar 1997:175, n. 28). Milošević gave it only conditional approval, but it was approved by Tudjman and also by the Slovenian President, Milan Kucan. But Kucan’s endorsement has been viewed as disingenuous: months earlier the Slovenes had given up on the idea of being part of Yugoslavia and were preparing to declare independence on 26 June (Kumar 1997:175, n. 28).

Conclusion

The West was caught unawares by the Yugoslav conflict. The nature of the crisis was simply beyond the understanding of many policy practitioners, who were unfamiliar with ethnic disputes unless they were on the peripheries of their own territories or else raged beyond Europe. It would take some time for the West to become familiar with the readiness of ex-communist leaders to acquire a new clean identity by recycling
themselves as defenders of nationalist values apparently threatened by a range of internal or external enemies. There was little realisation that much of the impetus for secession in Yugoslavia was coming from the centre in order to facilitate the rearrangement of Yugoslavia’s boundaries to enable most Serbs to gather in one state.

The noisy cries for self-determination from Slovenia and Croatia were familiar to, and largely unwelcome for, European leaders who had many reasons for being nervous about sanctioning boundary changes in Europe, and who preferred to deal with one state rather than a lot of smaller entities.

The same went for the USA, which was aware of the magnitude of the Yugoslav crisis earlier than its allies but just as pessimistic about intervening to try to halt the slide to outright war. The Bush administration had shown its unwillingness to intervene in the internal affairs of a strategically placed state when it left Saddam Hussein in power in Iraq after the Gulf War. Deterred by the prospect of establishing a workable democratic system in multi-ethnic Iraq, it was likely to be even more daunted by using its status as the undisputed global superpower to preserve peace in Yugoslavia despite its past strategic significance.

The USA and most of its European allies also wished to discourage nationalism in the Soviet Union for fear that it would derail Gorbachev’s reform efforts and enable Cold Warriors to replace him in the Kremlin. Yugoslav events in 1990–1 were seen very much through a Soviet prism. Milošević, however rough his methods could be, was seen as a figure capable of promoting continuity along the lines mapped out by Tito, while tilting policy more in favour of the Serbian majority. There was no realisation that on the very westernmost fringes of what had been the Soviet bloc, nomenklatura forces, mostly imbued with the need to defend their collective and individual privileges, would be capable of consolidating their position while Moscow adopted a Western trajectory; nor that the triumph of communists promoting nationalism as a survival strategy would soon prove very troubling for Western security interests.

Tudjman was seen as a disagreeable throwback to the 1930s, which in many ways he was. The looming Serbian-Croatian confrontation was depicted in terms of a re-run of Second World War rivalries, and, once it escalated, as a reversal to ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’ apparently endemic in the region Yugoslavia belonged to. The preference for such analogies betrayed an unwillingness to view the conflict in terms of present-day realities, and also an ignorance of the fast-evolving situation on the ground among Western diplomats and policy advisers who usually reflected a Belgrade view of events.

There were diplomats and officers who saw a strong Serbia as necessary for regional stability, while ‘anti-imperialists’ on the Left were ready to endorse Milošević’s Serbia because it was apparently one of the few remaining outposts of socialism left in a world in which imperialism had won key engagements. When war erupted in July 1991, there is little evidence to suggest that Milošević was troubled by the reaction of the West, given the mediocre approach of policy-makers and advisers to the crisis as it had steadily escalated in previous years.
The war in Croatia and the countdown to the Bosnian conflict, July 1991–May 1992

EU peace mission founders

On 25 June 1991, the assemblies of both Slovenia and Croatia declared the independence of their republics. Clashes soon occurred between the JNA and the territorial defence units of Slovenia, which had managed to retain weapons seized by the military authorities in other republics. Slovenia was the frontline of western defence for the JNA which had 25,000 enlisted men and officers stationed in the republic. Nevertheless, the JNA was defeated by the much better—motivated Slovenians.

EC diplomatic intervention would end the war in Slovenia on 7 July. But if it had been Milošević’s goal to preserve the Yugoslav state, he would not have let go of Slovenia so easily. It is a widely held view that he was willing to permit Slovenia’s quick departure because he knew it would fortify Croatia’s secessionist ambitions, making war even more likely (Sikavica 1997:149, n. 15). The desire for independence in Slovenia was supported by an ethnically homogeneous group and very few Serbs lived there.

Croatia’s Tudjman refused to show solidarity with Slovenia during its ten-day war. Indeed, Tudjman went as far as assuring Milošević that ‘we shan’t meddle in your dispute with Slovenia’ (Špegelj 2001a:26). Unlike his Slovenian counter-parts, Tudjman showed no interest in displaying practical solidarity with the hard-pressed Kosovar Albanians. When their leader, Ibrahim Rugova, was taken to see Tudjman in 1991, he was effectively told by the Croatian leader that his people would need to solve their problems in Belgrade, not Zagreb, which prompted the visitor abruptly to terminate the meeting (Špegelj 2001a:33).

Zagreb’s political tactics had been extremely inept during the escalating crisis. The snub to Slovenia (after the two republics had agreed to cooperate) resulted in Kučan placing no obstacle in the way of the JNA withdrawing most of its heavy weaponry to Croatia (where it would soon be used) and indeed to Bosnia (Špegelj 2001a:27). Moreover, radical members of Tudjman’s HDZ were seeking to provoke conflict in parts of Croatia where they believed Serbs were vulnerable to attack. In-mid April, Gojko Šušak, already one of Tudjman’s closest advisers, went to the outskirts of Borovo Selo, a Serb-populated village near Vukovar, and, along with companions, fired three shoulder-launched Ambrust missiles into the village.1 Several weeks later, on 1 and 2 May, fourteen Croatian policemen were killed here. A ‘sea change’ in Croatian public opinion
occurred with the Serbian minority being denounced as ‘the enemy within’ (Silber and Little 1996:155). On 2 May, the local HDZ admitted to organising attacks on Serb-owned property in the Dalmatian port of Zadar (Thompson 1999:174). Parts of the Croatian media would begin to emulate their Belgrade counterparts in the use of ‘hate speech’, but not as systematically. It is from this moment that the term četnik, deriving from Second World War monarchist followers of General Mihailović, began to be heard regularly on television, the newscaster stating on 3 May that it is a matter of ‘chetnik hordes against the legal organs of the Croatian state’ (Thompson 1999:159). The police chief in the town of Osijek, Josip Reihl-Kir, had worked tirelessly to defuse inter-ethnic conflict in the preceding months. But he lost control of the situation and was murdered by HDZ extremists on 1 July. Serbs who had decided to stay in Croatia suffered when the war turned against Zagreb. In Gospić, in September, some twenty Serbs—professors and judges—were killed by Croatian militia (Silber and Little 1996:192).

The outbreak of the first of Yugoslavia’s wars coincided with one of the twice-yearly summits of the EC’s heads of governments. A troika of Foreign Ministers was despatched from the conference to Yugoslavia. Their instructions were to try to secure an end to the fighting and arrange a long-term political agreement. At their head was Luxemburg’s Jacques Poos, who still had a few days of his six-month term as President of the European Council to run. Accompanying him were his predecessor, the Italian Foreign Minister, Gianni de Michaelis, and his successor, Hans van den Broek, from the Netherlands.

After the disunity exhibited by the leading West European states during the Gulf War, several of them were looking for an opportunity to demonstrate their capability of operating a common foreign policy (Woodward 1995:158). There was also a desire to show the USA that the EC states were capable of solving a dangerous-looking crisis in their own backyard. This sentiment animated the much-quoted declaration made by Poos at the start of the troika’s mission: ‘This is the hour of Europe; it is not the hour of the Americans’ (Zucconi 1996:271). De Michaelis also made it clear that the troika would be briefing the Americans about its activities but not consulting them (Almond 1994:32).

The EU was actually undertaking its first, ever peace mission. It was embarking upon ‘a colossal task for which it was badly-equipped and that in fact uncovered the flimsiness of collective mechanisms through which the organization expected to deal with the new, fast unrolling panorama of international problems and pressures’ (Zucconi 1996:237). The West Europeans were criticised for using Yugoslavia ‘to satisfy their vanity’ (Zucconi 1996:271). The CSCE claimed primacy in the area of crisis management because of the rules it had been given under the 1990 Treaty of Paris for a new European security system (Woodward 1995:151). But this was essentially a declaratory set of principles about European security which had little institutional force behind it. The EU preferred to occupy centre-stage and NATO, ‘the only capable collective military structure available’, was kept at arm’s length because different vested interests wanted it to be an all-European act (Zucconi 1996:271).

On 7–8 July 1991 the EC troika’s shuttle diplomacy produced a ‘Common Declaration on the Peaceful Resolution of the Yugoslav Crisis’, hammered out with representatives of the central government, Serbia, Slovenia and Croatia, on the Adriatic island of Brioni. Slovenia and Croatia agreed to a three-month freeze on implementation of their independence declarations while the military returned to barracks and the disputants tried
to negotiate a political solution of the crisis (Steinberg 1994:239; Zucconi 1996:242). Agreement was also reached for the deployment of EC monitors in Slovenia; later, when fighting erupted in earnest in Croatia, a monitoring mission comprising 300 observers and 300 support personnel was sent there (Steinberg 1994:240).

In less than a month, van den Broek was forced to admit that the EC peace mission had failed: on 4 August, he stated that ‘we did everything to help the country stop the killing and begin dialogue, but we failed’.

In July, fighting had spread to different parts of Croatia, where Serb paramilitaries attacked and burned various villages and drove out their inhabitants. It had perhaps been facile to assume that the EC, better known for its endeavours in harmonising coal and milk production, could have cut short a conflict long in preparation. It was unfortunate that it was the twelve-member body’s puniest member, Luxemburg, which happened to be in the driving seat in June 1991. One pro-Slovenian French commentator wrote acerbically:

> it was completely surreal to see Jacques Poos, a minister of the Lilliputian state of Luxemburg, demand of the minuscule Slovenians, in the name of the EC, that they renounce their aspirations to become a country. Perhaps tomorrow Prince Rainier of Monaco will demand of the Baltic nations in the name of Planet Earth that they be reasonable and accept, for just one more short century, that the Stalin-Hitler Pact hold sway!

(Finkelkraut 1999:74–5)

The EC’s mishandling of the Yugoslav crisis dealt a major blow to ‘its perceived weight as a major unitary actor, and to its aspirations to anchor the emerging political order on the European continent’ (Zucconi 1996:237). As fighting escalated, the CSCE crept back into the picture. The Treaty of Paris had created a CSCE Secretariat and a Conflict Prevention Centre (Woodward 1995:151). But its resources for tackling disputes turned out to be ‘a few unarmed men in suits with diplomatic passports and instructions to see all sides of the question’ (Almond 1994:55). The CSCE was handicapped by the principle of unanimity among its members before effective action could be taken; this made moves not welcomed by Belgrade impossible (Hoffmann 1996:109). Upon the suspension of Yugoslavia from membership, its freedom of action increased. The notion of ‘consensus minus one’ was developed, which made intervention in internal conflicts easier (Hoffmann 1996:109–10). But faced with its first big test in Yugoslavia, it proved ill-equipped to deal with a crisis stemming from the violent break-up of a state. Accordingly, the claim that the CSCE was ‘the organization [that] had prime authority with regard to security threats in Europe’ was heard with far less frequency (Zucconi 1996:239).

France was most strongly committed to a European defence force separate from a NATO which was dominated by the USA. It had long felt that the West European Union (WEU), to which all but two EU states belonged, could fill this role. On 5 August 1991, the French Foreign Ministry announced that France had asked for an emergency meeting of the WEU to consider sending a military force to Yugoslavia. Germany supported the move. But the Soviet Union warned against the dispatch of such a force, Pavel Grachev, the Defence Minister, saying that the conflict would grow into ‘an all-European one’ (Hodge and Grbin 1996:53). The idea was shelved, but the momentum behind it revived following a large-scale JNA offensive in Croatia. On 20 September 1991, General
Kadijević announced ‘military action against Croatia at a time when the JNA had four infantry corps, half the airforce, and almost the entire navy deployed in Croatia’ (Magaš and anić 2001:355).

At a meeting of the EC Foreign Ministers on 28 September 1991, a German-Italian initiative to deploy a WEU force in order to separate the main combatants in Croatia led to heated debate. Douglas Hurd, the British Foreign Secretary, strongly opposed the plan. He argued from the experience of Britain in Northern Ireland that WEU intervention would require extensive manpower, was bound to lead to loss of life, and would almost certainly become ‘open-ended and long-lasting’. Britain’s objections were bound to carry weight since it was the only EC member deploying thousands of its troops in a conflict that was the most protracted yet seen in post-1945 Europe. The optimism of the Luxemburg-led troika had vanished in the subsequent three months of escalating warfare. It was easy to assume that the parallels between Northern Ireland and Yugoslavia were indeed close and that no outside force could possibly stem ‘an irremediable’ inter-ethnic conflict (Gow 1997:176).

This was the first of many interventions by Britain to support a minimalist response to the conflict. Douglas Hurd had described his view of the nature of the conflict in July 1991, one from which he would not deviate for the next four years: ‘at the end of the day, they [the people of Yugoslavia] have decided what they want is a civil-war, it will be a reproach to Europe but we cannot prevent it’. Hurd rejected the view that it was an elite-led conflict, and indeed Britain was always more anxious than any of its partners to treat Milošević and the heads of Bosnian Serb political and military structures as respectable negotiating partners. He repeated his pessimistic views about the conflict on 19 September, when calls for external military intervention were mounting:

I am very anxious that we should not exaggerate what we can do or pretend that we in Western Europe can substitute for a lack of will for peace in Yugoslavia itself. When they are ready for peace, we can help monitor it.8

This was just one of many official statements in which armed groups were seen as representative of the population. For decades Britain had gone to enormous lengths to tell the world this wasn’t true in Northern Ireland, but it was the explanation instinctively adopted for a conflict which it could claim to have little expert knowledge of.

As if to reinforce the caution of Britain and other like-minded states, Vojislav Šešelj, the most outspoken Serbian radical, declared, as the Croatian conflict was escalating:

We will not tolerate any sort of foreign troops here… If the West interferes, tens of thousands of Western troops will be killed. It will be total war, a war without mercy. We are not sure that the West is prepared to lose so many lives. That would be a war without prisoners. We would kill them in every place wherever we could. We would poison their food. We would poison their water. There is no means we would not use against foreign intervention.9
The West misreads the Serbian mood

It would take years of bloodshed before it became clear that claims of Serbian military prowess, and the determination of its soldiers to fight to the last against foreign trespassers on their soil, were based on a large element of bluff. Any close examination of the public mood in Serbia and Montenegro during the first months of the war would have revealed not enthusiasm for a national crusade but deep foreboding. To avoid receipt of military call-up papers, thousands of young men were sleeping away from home, and a mass exodus of men of military age ensued. In Montenegro, certain units were left with only 10 per cent capacity: in June, a peace rally held in the capital, Podgorica, under the banner ‘Heroism today is to avoid war!’, 5,000 people were addressed by the head of Montenegro’s Partisan War Veterans Association (Backović et al. 2001:333). In Belgrade, on 2 July, some 300 parents of soldiers in JNA units serving in Slovenia surged into the Serbian parliament, many demanding that Milošević should issue a call for Serbian soldiers to return to Serbia (Backović et al. 2001:331–2). On the same day, the citizens of the Serbian town of Loznica surrounded a called-up reserve unit which itself soon rebelled after being sent to fight. In a closed session of the Serbian parliament in September, it was announced that the response of reservists in Serbia was 50 per cent, but in Belgrade only 15 per cent (Backovic et al. 2001:336). The lack of enthusiasm for the war was shown graphically in a confrontation between a reservist, Rade Andrić, and the JNA Chief of Staff, General Blagoje Adžić, which was reported in the Belgrade newspaper Politika. According to Andrić:

When General Adžić visited us, I brought a dead and massacred colleague who was a shapeless mass; he had been bombed by our own airforce. I said to him: ‘General, the Ustasha may be killing us, but why is our own airforce killing us too?’ He reached for his pistol and said, ‘Shut up, you idiot, that’s a lie’.

(Backović et al. 2001:336)

Dobrica Ćosić, the intellectual figurehead of nationalist Serbia, issued a statement with the message that ‘at this time pacifist rhetoric is senseless’ (Backović et al 2001:333). Mihailo Marković, the once-dissident Marxist who had embraced nationalism, complained that:

Our young people were not psychologically prepared for war. Young people have been living comfortably, dreaming of a Dynasty-like future, and now they are faced with the shock of having no choice but to put on a uniform, take up arms and go to fight.

(Backović et al. 2001:340)

In Serbia, during the last months of 1991, 50,000 people signed a petition for peace and for the holding of a referendum on whether the country should go to war. The peace movements behind it estimated on the basis of their own research that 150,000 had fled Serbia, and 50,000 reservists were in hiding from the call-up (Backović et al. 2001:340). By 1994, at least 15,000–20,000 people had faced criminal proceedings related to
avoidance of military service. In the same year, the Belgrade Centre for Anti-War Actions estimated that some 200,000 draft dodgers were in hiding in Serbia and Montenegro, many others having fled abroad (Schmidt 1994:52).

Several opposition parties in Serbia expressed support for deserters, Vuk Drasković urging front-line troops to 'pick up their guns and run'. But much of the opposition was nationalist in outlook and it differed with the Serbian leader only over the tactics to be used to attain a Greater Serbia. Just as culpable were the West European leaders, who showed no awareness of how important it was to nurture the large slice of Serbian society opposed to extremism and war. The proposal of Colonel Edward Cowan, the British military attaché in Belgrade from 1987 to 1990, for ‘a serious democratic alternative to Milošević to be nurtured, not just with the promise of aid and “know-how” but with the ultimate prize of acceptance into the European Community’ was ignored.

On 7 September 1991, the EC accepted responsibility for mediating the conflict, and set up a Peace Conference in The Hague. The basis for negotiations was the unalterability of internal frontiers by force, and the need to ensure the rights of minorities (Magaš and anić 2001:354). The President of the European Council, Hans van den Broek, entrusted Britain’s Lord Carrington with the task of ending the armed conflict ‘within two months’ (Conversi 1998:14). Peter Carrington was a former British foreign secretary who had presided over the difficult negotiations preceding Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980. Much earlier, he had also been part of the 1938 discussion of the possible partition of Palestine, and he had taken part in a mission to South Africa during discussions of the possible partition of that country (Kumar 1997:48). The British approach to intractable colonial problems had, more often than not, involved a variant on partition and there would be no shortage of such schemes for Yugoslavia in the years ahead, when British figures dominated the negotiations between the ‘warring factions’.

On 18 October 1991, Carrington presented the EC peace plan. It provided for Yugoslavia to be a community of sovereign states cooperating in financial and trade issues, and security. Republics so desiring it would be recognised as independent within existing borders. Areas where minority ‘national or ethnic groups’ formed a majority of the population would have a special protective status and would be permitted dual citizenship (Unfinished Peace 1996:44). All the republics except Serbia accepted the Carrington plan. Under pressure from Milošević, Montenegro then withdrew its agreement. Milošević rejected the idea of ceding the same rights to minorities within Serbia (notably the Kosovo Albanians) that he demanded for Serbs elsewhere (Simms 2001:18). He was holding out for a change of boundaries which would result in a new Serbian entity, much enlarged and encompassing all Serbs.

No punitive measures against Serbia were adopted despite Carrington’s confederal scheme being accepted by the other five republics (with Montenegro soon backing out) (Hodge and Grbin 1996:54–5). Carrington, who liaised closely with his fellow Conservatives in charge of the British government, was for keeping the talks process going despite the increasingly bloody events on the ground in Croatia. The reports of the EC monitoring mission denied the ‘civil-war’ thesis favoured by Carrington, and provided ample evidence that the Yugoslav army was heavily involved in offensive action that gave rise to many civilian casualties (Gow 1997:56). In a faux pas, a member of the Serbian government, Dragan Dragojlović, the Minister of Cults, admitted in September that Serbia was up to its neck in the conflict raging across its border in.
Croatia. In a speech to reservists, he said ‘Yugoslavia, ostensibly is not at war, in order not to be labelled as an aggressor; so it does not have its own army either, but it has one within the JNA…’ (Backović et al. 2001:335). Britain and many of its partners colluded in this fiction in the early stages of the war. Sir Percy Cradock, a former governor of Hong Kong and a key advisor to the Major government on foreign policy, submitted a paper to John Major in September 1991 supporting the civil-war theory. He later wrote:

I came to the unsatisfactory conclusion that while we were ready to concede that the federation was irretrievably fragmented, we still recoiled from the conclusion that international aggression was occurring…

As we saw it, British interests were not seriously threatened.

(Cradock 1997:187)

**Dubrovnik and Vukovar**

At the end of September 1991 the EC turned to the United Nations for leadership and, on 8 October, Cyrus Vance, US Secretary of State from 1977 to 1980, was appointed by the UN Secretary-General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, as his personal envoy in the region. Until then, the UN had preferred to stay aloof. Perez de Cuellar emphasised that the crisis was an internal matter that the Yugoslavs needed to solve themselves. He had turned down Slovenia’s request for UN observers on the grounds that ‘Slovenia is not an independent UN member’ (Steinberg 1994:211). But on 25 September, at the urging of West European members, the UN passed Security Council resolution 713, prohibiting supplies of weapons and military equipment to all republics of Yugoslavia. On 5 July 1991, the EC, supported by the USA, had already imposed its own arms embargo on Yugoslavia. It made little difference to the military arsenal at the disposal of the JNA. But it proved a serious obstacle for the makeshift army of Croatia, as it would to the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995. A radical military imbalance in favour of Serbia was thus locked into place, and it should have been no surprise that, by September 1991, Serbian forces were in occupation of 30 per cent of Croatian territory (Sells 1996:117).

At the end of October 1991, The UN Secretary-General submitted a report to the Security Council calling the Yugoslav conflict ‘a threat to international peace and security’ (D.Huntington 1996:442). In the subsequent weeks, international attention focused on the Adriatic city of Dubrovnik, which, along with other centres on Croatia’s long coastline, was shelled by the JNA and also by the Yugoslav navy. As the city was one of the architectural treasures of Europe, the shelling of historic Dubrovnik made it far less easy to argue that this was a faraway and inconsequential Balkan quarrel. The significance of what appeared to be a wanton act of cultural vandalism was felt keenly in France, where intellectuals had the capacity to sway public opinion more than anywhere else in Europe. The philosopher, Andre Glucksmann, described events such as the siege of Dubrovnik as ‘A Moral Pearl Harbour’ (Martel 1994:131). Writers such as Eugene Ionesco joined him in demanding that the forthcoming EC summit at Maastricht should be held instead at Dubrovnik (Martel 1994:131). Michael Foot, the former leader of the British Labour Party, happened to be in Dubrovnik during the early stage of the siege,
and he would become an inveterate opponent of the arms embargo and the failure of the West to make a clear distinction between the aggressor and his victims.

But not all international experts closely following the drama in the Eastern Adriatic were prepared to indict Serbia. Susan Woodward, a senior fellow in the Brookings Institute, in the first full-length text to explore the international aspects of the crisis and subsequent war, blamed Croats for the siege of the city: ‘The Croatian government had calculated in using sharpshooters on the Dubrovnik walls’ to provoke a JNA attack on the city (Woodward 1995:182). The argument that defenders were responsible for their own misfortunes was one that would be heard frequently in subsequent years by international mediators, not least during the siege of Sarajevo (1992–5). Yashushi Akashi, the UN Secretary-General’s special envoy to Yugoslavia during much of the siege period, frequently argued such a case in order to justify military inaction if Serb forces violated UN resolutions through shelling or other forms of attacks on civilians. Woodward was a senior policy adviser to Akashi in 1994, and it is not unreasonable to assume that she influenced his outlook on the conflict.

Milos Vasić, the Belgrade-based military expert, believed that the attack on Dubrovnik was part of ‘a larger operation designed to take Split and the Dalmatian coast’ (Vasić 1996:129). Long after the siege, it emerged that, during it, the NATO Supreme Allied Commander for Europe, General John Galvin, had prepared plans to break it by neutralising Serbian vessels and artillery positions (Danner 1997).

General Jean Cot, the Frenchman who commanded the UN force in Bosnia from June 1993 to March 1994, has publicly declared that the Serbs could have been quickly stopped by outside force at this stage in the conflict:

> Along with many others, I am convinced that the Serbs could have been stopped in October 1991 with three ships, three dozen planes and about three thousand men deployed in Dubrovnik and Vukovar to emphasize the unequivocal determination of the European Community.14

Support for such a view has come from an unexpected source. Radovan Karadžić, leader of the nationalist Serbs in Bosnia, himself declared in a tele vision interview that, had NATO sent 20,000 troops to Yugoslavia during the war against Croatia, the entire Serbian project would have been ‘stopped in its tracks’ (Vulliamy 1998:88).15

Indeed, at the end of 1991, NATO’s new role as guardian of European security would be endorsed at its Rome summit; an altered military strategy no longer emphasised defence of the territory of existing members. The new emphasis ‘implied’ NATO responsibility to respond to precisely the sort of conflicts by then raging in the Balkans (Gompert 1996:128). But NATO could do none of this without strong US backing. In the autumn of 1991, France tried to secure it for a Western intervention force, but Washington showed no interest in the idea (Sharp 1996:12).

Stanley Hoffmann, a leading interpreter of West European affairs in US academic and policy circles, believed that a clue to Milošević’s confidently aggressive tactics could be found in his communist formation: ‘as a good Leninist, Milošević kept pushing because he met only mush but might have moderated his demands and his acts if he had met steel far short of colossal military action by European or UN powers…’ (Hoffmann 1996:115).
But West Europeans had rarely had to negotiate with politicians from the Eastern bloc who displayed such ruthlessness or capacity to disregard the truth; many may have been lulled into a sense of false security by having to deal with the moderate communist leader Gorbachev, who usually abhorred violent methods. The international community’s lukewarm attitude to the siege of Dubrovnik (undoubtedly a Serbian blunder) showed that Milošević had little to fear from that quarter (Cigar 2001a:207). But the other headline-grabbing event of the autumn of 1991, the siege and capture of the Croatian city of Vukovar, had much more serious implications for the Serbian national project.

Vukovar, one of the most ethnically mixed urban centres in Yugoslavia, was a graceful port city on the Danube in Croatia’s Eastern Slavonia region. Its population was 39 per cent Croat and 37.4 per cent Serb, with a strong presence of Hungarians and citizens who declared themselves to be ‘Yugoslavs’ (Cohen 1998:185). From mid-October, Vukovar was subjected to a relentless siege by the JNA. After the most devastating fighting in Europe since the Second World War, the city fell on 18 November 1991. The 19 per cent of inhabitants who were Hungarian or Yugoslav were expelled by the occupiers, a telling sign that this was viewed in Belgrade as a war between Serbs and non-Serbs, not Serbs versus Croats (Hodge and Grbin 1996:34, n. 26). Cyrus Vance, the UN special envoy, arrived as the city was falling. But he was prevented by a JNA official, Colonel Veselin Sljivancanin, from entering it on the grounds that it wasn’t safe. Ian Traynor, who reported the first three Yugoslav wars for The Guardian, later wrote:

Mr Vance was apoplectic. But what Colonel Sljivancanin knew and he did not at that moment was that Col. Sljivancanin’s army colleagues were completing their conquest by dragging 200 civilians from Vukovar hospital to a farmyard outside town where they were killed and dumped in a mass grave. Col. Sljivancanin has been indicted by The Hague for mass murder, but he is still at large in Yugoslavia.16

Vukovar was a pyrrhic victory for the JNA. Along with Serbian police and paramilitaries, it had lost over 5,000 men that autumn (Tus 2001:60). The tenacious Croatian defence of the city forced Serbs in the JNA to revise downwards their ‘expectations for victory at an acceptable cost’ (Cigar 2001a:204). Not only here was the JNA starting to be outflanked by the makeshift Croatian army that was hurriedly taking shape. JNA offensives aimed at linking up with its besieged garrison in Zagreb were foiled in October 1991. Large amounts of military equipment were captured, including 200 tanks and 150 armoured personnel carriers. Solidly armed brigades were formed, which fought well against poorly motivated JNA soldiers, many of whom were conscripts (Tus 2001:50). General Anton Tus, the Croatian army’s first Chief of Staff when it was formally created on 21 September 1991, has argued that the army could have occupied all JNA garrisons and depots in September and October 1991. He criticised President Tudjman for issuing erratic instructions and forcing the army to make decisions on narrowly political criteria, decisions which had to be rescinded at a later date (Tus 2001:50). Tudjman’s unwillingness to evacuate the civilian inhabitants of Vukovar has also been criticised (Sikavica 1997:143). The cost of occupying even a small city such as Vukovar may have dissuaded the Serbian besiegers of Sarajevo from moving in decisively to try and capture it when they enjoyed an overwhelming military advantage in Bosnia in 1992–3.
Germany breaks ranks

By the closing months of 1991, the EC was striving to preserve its credibility by brokering dozens of cease-fires, only for them to collapse within hours or days. Following the rejection by Milošević of the Community’s peace proposal of 18 October, the EC announced it would impose trade sanctions against any republic that still rejected the plan by 5 November. Three days later, EC heads of government imposed sanctions on Yugoslavia. The trade and cooperation agreements, the first Brussels had signed with a communist country, were abrogated along with other trading preferences. Comprehensive measures were adopted to assist those republics which had endorsed the EC peace plan (Steinberg 1994:243).

Hitherto the EC had maintained a united front over the Yugoslav crisis. But this fell apart when Germany came out officially in favour of recognising Slovenia and Croatia as independent states. Their independence declarations had been reactivated in October after the failure of the Brioni agreement, which had frozen them while a peace agreement was being sought. In early December 1991, the Bundestag, Germany’s parliament, voted unanimously to mandate the government to opt for recognition before Christmas 1991 (Gow 1997:171). Foreign Minister Genscher stated that his aim was to seek EC agreement for recognition at the important Maastricht summit of the EC later in the month. He warned that if agreement was not found, Germany would break ranks and recognise them unilaterally.

Serbian officials railed against a new German drang nach Osten. It is a view that struck a definite chord with analysts and policy-makers in times to come. Susan Woodward saw German activity in a particularly negative light:

Germany was now acting unilaterally to secure its eastern and southern flanks with a ring of friendly, prosperous, stable states from Poland to the Czech Republic, Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia, and without regard for the destabilising potential of this new, if invisible border in eastern and south-eastern Europe.

(Woodward 1996a:174)

If Germany was not seeking to create a ring of satellites, it was certainly displaying overweening arrogance. Woodward elsewhere has written that:

The German campaign came through as cultural arrogance—in deciding for the Yugoslavs whose rights were more valid and what use of force was acceptable; in its repeated insistence that the issue was one of values, above all ‘German values’ and ‘European standards’; and in its demonization of Milošević and the Serbs.

(Woodward 1995:186)

A German authority on the Balkans, Marie-Janine Calić, has written that cultural factors were significant in shaping the German outlook at the time, but not necessarily for the same reasons as those of Woodward:
the German public opinion was attracted by the Slovenes’ and Croats’ striving for independence which was an expression of its own ideal of self-determination. Historically, the Germans conceived of the nation primarily as a community determined by descent, language and culture. Thus, they interpreted the right to self-determination differently from the Americans or the French, for example, who interpret nationalism from a political rather than an ethnic standpoint. According to their conception of state, a nation is based on civic values, traditions and institutions. Moreover, the Germans were not familiar with the problems of ethno-national or regional movements within their country, thus there was a lack of sensitivity towards an extensive interpretation of the right to self-determination there.

(Calić 1996:58)

The prominent British Labour Party figure, Tony Benn, was just one of several leading figures in allied countries who were convinced that ‘the break-up of Yugoslavia was a deliberate act of German policy to reassert control in the Balkans…’ It is not clear why the Balkans was the German target when nearer to home there were formerly German territories in Prussia, Silesia and the Sudetenland from which Germans had been driven out or forced to flee in 1944–5; these Germans constituted an active lobby in domestic politics, particularly in the ruling Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU). They could vote in German elections, unlike many of the ‘guest workers’ from Yugoslavia. But post-unification Germany never put pressure on Poland or the Czech Republic for territorial revisions or even for energetic restoration of property rights, and would not use these issues to slow up the negotiations both countries eventually started in order to join the EU.

The ‘German conspiracy thesis’ for events in Yugoslavia acquired a good deal of momentum, particularly for ‘elites…in Britain [which] lacked substantial information on the background of the conflict, or decided to rely on information filtered by Belgrade-centred sources’ (Conversi 1998:58). But one of Britain’s leading scholars on Germany and post-Cold War Eastern Europe, Timothy Garton-Ash, has refuted the German conspiracy theory. He believes the main determinant for change in German policy was pressure from below:

One can safely say that most Germans who supported this step did so with the very best intentions, which had nothing in common with Hitler’s wartime alliance with Croatia. One the contrary, Milošević’s Serbia had been presented to them as the new Nazi Germany and this time they wanted to be on the right side… What one could not say, however, is that this sudden turn in German policy was the result of any sober calculation of national interest. It was a hasty over-reaction, following public and especially published opinion rather than leading it. Of course, it was by no means only in Bonn that this was liable to happen. It was one of the structural problems of making foreign policy in a television democracy.

(Garton-Ash 1993:396)
Another British source has argued that Germany’s own disreputable authoritarian phase between 1933 and 1945, and the failure of appeasement policies to halt its destructive course, weighed heavily on policy-makers such as Genscher (Bennett 1995:178). The anti-appeasement mood was shaped by sharp press criticism of Western inaction. As early as 29 June 1991, Die Welt carried an editorial declaring that ‘Serbian guerrillas and the Yugoslav army have decided to let the worst come to pass. The protectors of the murderers only laugh when they are urged to enter into a dialogue.’

The idea that the several-hundred-thousand-strong Croatian ‘guest worker’ community was able to exercise strong influence in German politics appears far-fetched (Krieger 1994:31). The Catholic CDU, in office under Chancellor Kohl, was likely to have sympathies with mainly Catholic Croatia. But Genscher, a Protestant, headed the smaller coalition partner, the Free Democrats, whose voters were not swayed by such religious concerns (but are likely to have been among the millions of Germans who regularly holidayed on the Dalmatian coast). It was Genscher who was the prime mover in German foreign policy until his retirement in 1992.

He argued that:

the Serb leadership wanted to gain time (through the use of negotiations)… in order to continue their military actions and to achieve their military goals … It became clear that a further delay of recognition would constitute an encouragement to continue the war.18

By contrast, recognition would result in an “internationalisation” of the crisis which would permit intervention without Belgrade’s consent’ (Zucconi 1996:243).

Even after Germany stepped back from the limelight over Yugoslavia, the Foreign Ministry still insisted that Serbia had prime responsibility for unleashing events the world could not ignore. Thus, in March 1993, its published brief on ‘Recognition of the Yugoslav Successor States’ argued: ‘The Serbian leadership itself had done all that it could to undermine the state created by Tito by systematically unleashing Serbian nationalism since 1987’ (Gow 1997:169).

However, there was one important double-standard in the German case. Bonn strongly favoured NATO or the WEU standing up militarily against Belgrade’s aggression, while being fully aware that the German constitution prevented the Bundeswehr (army) participating even in peace-keeping forces beyond the state frontiers. But, if Germany had sought to resolve this anomaly by altering the constitution, it is highly likely that it would have been viewed as a deeply provocative action by many of its Western critics.

Germany’s actions in 1991 over the Yugoslav crisis have never been forgotten by ‘politicians, intellectuals, and media professionals wishing to pin the blame [for the debacle] on a convenient target’ (Conversi 1998:18). Relations were indeed soured between the other Western powers and Bonn. Douglas Hurd even told British MPs on 18 December 1991 that ‘there is a tradition in these matters of Western Europe splitting in rivalry and this all ending up on the battlefield’.19

The most serious criticism levelled at Germany is that its ‘precipitate’ recognition of Croatia engineered a chain of events that led to the declaration of Bosnian independence and the outbreak of the worst fighting in post-1991 Yugoslavia. However, Serbian preparations for the war in Bosnia had been in train since at least August 1991, long
before the EU had decided to abandon a peace settlement based on an all-Yugoslav state (Gow 1997:34). Stanley Hoffmann has written:

> The critics of the premature ‘recognition’ of Bosnia-Herzegovina need to prove that there would have been no war in Bosnia-Herzegovina if recognition had been denied or postponed. The gap between the Serbs’ position and the Muslims’ insistence on a multi-ethnic state was such that it is hard to see how war could have been avoided.

(Hoffmann 1996:107)

Those opposed to early recognition of Slovenia and Croatia were not prepared to ‘put the Yugoslav peace process before European unity’ (Silber and Little 1996:219). Blocking Genscher would have shattered prospects for progress in asserting a common security and foreign policy structure. On 17 December, the EC agreed to invite all Yugoslav republics wishing to do so to submit a request for international recognition by 24 December. It was to be considered by the Badinter Commission which the EC had set up in November under the chairmanship of French judge and constitutional lawyer, Robert Badinter. Its purpose had been to advise upon the legal aspects of the dissolution of Yugoslavia (including the distribution of former federal assets), and to prescribe conditions for recognition after Slovenia and Croatia reactivated their independence declarations (Allcock et al. 1998:11). On 9 December, the Badinter Commission had already submitted a report to the EC Peace Conference in The Hague which concluded that Yugoslavia was in a process of dissolution.

The Badinter Commission came to the forefront of the peace process thanks to a complex deal secured at the Maastricht summit of the EU in December 1991. Stanley Hoffmann has summed up its particulars as follows:

> Germany would agree not to break ranks but to wait for collective recognition, in exchange for a British and French agreement to separate the issue of recognition from that of a global settlement; and Britain and France agreed to do this in exchange for German concessions in the Maastricht negotiations (to accommodate the distrustful United Kingdom; over institutional reform, to please the reluctant French). The injection of these completely extraneous issues into the handling of the Yugoslav crisis was not a mark of wisdom.

(Hoffmann 1996:111)

### The Croatian cease-fire and the work of the Badinter Commission

EC recognition of Slovenia and Croatia took place on 15 January 1992. On 2 January, Cyrus Vance secured a permanent cease-fire with the United Nations authorising a peace force for Croatia on the 8th. What motivated Milošević and the JNA to agree to a cease-fire was the deteriorating military situation (Cigar 2001a:205). Manpower and morale problems were corroding the effectiveness of the JNA (Cigar 1993:320–2). Initially, the JNA may have hoped to acquire control of all Croatia and suppress its independence bid,
but its influence waned as an improved Croatian army waged fierce resistance. An incident on 7 January 1992 further damaged the leadership of the JNA. Federal jets shot down an EC helicopter, killing all five monitors on board. The EC communiqué referred to ‘an accident’, with Douglas Hurd saying that it should not be allowed to hinder the peace process (Almond 1994:244). Such a tepid response was a further indication, if any were needed, of the EC’s hesitation about countering flagrant aggression. Western irresolution was fully demonstrated by the way the Croatian peace plan was implemented. Under it, people displaced from areas under Serbian occupation were to be allowed back to their homes in disputed zones (known as UN Protected Areas: UNPAs) pending a final settlement. There were around a quarter of a million such people but, by ‘the end of 1994, not a single refugee had been allowed to return’ (Rieff 1995:179). The peace-keepers had no mandate to create conditions for the return of refugees and could do little when the Serbian police, into which members of the Serbian militias had enrolled en masse, blocked all efforts to facilitate refugee returns (Unfinished Peace 1996:45). It was soon universally conceded that the Serbs, not the UN, controlled the UNPAs.

General Kadijević, the Defence Minister in Belgrade, resigned after the deaths of the EC monitors. In a year the JNA had changed out of all recognition and the changes were far from complete. During 1991, almost all Slovene and Croatian officers had been forced to quit, regardless of their loyalty. In early 1992, ‘officers of strong Yugoslav persuasion, but whose loyalty to Milošević was questionable, or who did not share to a sufficient degree the currently fashionable commitment to Serbian nationalism’ were next to go (Vasić 1996:130). The army’s security arm was also purged and secret servicemen allied to Milošević installed (Vasić 1996:130).

The JNA had allowed itself to be easily manipulated by Milošević. In 1989 and 1991 he used it for internal security purposes in Kosovo and, in March 1991, it had lost its reputation for neutrality even in Serbia when it suppressed student demonstrations in Belgrade calling for Milošević’s removal (Allcock et al. 1998:337). On 19 May 1992, the JNA formally disappeared. It became three armies: the army of Yugoslavia (VJ), the army of the Serbian Krajina (SVK) and the army of the Republic of Srpska (VRS), initially called the army of Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Špegelj 2001a:36). In the VJ, loyalty to Milošević became the key to survival and it gradually turned into his own personal instrument.

As an uneasy peace fell over Croatia, preparations for war intensified in Bosnia which it was hard to conceal. Weaponry was moved from Croatia to Bosnia and heavy artillery positions were constructed around several of its cities, including Sarajevo (Malcolm 1994a:231). In December 1991, the Prime Minister of Slovenia, Lojze Peterle, used diplomatic channels to urge the West to send a peace-keeping mission to Bosnia (Ramet 1999:203). But Cyrus Vance opposed the preventative deployment of troops there (Conversi 1998:66, n. 52).

The EC’s Badinter Commission also took decisions which would have fateful results. It decided to recommend that the inner boundaries of Yugoslavia be recognised as international ones, replying in the affirmative, on 11 January 1992, to the question of whether the boundaries between Croatia and Serbia and Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina could be regarded as international boundaries (Zucconi 1996:266). If it had come out in favour of a revision of republican boundaries in order to facilitate the creation of new states in the defunct federation, it might just have encouraged Serbia (and possibly
Croatia as well) to use military might to enforce its ownership rights over disputed or ethnically mixed territory. So it had unenviable decisions to make. Nevertheless, the Badinter Commission gave itself less than a month to approve the request for recognition. States seeking secession needed to fulfil minimum democratic preconditions, particularly in the treatment of minorities. The Badinter Commission ruled that Croatia had failed to do this. Nevertheless, the EC went ahead and granted recognition. If the EC had insisted on proper treatment of minorities in Croatia, it would have been far less easy for Milošević to depict himself as the protector of the Serbs outside Serbia. (It is likely that the pressure on him to concede similar guarantees to the Albanians in Kosovo would also have increased) (Štitkovač 1997:160). Germany pressed Tudjman to determine constitutionally the rights of minorities and institute a human rights court. But Genscher did little when Tudjman failed to respond. By the close of 1995, the percentage of Serbs in Croatia had fallen from 12 to 5 per cent of the republic’s population (Cohen 1998:439).

The EC’s reputation as an honest broker was even further tarnished in relation to the Republic of Macedonia. The Badinter Commission had ruled favourably on its eligibility. It rejected the claim made by Greece, finding that Macedonia had ‘renounced all territorial claims of any kind in unambiguous statements binding in international law; that the use of the name “Macedonia” cannot therefore imply any territorial claim against another State’ (Zucconi 1996:268). However, because Greece objected strenuously, recognition was withheld. For The Independent in London, ‘the lesson seemed to be that if an EC member wanted something badly enough, it would get it—a new twist to the idea of a common foreign policy’.20

Turning to Bosnia, the Badinter Commission ruled on 11 January 1992 that Bosnia fell short of the EC’s criteria for recognition, but this assessment could be reviewed if a referendum on independence was carried out under international supervisions (Touval 2002:108). It did not insist on majority support in each of Bosnia’s three constituent ethnic groups. Nor did this requirement take account of the mood of belligerence among the Bosnian Serb leadership. Burg and Shoup reckon that the call for a referendum by the Badinter Commission when there was already a simmering inter-ethnic conflict in Bosnia (a call supported by the USA) was by far the main mistake of the international community in the run-up to the conflict: ‘The mistake…consisted of its unqualified support for the holding of a referendum on independence before the three nationalist parties had agreed on a constitutional solution’ (Burg and Shoup 1999:126).

EC decisions in this crucial period were made not on the basis of general principles but according to the degree of pressure certain countries were prepared to exert. It was a bad omen when what was called for was a clear indication that the EC was not partial to, or antagonistic towards, any ethnic group or republic.

The failure of international efforts to wrest the initiative from Serbs in Yugoslavia committed to settling conflict by violence left the strategically placed republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (hereafter Bosnia) dangerously exposed.

**No hiding place from the war: Bosnia before May 1992**

With an area of 51,129 square kilometres and a population in 1991 of 4.36 million, Bosnia was the third largest, both in size and population, of the six Yugoslav republics. It
lacked a predominant nation and could not claim to be a nation-state that had merged its
destiny with other nations in the Yugoslav commonwealth. None of its three nationalities,
Muslim, Serb and Croat, had an absolute majority. According to the 1991 census, the
population was 17.3 per cent Croat, 31.4 per cent Serb and 43.7 per cent Muslim, with a
further 5.5 per cent declaring themselves to be ‘Yugoslavs’ (Cohen 1993:139).

The Muslims had been recognised as a constituent nation only as recently as the
census of 1971 (Thompson 1999:209). They acted as a buffer between the two larger
South Slav national groupings, the Serbs and the Croats, whose unresolved political
differences became harder to conceal from the 1970s onwards. A 1990 poll on the
attachment of citizens in the federation to different levels of territorial organisational
found that Muslims (84 per cent) gave their primary identification to Yugoslavia (ahead
even of Montenegrins, on 80 per cent, who had traditionally done well out of the

Nationalist ideologues among the Serbs and Croats viewed the Muslims as renegade
members of their own group who had broken Christian solidarity by going over to the
Islamic foe during the long era of colonial rule (Bringa 1995:13). Such ideologues were
increasingly in the ascendancy as communist collectivism was substituted for the
nationalist version in the 1980s. Bosnia did not witness nationalist mobilisation until
almost the last years of Yugoslavia’s existence as a single unit. A multi-ethnic civic
culture was slowly emerging in its cities. The incidence of mixed marriages was usually
higher than that to be found elsewhere in the state and, in 1981, accounted for 15.3 per
cent of the Bosnian total (Burg 1997:125). But there was social distance and separation in
the rural areas, where far fewer inhabitants declared themselves to be ‘Yugoslav’ and
ethnic communities were far more tight-knit despite harmonious relations in public
(Bringa 1995:3). According to one source, ‘underlying antagonisms and tensions’ from
the early 1940s ‘constituted an important latent force waiting to erupt on the political
landscape’ (Cohen 1993:127).

Bosnia in the Second World War had epitomised the horrors and heroism of
Yugoslavia in this testing period. Absorbed into Pavelić’s puppet Croatian state, it
witnessed bloody massacres of large numbers of Serbs. But it would also be where Tito’s
Partisans fought some of their epic battles and won powerful support from all three ethnic
groups. Under Tito, Bosnia’s communists were obedient to the federal centre, and
liberalism was dealt with more harshly than elsewhere. Economic incompetence and
corruption blighted the reputation of the ruling communists in Bosnia during the late
1980s. Thus a party which, however hidebound and illiberal, had at least preserved an
ethnic balance was in a much weakened position when one-party rule began to fade. The
Alliance of Reform Forces, founded by Yugoslavia’s Prime Minister, Ante Marković, in
1990, might have fulfilled a political integrating role in Bosnia if it had been given more
time to organise itself before the crisis erupted in the federation. It acquired its best
electoral results in some of the cities of Bosnia where a secularised elite ‘set standards of
tolerance and openness’ (Allcock et al. 1998:23). This cosmopolitan urban elite appeared
well on its way to instituting a shared civic culture in Bosnia until war intervened. But
Bosnia, often viewed as a microcosm of Yugoslavia because of its ethnicity and religious
diversity, stood little chance of developing its multi-cultural features unless the federation
as a whole remained stable. It could not insulate itself from conflicts in neighbouring
countries which were soon impinging on Bosnia itself. Much of the electronic media was
beamed into local homes from beyond Bosnia. Serbian television’s broadcasting of the exhumation of Serbian victims of ethnic violence in the Second World War was bound to damage ethnic ties in Bosnia, where much of this violence had been carried out. The failure of Yutel, a federal TV station which started broadcasting in the late 1990s, committed to defending democracy and multi-culturalism, showed how difficult it was to counter appeals to collective hatred.21

The Bosnian Muslims had been politically submerged during the first half of the communist era. The only ones who were prominent in the Communist Party were children of middle-class Muslims and of impoverished nobility, some of whom had belonged to the Partisans (Zulfikarpasić 1998:91). According to Milovan Djilas:

The Muslims lagged behind the other nations in their development towards a national consciousness, and this...was due to the fact that they had been part of the Turkish empire for so long and...identified with the Turkish state.

(Zulfikarpasić 1998:85)

But later they were not alienated from the Yugoslav state like their mainly fellow Muslims, the Kosovar Albanians. Of Bosnian Muslims, 891,800 had declared themselves to be of Yugoslav nationality in the 1953 census (Bringa 1995:28); they had yet to reach the point of differentiation by 1945, when Bosnia-Herzegovina became a republic in Federal Yugoslavia within broadly the same borders that had existed in Ottoman times (Zulfikarpasić 1998:84). Yugoslavia’s durable communist leader, Marshal Tito, increasingly regarded Bosnia, with its dependable political bosses and quiescent Muslim population, as a shock absorber for centrifugal trends emanating from either Serbia or Croatia (Banac 1996:146).

Muslims were slowly rising in the party and, by 1971, made up 33.9 per cent of the membership in Bosnia (Schöpflin 1980:16). In 1961 Muslims had been recognised as a narod (people), and in 1971 as a nationality (Bringa 1995:28). Whatever impact their emergence had on internal politics, it also went down well with the Islamic countries grouped in the non-aligned movement that, during Tito’s lifetime, was effectively headed by Yugoslavia.

Bosnian Muslims switched in large numbers from having a ‘Yugoslav’ identity in census returns to a ‘Muslim’ one. But Bosnian Muslim nationhood was secular. Religion had been their chief unifying feature but, increasingly, it only touched most Muslims lightly (Friedman 1996:239). Mosques mainly attracted the elderly.22 A commonly heard saying in the Muslim community was: ‘There’ll be time to go to the mosque: wait till you get old’ (Udovicki and Štitkovač 1997:176). One journalist has claimed that Bosnian Muslims were, in the main, ‘bacon-sandwich-washed-down-with-plum-brandy Muslims to a degree that appalled and amazed charity officials from religious Islamic countries’ in the 1990s (Vulliamy 1998:85).

Community relations could probably be traced on a wide continuum in a society as ethnically complex as Bosnia. The Norwegian anthropologist Tone Bringa offers a useful perspective about such relationships in a mixed village in central Bosnia where she carried out research from 1987 to 1992:
There was both co-existence and conflict, tolerance and prejudice, suspicion and friendship... To the generation that grew up in the 1950s and 1960s [nationality] was usually not an issue, while to pre-World War II generations it often was, and it was starting to become important to young people in the eighties.

(Bringa 1995:3)

By 1990 about 40 per cent of urban Bosnian marriages involved people from different ethnic backgrounds (Friedman 1996:179). But liberal-minded city-dwellers were politically inactive thanks to the communist monopoly of power, and would largely remain so up to the last weeks of peace in Bosnia. A woman from Sarajevo, the owner with her husband of an optician’s shop, highlighted the indifference to politics of the urban-minded in Bosnia:

Before, under the communist regime, we were not in the habit of protesting. It is also true that we were living something of a dolce vita. We reckoned, before the war, that we were earning more than the average French optician. In a sense we had it too good—everything was earned without effort or obligation. We spent weekends in Rome and Paris, we kept up with the fashions, and were always going out to restaurants. We went skiing at night on the illuminated slopes around Sarajevo; we spent our days at the terraces of cafes. Nobody was interested in politics. Had people like us and our friends engaged ourselves, we may have been able to avoid the worst.

(Vejvoda 1996:22)

Mirko Pejanović, a Serb who remained loyal to the Sarajevo government throughout the ensuing war, decried ‘the inability of reform-minded individuals to present a unified political platform to a citizenry being courted by the simple allure of nationalism’. An anti-nationalist party such as the one hastily got up by Ante Marković failed to make striking progress in such conditions. When multi-party elections were possible in September 1990, most of the electorate voted along communitarian lines, for one of three parties representing Muslims, Serbs and Croats. The communist state itself had licensed an ethnic outlook by ensuring that, at least in many civil occupations and professions, each of the ethnic groups was well represented. A communitarian identity had been advanced at the expense of a sense of citizenship during, and indeed for long before, the communist era (Bougarel 1996:87).

The clear front-runner in the 1990 election was the Party of Democratic Action (SDA). It was an uneasy mix of people who had worked with, or suffered under, the communist system and who gave contrasting degrees of emphasis to a secular or confessional Muslim identity. The best-known figure was 50-year-old Fikrit Abdić, a communist-era manager who had brought prosperity to the over-whelmingly Muslim Bihać area of north-west Bosnia in the 1980s. He managed Agromerc, Yugoslavia’s biggest state food company, until 1987, when he was accused of issuing around $1 billion in unsecured promissory notes. He was sent to prison but released upon acquittal in 1989. Abdić won more votes in the presidential election than any other candidate. He
wore his religion lightly, as did Adil Zulfikarpasić, a successful businessman in Switzerland, who returned after decades abroad to try to promote a centrist liberal party emphasising civic as opposed to ethnic identities (Zulfikarpasić 1998:153). But destined to eclipse those two was Alija Izetbegović, who did not have a communist background or indeed political experience of any kind. Instead he had a background of religious activism which had earned him prison sentences in the mid-1940s and from 1983 to 1989 (Allcock et al. 1998:131).

The SDA started out as a catch-all party encompassing former communist notables, various kinds of Muslim nationalists and an initially very low-profile pan-Islamic current (Bougarel 1999:4) Among the SDA’s founder members were eight people who had been active in the Young Muslims, a pan-Islamic movement stretching back to the 1930s. In the Second World War, the Young Muslims had supported the idea of an autonomous Bosnia under German tutelage, some joining an SS division recruited by Amin el-Hussein, the mufti of Jerusalem (Bougarel 1999:2, 4). The religious stronghold of the Islamicists was the mosque in Zagreb, the then religious leader of Bosnia’s Muslims showing no enthusiasm for the politicisation of religious identity. But the SDA was able to work through young imams and hodzas (priests) who played a big role in choosing the local party committees outside the big cities (Zulfikarpasić 1998:154). Zulfikarpasić has claimed that Izetbegović’s group relied on people in religious communities who had served the communist regime ‘and were now ready to serve the SDA unconditionally’ (Zulfikarpasić 1998:154). The end result, he claims, was a low-quality party out of its depth in a situation where politics was being played for the highest of stakes (Zulfikarpasić 1998:142). Zulfikarpasić broke with the SDA in September 1990 after trying to persuade it to abandon the national ‘Muslim’ name in favour of a new one: Bosniak (Bosnjak).26 Little further was heard of the Muslim Bosniak organisation he founded. Abdić, in turn, was sidelined despite winning most votes for the presidency.

Lying in second place to the SDA in the 1990 Bosnian elections was the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) with 26.15 per cent of the votes. Like the SDA, it emerged thanks to the lobbying of a professional group which enjoyed a standing beyond the Communist Party. The SDS actually spread from Dalmatian Croatia to Bosnia. Jovan Rasković, the psychiatrist who had founded it in February 1990, contacted colleagues in the medical profession, health workers, doctors, dentists and psychiatrists, in order to get the party off the ground (Bennett 1995:126). Among them was Radovan Karadžić, whose political skills enabled him to emerge as the SDS leader in Bosnia. In the Bosnian election, the SDS campaigned on a vague platform of Serb rights with no mention being made of partitioning Bosnia. It got 72 out of 240 seats, but thirteen Serbs were elected for other parties (Malcolm 1994a:222).

Initially, a tactical alliance between these two parties with their Muslim and Serb clienteles appeared to take shape (Burg and Shoup 1999:52). In the past, Bosnian Muslim leaders had opted for non-confrontational and coalition-building strategies in order to remain in contention politically and to avoid hostility being directed at them (Friedman 1996:239). One incentive for cohabitation was the need to vote down the parties with a Yugoslav outlook in the elections (Zulfikarpasić 1998:146). David Owen, the EU peace envoy, has even claimed that in the summer of 1990, Izetbegović and Karadžić went to a memorial meeting in the town of Foča for Muslim and Serb victims of the Second World War, and, on a bridge over the Drina river, both said ‘blood must never flow down the...
Drina river ever again’ (Owen 1996:186). Such concord was, however, short-lived and competition between the SDA and SDS broke out, initially over the spoils of office, after other competitors had been flung aside (Burg and Shoup 1999:53–4).

Initially, the SDA’s Islamic founders had wished to unite all of Yugoslavia’s Muslims. They had close links with the Sandzak, adjacent to Bosnia but part of Serbia, whose population was mainly Muslim (Bougarel 1999:12). But the Albanians of Kosovo had no strong leanings towards a religious party, less to one that was Yugoslav in orientation. As the crisis in the rest of the federation impinged on Bosnia, the SDA was increasingly emphasising a political programme centred around Bosnia.

But Izetbegović was unable to shake off the party’s Islamic image, which was gleefully exploited by its ethnic opponents. They seized upon his 1973 Islamic Declaration, an esoteric document into which they read plans to create a Muslim state. According to Silber and Little:

A more significant indicator of Izetbegović’s orientation was Islam between East and West, first published in the United States in 1984. This book mapped out his vision of an Islamic state in the modern world… In it he charts a course between Islamic values and material progress, arguing that the benefits of secular western civilization are without meaning unless they are accompanied by the spiritual values found predominantly in Islamic societies.

(Silber and Little 1996:229)

Izetbegović’s political record since 1990 does not suggest that he is a religious zealot. It is possible to point to statements such as the one delivered in Tehran in December 1997 at the closing of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, where he challenged head-on some cherished attitudes held by Islamic regimes, such as that of the host country of the summit, Iran:

Islam is the best but we [Muslims] are not the best… The West is neither corrupted nor degenerate… It is strong, well-educated and organized. Their schools are better than ours. Their cities are cleaner than ours… The level of respect for human rights in the West is higher and the care for the poor and the less capable is better organized. The Westerners are usually responsible and accurate in their words… Instead of hating the West, let us …proclaim cooperation instead of confrontation. 27

But Izetbegović has shown himself capable of playing into the hands of his enemies. David Owen criticised him for visiting Libya in March 1991 to arrange a $50 million loan and, in the same year, for applying to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference for observer status for multi-confessional Bosnia (Owen 1996:39). Such moves could so easily be misinterpreted in rural Bosnia, where Serbs often relied for political information on hopelessly biased television news beamed from Belgrade. It has been claimed that the Muslim religion enraged or frightened Serbs, especially in upland rural areas where contacts were usually confined to one’s own community and where the Muslim might be seen as a lineal descendant of the hated ‘Turk’ of old (Friedman 1996:245). Such hatreds
were also to be found among the Herzegovinian Croats, who often lived in relatively closed communities contiguous with Croatia (Moore 1994:22).28

From late 1990, the SDS, along with most parties in Serbia, was arguing for the ‘cantonisation of Bosnia’. In May 1991, Karadžić’s party started to demand the secession of large parts of north-west Bosnia and their amalgamation with the Croatian ‘Krajina’ in a new republic (Malcolm 1994a:224). By July 1991, Noel Malcolm relates:

there was evidence that regular secret deliveries of arms to Bosnian Serbs were being arranged by Milošević… Confirmation of this came in August, when the outgoing federal Prime Minister, Ante Marković, released a tape recording of a telephone conversation in which Milošević could be heard informing Karadžić that his next delivery of arms would be supplied to him by General Nikola Uzelac, the federal army commander in Banja Luka. There could be little doubt by now that Karadžić’s actions were being directed step-by-step, by the Serbian President: he even boasted to one British journalist in August that he and Milošević ‘speak several times a week on the phone’.

(Malcolm 1994a:225)

James Gow has referred to striking parallels between Bosnia’s situation on the eve of war and that of Czechoslovakia in the late 1930s. Konrad Henlein, the leader of the Sudeten German Party, was induced by Hitler to destabilise the Sudetenland by whipping up the local German population. Escalating demands for autonomy were made, which an increasingly isolated Czechoslovak government was unable to resist; according to Gow, ‘[A]s Hitler used Henlein, so Milošević used Karadžić’ (Gow 1997:83).

By September 1991, the SDS had proclaimed a few ‘Serb Autonomous Regions’ in Bosnia. In that month, an appeal was issued to the JNA to ‘protect’ them, and federal troops were promptly deployed. The ‘borders’ of ‘the Serb Autonomous Region of Herzegovina’ were mapped out (Malcolm 1994a: 227–8). As a reciprocal gesture, the mayor of Trebinje, the largest town in south-west Herzegovina, and hundreds of his supporters, participated in the bombing of nearby Dubrovnik, promising to build a new Dubrovnik even more magnificent than the previous one. One of the justifications the SDS leadership used for its aggressive actions was that more than 60 per cent of the land in Bosnia-Herzegovina was owned by Serbs at the outbreak of the conflict (Hodge 1999:13).29 Published records indicated that, until 1991, Bosnian Muslims had owned 1,049,535 hectares (20.5 per cent) of the land in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbs had around 998,338 hectares (19.5 per cent) and Croats 343,019 hectares (6.7 per cent).30

Absence of conflict prevention seals Bosnia’s fate

Political objectives and war aims fluctuated in Belgrade as the Yugoslav crisis evolved and took increasingly violent forms. But it is clear that there was far greater interest in acquiring control of Bosnia than in linking the Croatian ‘Krajina’ to Serbia. The Dalmatian hinterland was mainly barren upland. Only those such as Šešelj, who had a maximalist objective of securing the whole Yugoslav coast, were firmly attached to it.
There would be hardly a whimper in Belgrade when Milošević eventually abandoned the Krajina Serbs in 1995. But Bosnia, because of its location in the heart of Yugoslavia, the existence of many military facilities and, above all, the much larger Serb population, was a different matter.

Boro Jović, Milošević’s closest ally in 1991, was quite open when he met Croatia’s Stjepan Mesić early in that year, about the importance of Bosnia. Jović told Mesić that Serbs in Croatia were of no interest to Serbia:

They are your citizens, do with them what you will, you can impale them if you want, it’s no business of ours… We are interested in 66 per cent of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and this we shall take. It was Serb, it is Serb, it will remain Serb.

(Mesić 2001:11–12)

Preparations for war in Bosnia were sufficiently noticeable for Baker, the US Secretary of State, publicly to express his concern at the UN Security Council in the autumn of 1991 (Simms 2001:19). When the SDA sought to get parliamentary backing for the idea that Bosnia was a sovereign entity, Karadžić warned on 15 October 1991:

Do not think that you will not lead Bosnia-Herzegovina to hell, and do not think that you will not perhaps lead the Muslim people into annihilation, because the Muslim people cannot defend themselves if there is war… How will you prevent everyone from being killed in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

(Burg and Shoup 1999:78)

But Izetbegović, having occupied the Bosnian presidency since 1990, was strangely passive. He allowed the JNA to confiscate the weapons supplies of the local territorial defence units and resisted calls to create a fighting force loyal to the government or arrange the defection of Muslims in the Yugoslav army (Cohen 1998:341). According to a Muslim political rival, Izetbegović was convinced that the JNA would somehow prevent any persecution of the Muslim population. But, in early 1992, he decided suddenly to recommend to the Muslims that they should no longer respond to the call-up, without entering into talks with the military (Zulfikarpasić 1998:147).

Izetbegović gave the impression of being politically out of his depth in this crucial period. A journalist who visited the presidency building in Sarajevo at the end of 1991 was unable to see him but met his tearful daughter, Sabrina, who worked as her father’s assistant: “we don’t know what he’s doing”, she said… “He works all the time, yet we see no results” (Hall 1994:206).

Izetbegović’s political options were indeed narrow. Until the last months of 1991 he had striven to preserve a Yugoslav federation, fearing for the future of Bosnia if it attempted to go it alone or found itself trapped with, and under the control of, Serbia. Minus Croatia he believed Yugoslavia to be a dead letter and, even if Bosnia joined a rump Yugoslavia, he felt it would be a prelude for partition, with the Herzegovinian Croats seceding and other carve-ups to follow (Burg and Shoup 1999:96–7). In December 1991 he decided to apply for EC recognition, perhaps assuming that with recognition would come a Western commitment to defend Bosnia if it faced large-scale
aggression. But the threatening mood of Karadžić’s camp was unmistakable. As soon as
the EC announced (on 16 December) that it was prepared to recognise the former
Yugoslav republics, the Bosnian Serb assembly (set up in the preceding months)
announced the formation of the Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (on 21 December)

The EC-sponsored international conference on Bosnia, which began on 14 February
1992, showed that the West Europeans wanted Izetbegović to compromise with the
Bosnian Serbs and Croats. In talks brokered by the Portuguese diplomat, José Cutileiro,
the three sides agreed to recognize the existing external borders of Bosnia. They also
endorsed the formation of national territorial units within Bosnia. The first represented a compromise by the Serb and Croat parties because it
committed them to the preservation of a Bosnian state. The second agreement…was a complete turn around for Alija Izetbegović who, until
then, had rejected any division along ethnic lines.

(Silber and Little 1996:241)

A Western diplomat who got to know Izetbegović described him as ‘a decent individual,
but naïve as a political leader… He’s weak as a negotiator, agrees to compromises and
then changes his mind. He’s too much influenced by the person he last spoke with.’31 An
outcry ensued in Sarajevo when details of the agreement, signed in Lisbon, were leaked.

Lord Carrington has also alleged American interference: ‘The Americans actually sent
them [the Bosnians] a telegram telling them not to sign.’32 Anyway, Izetbegović soon
withdrew from the Lisbon agreement. It could well have prevented the bloodbath that
ensued in April but in all probability it would have led to enormous population
displacement and, no doubt, suffering. The 1991 census had shown that, although they
had their concentrations in specific areas, the three ethnic groups were densely
intermingled (Mahmutčehajić 2001a:144). Under the internal borders agreed at Lisbon
for the ethnic cantons, 50 per cent of Serbs would have been living outside the Serb
region, 59 per cent of Croats outside theirs, and 18 per cent of Muslims outside theirs
(Divjak 2001:173–4). If territory had been divided up into ‘national’ areas, forced
migration, expulsions and perhaps even massacre would have been likely consequences.
It is possible that only a large-scale intervention from outside could have allowed a de
facto partition to have been accomplished without significant loss of life.

The significance of the Cutileiro plan was that it legitimated the ‘ethnic criteria’ for
dividing Bosnian territory, one that would be followed by all subsequent peace plans
(Divjak 2001:173–4). It was soon followed by a referendum on independence, held on 29
February and 1 March 1992. This was a requirement that needed to be fulfilled in order to
secure EU recognition of independence. Of voters, 92.68 per cent supported
independence on a 63.4 per cent turnout. Muslims and Croats voted overwhelmingly in
favour, but most Serbs stayed away. The SDS had called for a boycott and, in several
areas, the SDS was able to prevent the opening of polling stations (Kumar 1997:51; Rieff
1995:17). Federal army planes also dropped leaflets supporting the boycott (Malcolm
1994a:231).
Before the results were announced, a Serb attending a wedding in Sarajevo was shot by an unknown assassin. Barricades were thrown up around the city by Serbs and twelve people died before an uneasy calm was restored. It was still hard to imagine that Bosnia stood on the edge of a horrendous conflict. The bodyguards of Izetbegović and Karadžić mingled in the corridor outside the television studio where they were negotiating in March 1992 (Silber and Little 1996:227). Sarajevo TV, unlike its counterparts in the two republics that had already gone to war, worked tirelessly to bridge the ethno—political divide. Nenad Pejić, the editor-in-chief, had successfully prevented local television being carved up by the rival parties in December 1991 by mobilising massive public support.33 The Guardian described the atmosphere Pejić’s broadcasting service tried to promote:

Every day his television screens a brief shot of the Sarajevo skyline. The camera lingers on the minaret of the old mosque, the spire of the Catholic cathedral, the cupolas of the Orthodox church, and the stars of the synagogue, all within spitting distance of one another.

Church bells ring and the Muslim call to prayers echoes forth. ‘Can you hear it?’ intones the voice of Goran Bregović, Bosnia’s answer to Bruce Springsteen. ‘Do you want to destroy it?’34

But there were plenty of high-level worries that Bosnia was not going to be able to remain immune from the war. The CSCE, in a report published just after the referendum, warned about secret talks ‘between Serbs and Croats, along with ethnic Serb leaders from Bosnia-Herzegovina to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina between them as a way of resolving their differences’. Secretary of State Baker’s warning to the UN has already been referred to. On 14 February 1992, the UN authorised a force of 12,000–13,000 UN peace-keepers in Croatia. But in January Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the new Secretary-General, was advised by Marrick Goulding, former head of the Department of Peacekeeping, not to deploy an international force designed to prevent conflict (Hodge and Grin 1996:59). Later in 1992, Robert Dole, prominent US Republican senator, was not the only senior figure to be asking ‘why didn’t we respond to this aggression twelve months ago’.

Conclusion

The EC was the international body that first attempted to mediate in the Yugoslav conflict. It was one that reminded the architects of the European integration process that efforts to contain the furies of nationalism in the heart of Europe had not been rewarded with success. What turned out to be the EC’s first peace mission soon collapsed in disarray. The Community lacked the mechanisms or know-how effectively to intervene, nor did it have any coercive instruments at its disposal to yield results. It also showed scant willingness to work with other transnational organisations such as the OSCE and NATO, although this would change when the magnitude of the Yugoslav crisis became obvious.

Despite massive army desertions that prevented it from accomplishing its war aims, the Yugoslav military’s size on paper daunted the West, as did the nationalist defiance emanating from Belgrade. Its mood hardened when Serbia alone blocked an EC peace
plan in the autumn of 1991 (Montenegro being coerced by Milošević to follow suit). Sanctions quickly followed when evidence of the systematic aggression being practised by the regular army and paramilitaries became impossible to ignore.

Germany’s determination to recognise Slovenia and Croatia was never forgotten by Western critics looking for a convenient target to distract attention from the West’s collective failures in Yugoslavia before, during, and indeed long after the start of the conflict. Claims that Germany was reviving imperial ambitions in the Balkans can easily be dismissed. But the argument that German pressure on its EC partners, to abandon trying to preserve a collapsing federation and instead facilitate independence for republics meeting democratic preconditions, led directly to the war in Bosnia in 1992 carries more weight—except that there is abundant evidence of Milošević’s forces preparing for war there long before the non-Serb parties opted for independence. Moreover, a strong case can be made that the actions of the USA and Germany’s European allies before and during the Croatian conflict contributed just as much to the outbreak of war in Bosnia.

The failure of the EC states to treat Yugoslavia as their number one problem allowed the initiative to stay with forces committed to using violence to secure their goals. The issue would be reluctantly placed on the agenda of EC summits without any evidence of critical or innovative thinking being brought into play. The willingness of Britain and France to concede Germany’s recognition demand in December 1991, in return for obtaining concessions from Bonn over the Maastricht treaty, would not be the last time that short-term domestic interests prevailed over the best needs for peace in Yugoslavia. The search for a solution would not be carried out on the basis of general principles but according to the pressures EC members were able to exert. The Badinter Commission stated that Macedonia fulfilled the EC’s criteria for recognition but Croatia did not; however, German leverage would ensure that Croatia was recognised while Greek pressure resulted in Macedonia remaining in diplomatic limbo.

The Badinter Commission became symptomatic of the EC’s inability to construct a common foreign policy on the basis of its own structures and principles. Its insistence on a referendum on Bosnian independence indicated its belief that a majoritarian democracy could resolve deep-seated problems in a setting of three ethnic groups, with the leaders of one strongly opposed to the other two. The referendum only highlighted the conflict between radicalised Bosnian Serbs and the other two ethnic groups (Uneasy Peace 1996:34). The green light for independence ultimately meant nothing, due to the unwillingness of the EC to promote international measures to ensure that statehood would be acquired peacefully.

International failure to wrest the initiative from Serb militants committed to violence as a means of acquiring territory left strategically placed Bosnia-Herzegovina dangerously exposed. Bosnia lacked a predominant nation with a clearly defined state-building objective. Numerically the largest group, the Bosnian Muslims had strongly identified with Tito’s federal system and they were left without a political identity when it collapsed. Their main political voice, the SDA, was out of its depth in a situation where politics was being played for the highest of stakes. It is impossible to tell whether war could have been avoided if a more experienced leader, such as Macedonia’s Kiro Gligorov, had been at the helm instead of Izetbegović. But the stakes were much higher in Bosnia than in Macedonia. Serbian radicals coveted Bosnia and time would quickly
show that the militants among the Bosnian Serbs had their own agenda: despite being armed and encouraged by Milošević, they were not easily controlled by him; his decision to provide them with their own army, the VRS, in the months before war erupted, greatly increased their freedom of action.

The confusing signals which the USA and the EU sent to the Bosnian Muslims, encouraging a referendum on independence and failing to point out clearly that external assistance would not be forthcoming if a declaration of independence was followed by a Serbian attack, were particularly damaging (far more so than German’s démarche in 1991). The willingness to engineer a soft partition of Bosnia through the Cutileiro plan is also likely to have convinced Serb hardliners that the West would come round to accepting new borders created by force.

The bloody collapse of Yugoslavia revealed a lack of collective will on both sides of the Atlantic to upgrade security institutions (fast being rendered obsolete after the Cold War) that were able to respond to new dangers. Millions of people in different parts of Yugoslavia would endure terrible suffering before it dawned on Western policy-makers that the overall security of the West itself had been compromised by such a pusillanimous response.
Genocide and dispossession in Bosnia and the international response

Times of evil

War erupted in Bosnia-Herzegovina on 2 April 1992. eljko Ražnjatović, who operated under the *nom-de-guerre* of ‘Arkan’, conducted a raid on Bijeljine, a small town on the Serbian border. He claimed that he was preventing a massacre of Serbs, but it was dozens of Muslims who were killed (Bennett 1995:187). Fighting spread to Sarajevo on 5 April, when Serb gunmen fired indiscriminately from the top of the Holiday Inn hotel at thousands of anti-war demonstrators offering their support for a multi-national Bosnia and calling for fresh elections. The next day the EU and the USA recognised Bosnia as an independent state, but neither showing any sign of being ready or willing to intervene to deter violence. Soon Serb heavy artillery was pounding the city. There is evidence that the VJ, successor to the JNA, hoped to take Sarajevo in seven to ten days and all of Bosnia in three to four months (Divjak 2001:157). However, a resistance force, under Sefer Hafilović, made up for the unpreparedness of Izetbegović and the SDA, and managed to knock out columns of JNA troops (Hoare 2001:186).

Milos Vasić, the Belgrade-based military commentator, has written that ‘without Milošević’s full political, logistical, police and military support, there could have been no war in Bosnia’ (Vasić 1996:131). The VJ, increasingly answerable solely to Milošević, led operations in Bosnia from April 1992 onwards. James Gow has written that ‘in view of the speed with which they were implemented and the high level of coordination they revealed, these operations had clearly not been mounted spontaneously’ (Gow 1992:8). By this point, army personnel nearly all came from Bosnia: in January, a secret order had been issued by Milošević to transfer all JNA officers from Bosnia back to their native republic. By the time federal forces staged a formal and bogus withdrawal in May 1992, the vast majority of officers who remained behind were Bosnian Serbs (Silber and Little 1996:240).

Slobodan Milošević endeavoured to convince the rest of the world that his state was uninvolved in the conflict erupting in Bosnia. On 27 April 1992, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) was proclaimed in Belgrade, comprising Montenegro and Serbia (with Voivodina and Kosovo). The 80,000-strong Bosnian Serb Army which captured world attention from the spring of 1992 onwards was known as the Army of the Republic of Srpska (Vosna Republike Srpske: VRS). It continued to be paid, supplied and armed by
stealth by Milošević (Silber and Little 1996:245–50). At its head was 49-year-old Ratko Mladić. In the words of David Owen, ‘Milošević was personally responsible for promoting Mladić above many more senior people to command Serbian forces in Bosnia’ (Owen 1996:156–7). Mladić had been commander of the JNA in Knin, where he had earned a devoted following because of his fidelity to the Serbian national cause (Silber and Little 1996:189). The VRS as well as the rump Yugoslav army, the VJ (the new name for the JNA from May 1992), opened their ranks to volunteers of all stripes. Through the Ministry of the Interior, thousands of convicts had been released to fight in a dirty war first in Croatia and next, on a far larger scale, in Bosnia. What was known within the ministry as ‘a military line’ (vojna linija), ran from Milošević to a small group of men in the state security department of the ministry. After the revelation of atrocities carried out by forces mobilised by the Interior Ministry, Milošević failed to discipline those responsible and instead promoted them. Three key figures in the vojna linija responsible for arming and training paramilitaries, Radovan ‘Badza’ Stojićić, Franko Simitović and Mihalj Kertes, became a general, deputy head of the state security services and director of the customs service, respectively.

The most formidable of the paramilitary groups was Arkan’s Serbian Volunteer Guard, better known as the ‘Tigers’, who had first gone into action in Eastern Slavonia in the autumn of 1991. Arkan was wanted for serious crimes committed in several West European countries. He first entered the limelight in 1990 on becoming the head of the Belgrade Red Star Supporters Club. After imposing unity on the football team’s warring factions, he recruited many of his fighters from their ranks (Čolović 2000:386–8). Arkan opened a shop near ruined Vukovar to sell the booty acquired from the looting of non-Serbs’ homes and business premises in the region (Udovicki and Štitkovać 1997:209, n. 52). In 1993 he entered parliament at the head of the Serbian Unity Party. ‘Only Unity Saves the Serbs’ would be a slogan seen in many parts of ex-Yugoslavia where Serbian paramilitaries had been in action. Unlike the Serbian Radical Party leader Vojislav Šešelj, who proclaimed himself head of his own ‘chetnik’ paramilitary force known as the ‘White Eagles’, Arkan proved a reliable ally of Milošević until 1995. Speaking to an emissary of President Tudjman, Milošević said of Arkan: ‘I too must have someone to do certain kinds of work for me.’

It is hard to believe that the torrent of death and destruction which swept across Bosnia in the six months from April 1992 was organised by paramilitaries and ‘irregular soldiers’, bar-owners, truck drivers or warehouse clerks eager for booty. Since armed Bosnian Muslim resistance was sporadic, most of the organised violence was directed against civilians. They made up the vast bulk of the total deaths, especially between April and October 1992, when between 75 and 80 per cent of the total slaughter in what was to be a war lasting forty-two months occurred (Cohen 1998:218). The first major onslaught against Bosnian civilians occurred along the valley of the Drina river, close to the Serbian border but with a mainly Muslim population. One of the most appalling incidents occurred in July 1992 in villages situated on the left bank of the river Sava in north-west Bosnia. They were filled with refugees from the town of Prijedor and were subject to an intense artillery barrage in which thousands were estimated to have died (Udovicki and Štitkovać 1997:187). The rest were taken to detention camps at Omarska and Trnopolje, which would soon acquire a grisly fame.
The Muslims driven out of Prijedor had been subject to *ethnic purging*, a widespread practice in the Bosnian war meaning ‘ridding an area of a national group regarded as undesirable in order to create an ethnically homogeneous region’ (Allcock *et al*. 1998:90). It was first observed by an international witness on 10 April 1992; José Maria Mendiluce, a Spaniard, had just taken up his post as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees’ (UNHCR) special representative in Bosnia, a job he would perform with distinction until late 1993. He had just been to Belgrade, having secured a promise from Milošević that he would do everything he could to support the UNHCR mission in Bosnia (Silber and Little 1996:246). He arrived in Zvornik, on his way back to Sarajevo, after the town had fallen. He saw trucks full of corpses, including women, children and old people. He saw children put under the treads of tanks and then run over (Rieff 1995:200). On the outskirts of the town, he was surrounded by 1000 people. They were all over me, begging ‘Save us! Save us!’ with such despair that I stayed there for an hour trying to calm them down. There were lots of dead people, wounded children on the floor looking terrified—absolutely terrified—and we could hear the sound of mortar fire approaching.

(Silber and Little 1996:246–7)

Vojislav Šešelj went to Zvornik shortly after what he called its liberation and admitted the operation had been planned in Belgrade: ‘the best combat units came from this side [Serbia]. These were police units…special units of the Serbian Interior Ministry in Belgrade… The operation had been prepared for a long time… Everything was well-organized and implemented’ (Silber and Little 1996:247).

A recurring feature of ethnic purging operations was the systematic killing of community leaders—educated people, well-known figures, intellectuals, members of the SDA and businessmen. Reports of rape were also widespread. On 8 January 1993, an EC investigation into incidences of rape in Bosnia estimated that 20,000 Muslim women had been raped by Serb soldiers as part of their campaign of terror (Thompson 1999:94). Accounts of rape in Serb detention camps have been well documented (Gutman 1993:68–76, 144–9). Mass rape of women challenged the family system in patriarchal societies where women were allotted the primary role of being responsible for biological reproduction and thus the continuation of the community. A 1994 report by a commission of experts asked by the UN in 1992 to investigate the incidence of rape in the war referred to near identical patterns of rape: ‘in full view of family members, neighbors or other detainees, [it] would be so traumatic and humiliating that victims would never again return to their villages’ (Jordan 1995:20–1). These women would be taken out of the reproductive pool, encouraging ‘the disintegration of the fabric of society’.

Painstaking effort was directed at wiping out any physical evidence of the ‘cleansed’ district having been inhabited by the expelled group. Mosques and libraries were destroyed totally to erase any linkage of the previous inhabitants to the land (Cigar 1995:60–1). In the town of Foča, one mosque was turned into a pigsty (Vulliamy 1998:185). This was one of the earliest towns to fall to Serb forces. Upon its capture, Velibor Ostojić (Minister of Information in the Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina) ‘declared over the radio that… Muslims would no longer be permitted to live in Foča.'
And... every Serbian woman would have to bear seven children’ (Thompson 1999:252).

Banja Luka, the second largest industrial and urban centre in Bosnia, fell to Serb forces without a struggle early in the war. A university city of 195,000 people, it had more declared ‘Yugoslavs’ than anywhere else in Bosnia, there being roughly the same number of Serbs as non-Serbs. One resident was convinced that ‘intermarriages were so high that I believe [religious] distractions would have been meaningless in a couple of generations to anyone but a few old fanatics and people from the country’ (Rieff 1995:80). But long before the end of the war, Banja Luka was to become 90 per cent Serb. No trace of its mosques was left, including the Ferhadija mosque, built in 1579. Widely regarded as one of the treasures of the Balkans, it was under Unesco protection but, at 3 am on 7 May 1993 it was blown up in a blast involving several hundred pounds of explosives. The fifteen other mosques in the city met a similar fate and not a minaret was to be found in any part of Serb-controlled Bosnia. Determined efforts were being made here and elsewhere to try to erase half a millennium of Slav Muslim culture in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The non-Serb inhabitants of Banja Luka were deported in waves. In 1992 the Muslims were driven out, starting with the well-off who were divested of their wealth by intimidation and terror. A crisis committee banned any non-Serbs from retaining or securing employment as managers of large concerns (Rieff 1995:84). Non-Serb men were called up, and those who failed to report discovered they had lost their jobs. The next forced population exclusion occurred in 1993, when Croats were pressed into exchanging their apartments with Serbs who had left, or been driven out of, Croatia. In 1994 the remaining Croats were expelled as the war started to go badly for the Serbs.

Peter Galbraith, later US ambassador to Croatia, described Banja Luka as ‘the most evil-filled place I’ve ever been in’. Within less than two years, the great majority of inhabitants of Banja Luka were newcomers, Serbs from the Knin and Kordun regions of Croatia, or from parts of Bosnia in the hands of the central government. A large number of Serbs left the city at the same time as Muslims and Croats but not usually in the same circumstances. The prosperity of a city once a centre for major road and rail routes vanished owing to the war and never recovered afterwards. But there were Serbs who identified, not with militant co-ethnics, but with their victims, who may have been their friends, neighbours or fellow employees. They were branded as ‘rotten’ or ‘disloyal’ Serbs by nationalists. In areas subject to ethnic purging by outsiders and where ethnic boundaries had become blurred, it was not unknown ‘for men to be forced to prove their loyalty by murdering a neighbour of a different ethnic origin’ (Sikavica 1997:142). In north-west Bosnia, disputes even broke out ‘between the Serbs long entrenched in power, who favoured judicial proceedings’ against local Muslim professionals, and ‘radicals, who preferred summary executions’, the latter usually carrying the day (Gutman 1994:110). But there were Serbs who, at no small risk to themselves, tried to help non-Serbs in their midst, just as there were those who became sadistic tormentors of former friends. One of the founders of the SDS, Vladimir Srebov, was thrown into jail for three years by his former comrades when he tried to dissuade them from a policy of mass killing.
International abdication

In the first weeks and months, the international response to the events in Bosnia was a mute one. It was far from the USA, ‘a small place with no large oil reserves or other compelling claims to American interest or involvement’ (Cohen 1998:238). In Western Europe, there was a similar attitude of distancing. Sarajevo was known, if at all, for having staged the Winter Olympics in 1984 and for having been the scene of the assassinations seventy years earlier which helped to ignite the First World War, hardly a cause for empathy with its problems. In May 1992, one British newspaper commented that: ‘None of the institutions supposed to regulate the post-communist world—the UN, the CSCE and the EC—is up to the task in the Balkans.’ A month into the siege of Sarajevo, Marrick Goulding, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, argued in a memo to the Security Council that the situation in Bosnia was not ripe for peace-keeping (Rieff 1995:163). The Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali, an Egyptian diplomat from the country’s Coptic Christian community, was even more reluctant to get involved (Gow 1997:97). But public opinion, influenced by harrowing media coverage (such as the aftermath of the massacre in Sarajevo on 27 May when three shells landed on a bread queue leaving twenty dead), forced a rethink. Three days later humanitarian relief to Bosnia was authorised under the UNHCR. It would achieve much over the next two years, helped by two mild winters (Rieff 1995:202–03). On 8 June, the Secretary-General authorised the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) already in Croatia be deployed in Bosnia. By the summer of 1994, it had become the largest-ever UN peace-keeping operation with over 36,000 troops deployed under three commands in Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia (Gow 1997:99).

The incoherent statement delivered by President Bush in the briefing room of the White House on 7 July did not suggest that UNPROFOR would be instructed to act in a purposeful way:

I am appalled at the human suffering and the killing in Sarajevo and we will do what we are called upon to do. But right now we are not prepared to use those forces and, yes, I hope that sends a signal to people over there that we’re serious.  

At the EC summit in Lisbon towards the end of June, national leaders had other things on their mind than Bosnia:

the Danish Foreign Minister, Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, seemed to regard the fact that Denmark had replaced defunct Yugoslavia in the European soccer championships as the most important development. He came wearing a football scarf and took a portable television into the summit meetings so that he could follow the score. His Prime Minister, Paul Schluter, and the German Chancellor also followed the final on mini-TVs during the crisis session devoted to Bosnia! Ellemann-Jensen even showed his toy proudly before the cameras after his colleagues had ruled out intervention to stop the slaughter in Bosnia.

(Almond 1994:249)
But, in a *coup de théâtre*, France’s President Mitterand left the summit on 28 June and flew directly to Sarajevo. His arrival succeeded in getting the airport open, and the siege was dented when the French landed the first humanitarian flight on 29 June. Soon after, the Serb besiegers of the city handed over the airport to the UN, which had been mandated by the Secretary-General to reopen it (Rieff 1995:164). Mitterand’s lightning visit had been, ‘characteristically, both a demonstration of concern, and a substitute for more forceful action’ (Hoffmann 1996:116). It appeared to show that ‘military intervention was not necessary to bring sanity…to Bosnia’s chaos’ (Silber and Little 1996:282).

But Mitterand’s initiative deepened the involvement of the UN in Bosnia. Boutros-Ghali was livid at the turn of events. Shortly afterwards, EC negotiators appeared to clinch an agreement in which all Serbian heavy weapons in the vicinity of Sarajevo would be placed under UN control. Instead of expressing relief, Boutros-Ghali took umbrage, asking what right did the EC have to make agreements on behalf of the UN without speaking to the UN first (Gow 1997:97). EC negotiators had in fact been keen to draw in Boutros-Ghali but he had declined to take Lord Carrington’s calls. The EC and the permanent members of the Security Council were exasperated that such petulance may have lost ‘a pivotal opportunity to obtain decisive concessions from the Serbs’ (Gow 1997:98).

Another offer spurned by Boutros-Ghali, which, if it had been accepted, ‘would have altered the UN involvement and maybe the whole course of the war’, was that of the USA to operate the airlift into Sarajevo (Hollingworth 1996:6).

**The world responds to the Bosnian camps**

Worldwide concern about Bosnia was maintained by journalists who emphasised the human dimension in their coverage of events. On 9 July, Roy Gutman of New York’s *Newsday* telephoned a Muslim leader he had met in Banja Luka in 1991, only to be urged:

> Please try to come here… They are shipping Muslim people through here in cattle cars. Last night there were 25 train wagons…crowded with women, old people and children. It’s like Jews being sent to Auschwitz. In the name of humanity, please come.

(Gutman 1993:vii)

On 19 July Gutman’s paper published his first story about the camps after he had been allowed to visit a farm operated by the army. He was followed by the British reporters, Maggie O’Kane, Penny Marshall and Ian Williams, who gained access to camps at Trnopolje and at Omarska, an abandoned iron mine. Their reports coincided with EC-sponsored talks in London attended by Karadžić, who from 27 March had been president of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (better known as the Republic of Srpska, the name used hereafter). To allay criticism, Karadžić had extended an invitation to the British journalists to visit the camp. Inmates were found to be living in appalling conditions. Footage of cadaverous prisoner cringing in fear and surrounded by barbed
wire provoked outrage. The UN Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, in an indictment against one of the Bosnian Serb leaders, Mrs Biljana Plavšić, cited 150 executions at Omarska, Trnopolje and Keraterm camps in July and August 1992. It described how in these camps ‘the detainees subsisted in an atmosphere of constant terror fostered by random brutality’, being subject to ‘physical violence, mental suffering, sexual violence and other degrading and humiliating circumstances’. Many of those targeted in the camps were members of the elite, community leaders who could not easily be replaced. According to one Omarska detainee, a 40-year-old professional, ‘They killed the judges, teachers, the president of the court, company directors, the wealthy—all the prominent people at Omarska’ (Gutman 1993:110). One of the most prominent Muslims holding public office in north-west Bosnia, the mayor of Prijedor, Muhamed Cehajić, was one of those who failed to leave Omarska alive. A pacifist, he had crossed hardline Serbs as early as 1991 by refusing to back a call for local Muslim and Croat men to report for the military draft (Gutman 1993:112). Among the many women raped in the camp were a district court judge, the deputy district attorney and another county judge, as well as teachers, dentists, doctors and economists (Gutman 1993:147). These professional women may have been an affront to their hardline and deeply patriarchal Serb tormentors not just because of their religious affiliation but also because of their social status.

On 3 August 1992, Richard Boucher, a State Department spokesman, confirmed that ‘abuses, torture and killings’ had taken place in Serbian detention camps around Bosnia. But, testifying in the Senate, his superior Thomas Niles said the next day that such reports could not be confirmed (Cohen 1998:174).

On 18 August, the US Senate’s Foreign Relations Committee ‘received a staff report which suggested’ that full accounts of camp conditions had been available to the governments of the Western world and to the UN for some months. It concluded:

The United Nations did not respond in a timely manner to early reports from the field about atrocities in prison camps. The US State Department also had early reports of killings associated with the forcible transfer of populations but did not follow up on the reports. The failure to respond reflects systematic defects in the way the international community and the United States monitor human rights crises. Had the world community focussed earlier on the atrocities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, many lives might have been saved.

(Silber and Little 1996:277)

The New York Times journalist Roger Cohen has concluded that American satellite photos were held back ‘because the Bush administration had decided intervention in the former Yugoslavia was undesirable’ (Cohen 1998:446). Ron Neitzke, senior State Department spokesman in the late 1990s, believes that

the Bush administration’s attitude…was a combination of wilful ignorance and determined indifference. If they did not know precisely
how many were being killed in the death camps…nonetheless they knew from multiple sources a good deal more than they were comfortable knowing—given their fixed policy…

(Cohen 1998:218)

**Britain defines the agenda**

By the end of April 1992, i.e. within four weeks of fighting erupting, 286,000 people had been made refugees. By the end of the year, almost two million Bosnians—nearly half the population—had lost their homes (Silber and Little 1996:278). In the words of Silber and Little: ‘Western governments dealt with the war as though it were a flood or an earthquake, enthusiastically addressing the symptoms of the conflict, without making any real effort to challenge its causes’ (Silber and Little 1996:282).

It was Britain which defined a *minimalist* response of responding solely with humanitarian aid to something that was far from being a natural catastrophe. The UN’s own report on the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, which in many ways is an inquest into the whole UNPROFOR mission, says the following about this approach:

Nor was the provision of humanitarian aid a sufficient response to ‘ethnic cleansing’ and to an attempted genocide… The problem, which cried out for a political/military solution, was that a State Member in the United Nations, left largely defenceless as a result of an arms embargo imposed upon it by the United Nations, was being dismembered by forces committed to its destruction. This was not a problem with a humanitarian solution.

(United Nations 1998:109)

For differing reasons, the other major Western countries were not willing or able to take a lead. It was presidential election year in the USA and one of the administration’s overriding concerns was to ensure a campaign that was free from complicating international issues. Italy was in the grip of a political crisis that would soon lead to the collapse and disappearance of the main parties of government. Mitterand’s France, confronted by public opinion and intellectuals who were appalled at the fate of the Muslims, and diplomats and soldiers not a few of whom were pro-Serb in outlook, thought it best to keep a low profile. As for Germany, the discordant debate on the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia had made it nervous of any future Balkan adventures: ‘the priority for Bonn became the need not to offend the sensibilities of others in the EU and NATO’ (Gow 1997:174).

Britain was in an excellent position to shape international policy on Bosnia because it held the presidency of the EC Council throughout the second half of 1992. Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd showed that the scale of the Bosnian conflict had not led him to alter his views that the peoples of Yugoslavia had brought the tragedy upon themselves. Amalgamating the victims of violence with its perpetrators, he said in July 1992: ‘When there is no will for peace, we cannot supply it’ (Sells 1996:133–4). This was also the
view of Portugal’s José Cutileiro, whose plans for a soft partition of Bosnia had been rejected on the eve of the war. Writing eighteen months later, he was in no doubt that ‘The outside world has been kinder to the Bosnians than they have been to each other... It is their quarrel not ours.’

With Britain leading the way, military intervention in order to stop the war and enforce peace was firmly ruled out as an option. Instead, lightly armed UN troops had the limited task of delivering humanitarian aid and not themselves getting caught up in the conflict. When the Serb forces saw that the mandate by which UNPROFOR was in Bosnia was being interpreted in such an ultra-cautious way, this emboldened them to treat UN troops as potential or actual hostages on the ground. This would greatly inhibit other options for resolution of the conflict (Hodge and Grbin 1996:90).

From 1992 to 1995 Britain always insisted that the safety of its troops on the ground was paramount. But until the spring of 1995, Britain only contributed 3,800 soldiers to the 38,000-strong UNPROFOR force (Sharp 1996:17). France was the nation with the most troops and they were sent to the most dangerous areas (Hodge and Grbin 1996:84).

Not only did Britain succeed in foiling an international peace-making response to the Bosnian conflict for over forty months, but it also prevented the government in Sarajevo from securing arms to defend itself by insisting that the UN arms embargo be rigorously applied. Legally, Britain was ‘skating on the thinnest of ice’ over the arms embargo (Simms 2001:72). Bosnia-Herzegovina had been a member of the UN since May 1992: article 52 of the UN Charter provides the right to individual or collective self-defence to all member countries. Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General from 1996, argued in a report published in 1999 that the UN had failed to take the necessary means which would have made Bosnia’s right to self-defence unnecessary (United Nations 1998:109).

Britain stubbornly refused to allow a government it recognised to defend its people against armed aggression emanating from a government it did not recognise (relations with Belgrade having been frozen since 1992) (Simms 2001:73). It would become increasingly clear that the rationale behind London’s action was to bring the war to a quick conclusion, irrespective of who won. Hurd intervened whenever there were signs that Britain’s allies might have a change of heart over Bosnia. When some of Baker’s aides in the State Department promoted a much more interventionist stance during the early months of the Bosnian war, the British Embassy in Washington actively lobbied against them (Simms 2001:59). Britain also had misgivings about sanctions imposed on Serbia and introduced at the USA’s behest in May 1992 (Simms 2001:55).

An inconvenience of war: Bosnia’s refugees

Hundreds of thousands of refugees were created, owing, in part, to the failure of well-armed states which had just emerged victorious from the Cold War to use a tiny fraction of their arsenals to deter military aggression against civilians. Soon the emphasis was to be on restricting the flow of refugees into the EC. In July 1992, the EC held a one-day conference in Geneva, chaired by Britain, to try to respond to the refugee emergency (Silber and Little 1996:272). Germany was mindful of the 1951 Geneva Convention, which says that people with a genuine fear of persecution for ethnic reasons, or religious or political beliefs, are entitled to asylum. Germany, along with the Scandinavian
countries, proposed distributing refugees across the EC on a quota basis. Britain demurred. With the support of France and Italy, it recommended setting up safe havens for refugees within ex-Yugoslavia. Hurd did not hide his concern about countries such as Britain being overwhelmed by newcomers as a result of upheavals in different parts of the former communist bloc. Speaking to other EC Foreign Ministers in September 1992, he said immigration is ‘the most important problem facing the community’.26

Baroness Linda Chalker, Britain’s Minister of Overseas Development, argued that the humane approach was to accommodate people as near as possible to their former homes. She claimed that she was speaking, not in the interests of British or EC taxpayers, but in the interests of the refugees themselves (Silber and Little 1996:272). The burden of responsibility was thus placed on countries such as Slovenia and Croatia, still reeling from the war. Near the end of Britain’s stint as president of the EC Council, a Financial Times enquiry found that there was little sign of a coordinated response being promoted between EC governments, NGOs and inter-governmental organisations;27 in the end, EC states had vastly different responses to the refugee emergency. Germany had taken in 200,000 refugees from the Yugoslav conflict zone by the end of July 1992, Austria and Hungary around 50,000 each, and Sweden and Switzerland 44,000 and 18,000 respectively.28 By the end of the conflict, 320,000 refugees from Bosnia had been taken in by Germany, followed by Austria and Sweden; it is estimated that Germany annually spent $5 billion on refugees from the former Yugoslavia between 1992 and 1995 (Unfinished Peace 1996:8).

By this time, France had taken in just over 1,100, which elicited a bitter response from Alain Finkelkraut, a campaigner for a more energetic French policy:

when one speaks of intervention, France responds by pointing to the spectacle of humanitarian aid to the region, and when a truly humanitarian gesture is asked of France, and not simply one fabricated by the media, the nation responds that the remedy is exclusively political. In effect, France tells the refugees to go and make themselves heard elsewhere and at the same time, through its own refusal to act in the face of Serb aggression, makes it impossible for them to remain in their homeland in the first place. Undoubtedly a nation has to be the land of the Rights of Man and the Citizen to pull off such a feat.

(Finkelkraut 1999:93)

Britain had taken in an even smaller number than the French by July 1992. By late 1993, France would have taken in 58,000 and Britain a mere 4,000, compared to Germany’s 300,000 (Krieger 1994:28). In October, strict regulations were introduced requiring citizens from the former Yugoslavia (many of whom would now be technically stateless) to obtain a visa before they could be allowed to enter the United Kingdom.29 But, in a letter to fellow parliamentarian Timothy Kirkhope, Baroness Chalker claimed in 1995 that ‘Britain’s overall efforts to end the suffering in the former Yugoslavia are unmatched by any other country’.30 The Independent newspaper, which campaigned throughout the war for a more humane British response to the Bosnian tragedy, viewed the government’s record less charitably:
The complete absence of any moral, let alone diplomatic dimension in the Government’s thinking is striking. When more than two million Bosnians have been displaced by the terrible strategy of ‘ethnic cleansing’, and when Britain’s EC partners have been accepting a much greater share of the refugee burden, the Government adheres to the letter of convention that greatly favours offshore parts of the EC.

Let the Government recall that in the years following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran took three million and two million Afghan refugees respectively. Even poorer countries in Africa have been generous. When wars break out and people are being beaten, tortured, executed and driven from their homes, it is not conventions and treaties that matter. To pretend to be generous at such times, while behaving meanly, is not just hypocritical but despicable.  

The August 1992 London conference

International clamour for action in the former Yugoslavia grew in the late summer of 1992 amidst reports of enormous violations of human rights in Bosnia, primarily of Serbs against Muslims. Against this background, Britain, still holding the chair of the EC, summoned all the involved parties to a conference which met in London on 26–7 August. By now, two-thirds of Bosnia was in the hands of armed Serbs taking their orders from Karadžić’s Republic of Srpska. But despite their overwhelming superiority in weapons, they had been unable to conquer the whole republic, most of whose cities had put up successful resistance (Bennett 1995:191).

Milošević was in the early stages of trying to alter his image on the world stage from that of the architect of the Yugoslav tragedy to someone who could be increasingly relied upon as a peace-maker, while his military forces continued their work of ethnic purging. To this end, he appointed as Serbia’s’s Prime Minister 63-year-old Milan Panic, who had defected from Yugoslavia nearly forty years earlier and had gone on to run a multi-million dollar pharmaceuticals business in California. Panic was moderate-sounding and conciliatory and he helped deflect demands for stronger action against Serbia by indicating that he was determined to check those forces responsible for aggression and allow their victims to return to their homes (Sudetic 1998:128–30). This encouraged ‘a wait-and-see’ response from the Western powers, just what Milošević had been banking on; once the danger of full-scale intervention was over, Milošević quickly ditched Panic when he refused to act as his master’s voice.

Britain announced on 26 August that the Principles for a Settlement had been agreed by the different sides. The key principles included: a cease-fire; acceptance that borders could only be changed by mutual consent; guarantees for human and minority rights; and international access to detention camps (Moore 1992:2). Cyrus Vance and David Owen were appointed on behalf of the UN and EC respectively to oversee a negotiated settlement based on the principles agreed in London.

At the London conference, British Prime Minister John Major announced that ‘we have for the first time a comprehensive framework [for peace]’.  But David Gompert, an official in the Bush administration, has described how this was soon shown to be an
illusory boast: ‘in the days and weeks that followed London, the Serbs wilfully ignored every accord reached and commitment made. This affront drew no response from the West or the UN Security Council’ (Gompert 1994:38). For the US ambassador to Bosnia, Victor Jackovitch, it had been clear that the conference had only been meant as a pressure valve: ‘when we got there, we realised what was happening… Allow the Serbs to make promises and accept them knowing they had no intention of keeping them’. Ed Vulliamy has claimed that:

[T]he Serbs gained what they grabbed through a happy convergence of interests between their force and a school of diplomacy with illustrious traditions, the diplomacy of neutrality. The quintessence of neutrality during a hurricane of violence such as that which blew across Bosnia in 1992 is obfuscation—the political complication of things that are ethically simple.

(Vulliamy 1998:76)

Lord Owen, newly installed as the EC’s peace-maker (in succession to Lord Carrington), seemed to endorse the view that the main thing was to keep talking, irrespective of the horrors unfolding on the ground. At a speech to a gathering of fellow physicians in Dublin on 16 November 1993, he declared:

As physicians and surgeons, we have long been aware of the dangers of simply responding to the cry to ‘do something’. All too often we know that an illness has to work its way through the system. As a protective mechanism, the profession has develop the skill of masterly inactivity… Politicians need some of the sane skills.34

With such an outlook, it is not surprising that Adrian Hastings, a critical observer of the British-orchestrated peace process, described the Geneva talks which started after the London conference, with Owen as co-chair, as ‘a phoney device on the part of the world to justify non-intervention and, on the part of Karadžić, to hold off the world while he completes the destruction of Bosnia and turns it into a Serbian province’.35

American backing for the War Crimes Tribunal

The USA placed no obstacles in the way of Britain’s pursuit of a minimalist approach to the Bosnian crisis. The year 1992 was fully taken up with trying to secure George Bush’s re-election. In August, James Baker turned his back on what had become the world’s main flash-point in order to organise a faltering presidential campaign. His successor as Secretary of State was Lawrence Eagleburger, actually a former US ambassador to Belgrade. His views on the futility of outside intervention echoed Hurd’s:

This tragedy is not something that can be settled from outside and it’s about damn well time that everybody understood that. Until the Bosnians,
Serbs and Croats decide to stop killing each other, there is nothing the outside world can do about it.

(Quoted in Anžulović 1999:70)

Initially, he refused to become overly concerned about conditions in Bosnian Serb detention camps: speaking on 21 August 1992, he declared: ‘on the basis of what we have seen so far, I think it is best to say the evidence is unpleasant conditions [rather than full-scale brutality]’ (Cohen 1998:219). But in just over three months he would radically alter his stance. John Fox, who worked in the policy planning area of the State Department, had lobbied hard to get his immediate superiors to confirm Roy Gutman’s account of the horrors of Omarska, and the mood in the lower echelons of the State Department reflected his concerns (Halberstam 2001:132–4). Eagleburger got a report from officials he trusted critical of the administration’s Balkan policy. After the election was over he was prepared to critique the approach: ‘I knew something like this was going to happen… I knew it was going to be violent. I just didn’t know it would be this bad’ (Halberstam 2001:140). In Geneva, on 1 December 1992, the UN Human Rights Commission met, for only the second time in its history, to condemn ‘the crimes against humanity’ taking place in Bosnia. Eagleburger named senior figures on the Serbian side who had cases to answer. They included Milošević, Karadžić and the VRS commander, General Mladić (Gow 1997:114). On 16 December, he elaborated his concerns:

We have, on the one hand, a moral and historical obligation not to stand back a second time in this century while a people faced obliteration. The fact of the matter is that we know what crimes against humanity have occurred, and we know when and where they occurred. We know, moreover, which forces committed those crimes, and under whose command they operated. And we know, finally, who the political leaders are to whom those military commanders were—and still are—responsible.

(Cohen 1998:221)

Ironically, the building in Geneva where Eagleburger denounced Karadžić as a chronic liar and possible war criminal was the one where the Owen-Vance talks were going on with Karadžić (Mestrović 1994:90).

Eagleburger threw his weight behind the idea of forming an international commission to investigate war crimes in ex-Yugoslavia. The idea originated with Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the UN Human Rights commission’s rapporteur for ex-Yugoslavia. In August 1992, he was sufficiently shocked by what he saw and heard on a visit to the region that he believed nothing less was required.36 But without US backing the idea was likely to be stillborn. Eagleburger explained to a BBC interviewer why he decided to back it:

I thought a lot about it and sort of looked at myself in the mirror and wasn’t particularly happy with what I saw, in the sense that I, like everybody else, had my mind on the specifics of how you deal with the killing and how you try to bring it to an end. But nothing much at all on the moral issues involved—and they’re pretty substantial. So after I’d
thought about it a while, I decided it was more than time that the United States government had to say something about it.

(BBC Panorama, 12 December 1993)

This was one of the few robust steps the Bush administration would take over the Yugoslav crisis. It is probably no coincidence that the decision was made during the President’s final weeks in office. His bid for a second term had failed and a successor, William ‘Bill’ Clinton, would have to cope with the escalating Yugoslav crisis.

On 25 May 1993, UN Security Council resolution 827 founded the International Tribunal for War Crimes Committed on the Territory of Former Yugoslavia (soon better known as the UN Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia: UNTFY) with headquarters at The Hague. Eagleburger admitted that, in the previous December, his British counterparts ‘did not greet what I did with great enthusiasm’ (BBC Panorama, 12 December 1993). This turned out to be an understatement. Michael Sharf, attorney adviser for UN affairs at the UN State Department from 1991 to 1993, found that ‘the United Kingdom tried to water down the resolution depriving the Commission of its very important ability to conduct investigations’ (BBC Panorama, 12 December 1993). Cherif Bassiouni, the head of the UNTFY, discovered in 1993 that over 500 testimonies British officials had collected from individual refugees were not being passed on to the Tribunal despite requests for such cooperation (BBC Panorama, 12 December 1993). Hurd’s successor as Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, continued to block its work:

After the 1997 general election, incoming Labour ministers discovered that he had deliberately prevented the war crimes tribunal in The Hague from obtaining evidence that could prove Milošević’s complicity in genocide—which insisting in public that ‘we want to see cooperation with the war crimes tribunal’.37

‘Equivalence of guilt’

British officials refused to recognise the ethical dimension of a conflict mainly directed against civilians even though they frequently used the term ‘ethnic cleansing’. Lord Carrington declared in late 1992: ‘Everyone is to blame for what is happening in Bosnia and as soon as we get a ceasefire, there will be no need to blame anybody’ (Simms 2001:19–20). In a later interview, he declared that they were ‘all impossible people…all as bad as each other’ (Simms 2001:17).

The ‘equivalence of guilt’ thesis continued to be made in the face of mounting evidence collected by international agencies and individuals (Hodge and Grbin 1996:90). Carrington relates proudly that David Owen was prepared to discard an interventionist approach early in his peace-making role:

He [Owen] went in with the idea that the Serbs were the demons… And being a highly intelligent man, he wasn’t there for more than ten minutes before he realized it was a great deal more complicated than he realized, and that they were all as bad as each other.38
By August 1993, Owen was ready to lash out at those who ‘have exercised their consciences over Bosnia… There are elements of aggression on all sides’ (Simms 2001:39). The previous month, Hurd had criticised the ‘selectivity’ of the media searchlight, claiming that other conflicts were being ignored (a view normally held by those on the far Left who insisted that Western liberals were guilty of double standards by advocating intervention in some countries and not others) (Simms 2001:46).

Journalists such as Edward Mortimer, who argued that ‘it is not necessarily right to be even-handed between the strong and the weak, or between the aggressor and his victim’, were cold-shouldered by the upholders of the Hurd and Carrington line.39 Much preferred were disillusioned former liberals such as Conor Cruise O’Brien, who wrote in 1992: ‘There are places where a lot of men prefer war, and the looting and raping and domineering that goes with it, to any sort of peacetime occupation. One such place is Afghanistan. Another is Yugoslavia’ (quoted in Rieff 1995:42).

On both sides of the Atlantic, there were often frantic searches for corroborating evidence to suggest that the doctrine of equivalence was the most useful approach to the Bosnian problem. Ron Neitzke has written that:

…the Bush administration…tenaciously held on to Yugoslavia long after its disintegrative forces had passed the point of no return…

Most egregiously they proceeded to cover their error and reserve by repeatedly and gratuitously dishonouring the Bosnians in the very hour of their genocide, scraping together what limited evidence there was of Muslim excesses and ascribing the ‘strife’ to age-old ethnic animosities in which no side was blameless.

(Quoted in Cohen 1998:487)

A year later, Warren Christopher, US Secretary of State in a Democrat administration, urgently asked his department’s human rights bureau to try to gather together evidence of Muslim atrocities in order to ward off calls for a firmer US response when testifying before the Foreign Affairs Committee of Congress on 13 May 1993 (Halberstam 2001:230–1).

Carrington related that Izetbegović ‘was responsible for some of the atrocities… He was a dreadful little man.’40 The first to claim that the Bosnians were trying to secure Western intervention by shelling their own people was General Lewis Mackenzie, the Canadian soldier who was the first head of UNPROFOR in Bosnia.41 Lord Owen gave much space in his memoirs to a UN report that the marketplace massacre in Sarajevo on 5 February 1994, when sixty-eight were killed, was caused by a mortar shell fired from a Bosnian government position (Owen 1996:260). He failed to mention a second, more thorough investigation which found that the first had made a mistake in its calculations, concluding that ‘the shell could equally have come from the Serb side’.42

A variant on the above theme was that the defenders of besieged Bosnian cities and towns were provoking the besiegers with their occasional shelling. The Guardian advised against ‘such easy equations between aggressor and defender… The Bosnians are trying to break an encirclement by fighting Serb soldiers, while the Serbs are trying to break morale by killing Bosnian civilians.’43
Perhaps seeing how keen their Western interlocutors were for evidence that could minimise their involvement in the conflict, Karadžić and his colleagues continually presented them with ‘evidence’ that the Muslims were responsible for their own misfortune. The president of the SDS in Banja Luka, Predrag Lazarevic, said about the destruction of the Ferhadija mosque in 1993: ‘Personally, I am deeply convinced that the Ferhadija, like the other mosques in Banja Luka, was destroyed by Muslims themselves.’

Eventually the UN itself, in its investigation of how its peace-keeping force failed to prevent the massacre of Srebrenica in 1995, would come to criticise ‘the prism of “moral equivalency” through which the conflict was viewed by too many for too long’ (United Nations 1998:107).

Enlisting history to justify action and inaction

The gatekeepers of Western policy in Bosnia were irritated when parallels were made between their approach and that of their predecessors in the appeasement era of the 1930s. Erik de Mauny, who covered Yugoslavia for the BBC in the late 1950s, thus wrote in 1995:

> When are our so-called statesmen going to recognise a mortal danger, here in the heart of Europe, staring them in the face. That danger is now widely recognised by ordinary citizens, especially of my generation, who remember all too clearly the events leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War. And when will those same leaders recognise the simple fact that nothing can stop the juggernaut of Bosnian Serb aggression except to meet it and defeat it with superior military force.

It was less easy to ignore parallels with the last major period of European bloodletting when they came from the group that had suffered disproportionately. Up to 1993, Elie Wiesel and other survivors of the Holocaust rejected parallels with Bosnia as diminishing the magnitude of what happened in the Second World War to the Jews (Kofman 1996:92). But at the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington in April 1993, he turned to President Clinton and said, ‘I can’t but tell you something. I have been to the former Yugoslavia. We must do something to stop the bloodshed in that country… Something, anything, must be done.’ The journalist covering the event noted that ‘the applause was spontaneous and thunderous.’

Henry Siegman, a survivor of the Holocaust and head of the American Jewish Congress, wrote frequently about Bosnia during the war there. In July 1993 he argued that:

> What we are witnessing is the West’s and America’s total abandonment of Bosnian Muslims to their programmed destruction. It is as complete and as cynical an abandonment as that of the Jews in World War II.

The notion that the United States and its allies are helpless to do anything about this human and political disaster is a palpable lie. It is as
believable as the argument that European countries and America could do nothing to help the Jews in the 1930s, even as they turned away shiploads of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany.48

Eventually, it would be two members of the Clinton administration of Jewish origin who would go furthest in seeking to overturn the passive policy on Bosnia: Madeleine Albright and Richard Holbrooke. The Jewish support for the mainly Muslim-led Bosnian government discomfited one UNPROFOR commander, General Sir Michael Rose, who, in his memoirs wrote about ‘the Jewish influence on current events’ in the USA and ‘the powerful American Jewish lobby’ behind the Bosnian state (Rose 1998:5).

When newly-elected French President Jacques Chirac made parallels between the West allowing the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995 and Chamberlain and Daladier’s capitulation to Hitler, an angry British Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, snapped: ‘President Chirac has so far given us a lot of fine words but no proposal’ (Simms 2001:326).

Rifkind and his predecessors shaping British policy towards Bosnia tried to turn history to their own advantage. They argued that it was necessary to look much further back than the 1930s or 1940s for a frame of reference that would make sense of the Balkans. ‘Ancient ethnic hatreds’ were seen as the driving force behind violent Balkan upheavals at the end of the twentieth century. These eruptions of internecine warfare were seen as culturally determined and historically recurring, and therefore beyond remedy from outside. Exponents of such a view were found in many walks of life.

David Anderson, a former US ambassador to Yugoslavia, wrote in 1992:

The problem…is the Yugoslavs themselves. They are a perverse group of folks, near tribal in their behaviour, suspicious of each other (with usually sound reasons), friendly on the outside but very cynical within, ever ready for a war or a battle, proud of their warrior history, and completely incapable of coming to terms with the modern world… So, I would say, a plague on both houses [the Croats and the Serbs].

(Quoted in Mestrović 1994:149)

Sir John Keegan, the British specialist on military history, was in no doubt that: ‘The war…is a primitive tribal conflict, of a sort known only to a handful of anthropologists’. Bosnian Serb outrages ‘might be taken from a field report on the Yanomano, one of the [most] primitive and savage tribes known’.49

One senior Foreign Office official was of like mind. In 1993 he said to Michael Williams, the UN director of information in Zagreb, ‘you have to remember they are all cannibals’ (Williams 1999:378).

The most effective populariser of the ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’ viewpoint was the journalist Misha Glenny, who reported on the Yugoslav crisis for the BBC World Service in its early stages before going freelance and authoring several books on the war and the Balkan region. He was greatly respected by international figures who shared his view that irreconcilable differences at societal level were responsible for the conflict. General Sir Michael Rose, UNPROFOR commander in 1994–5, wrote that he ‘enjoyed sensible debates about what is happening in Bosnia with visitors like Misha Glenny, whose book
The Fall of Yugoslavia has contributed so much to my understanding of the Balkans’ (Rose 1998:54). Glenny’s apocalyptic views delivered on the eve of the 1992 London conference were typical of what he came up with at each perceived turning-point: ‘If the London conference fails, the people of Yugoslavia will do their best to exterminate one another’ (BBC Newsnight, 16 August 1992). He frequently saw forces of religion and violence working in harness, as when he wrote:

The anvils of violence working overtime in Bosnia are forging three mighty religious axes in eastern and south-eastern Europe. One links Rome with Zagreb via Bonn. The second joins Athens with Belgrade and possibly Moscow, while the third stretches from Zenica (the militant Bosnian Muslim city north of Sarajevo) to Istanbul and the Middle East.50

Heavily conspiratorial theories were frequently churned out by nationalist intellectuals via the captive local media, and it was no aid to understanding the conflict in the West for a well-placed journalist to rehash such views. But the electronic media, at least in Britain, preferred to use commentators who painted the conflict in stark, uncompromising colours. This made it easy to convey a simplistic explanation in the short period of time allotted to explaining the latest twist in the Bosnian conflict.

Journalists who challenged the ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’ thesis with thoughtful essays on what might happen if their own society was subject to the same pressures as that of Bosnia would only find relatively minor outlets for their arguments. Paul Harris, who provided distinguished war reporting from Bosnia throughout the war years, wrote in a Scottish Sunday newspaper in August 1992:

make no mistake about it, if there were to be fear abroad on the streets of Glasgow or Edinburgh, ethnic cleansing and fragmentation could be instituted remarkably easily—a handful of snipers working their trade from top floors in Sauchiehall Street or Princes Street, groups of drunken yobs on the rampage armed with Kalashnikovs distributed freely from the backs of lorries in Easterhouse or Craigmillar murdering or turfing out any English they find in the street, or in houses full of tasty loot.

Once destabilised, society could terminally break down with terrifying speed: just as in Bosnia, Scotland, in this doomwatch scenario, could be consumed with violence in just a few weeks. All this would happen not because the Scots actually hate the English but because the situation had been engineered by a relatively small group of people with access to media and weapons.51

One BBC programme, transmitted at the end of 1992, fully adhered to the ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’ thesis, but insisted that it had an uplifting cultural side. This was a fifty-minute programme called ‘Serbian Epics’, which was previewed in the BBC’s own Radio Times in the following way:

As the Serbs fight in Yugoslavia to regain their land and the glory of their medieval empire, the myth and epic poetry that enshrined it is reemerging
from centuries of Turkish rule and communist repression. With poet Radovan Karadžić, leader of the Bosnian Serbs, this film takes a detached look at the epic songs, music and sense of history which drives Serbian identity.52

There was an outcry which forced the BBC to hold a discussion programme about the issues raised in the programme. Next day The Daily Telegraph wrote:

Loud protests preceded last night’s Bookmark (BBC2) and, for once, those crying foul before the game had started were quite right to do so… It is not television’s job to tar all Bosnian Serbs with the same brush; indeed I suppose one could argue that a programme showing the good as well as the bad side of Serbian nationalism was long overdue.

The trouble with this film was that it showed only the good side. The leader of the Bosnian Serbs, Radovan Karadžić, was presented in such flattering colours—as a kind of soldier-poet deeply rooted in traditional culture—that he could have produced this film himself. But since when did a knack for writing verse poetry justify genocide?… In screening what amounted to a 50-minute party political broadcast, the BBC stands indicted of a gross error of judgment.53

Warring factions

In early June 1995 BBC TV interviewed Karadžić on the Nine o’clock News, where on a prime viewing slot he was able to place his regime’s case before British viewers at a time when his forces were holding several hundred UN personnel as hostages, including thirty-three British troops (Hodge 1999:20). He was also in the habit of phoning the BBC in London within minutes of a news item which he took issue with, demanding that he be able to put his side of the story (Hodge 1999:20). Karadžić’s access to the media dignified him as a credible political leader and certainly placed no restraints on the methods his forces were using to secure their objectives. The BBC usually referred to the three ‘warring sides’ or ‘factions’. The British Foreign Office and Ministry of Defence always did. Thus, no distinction was made between the internationally recognised authorities in Sarajevo and separatist rebels (Simms 2001:46).

Douglas Hurd described Izetbegović not as president of Bosnia but as ‘leader’ of the Bosnian Muslims to give him parallel status with Karadžić.54 Lord Owen actually tried to factionalise the Bosnian side by building up a more pliable Fikrit Abdić as an alternative leader to Izetbegović. General Jean Cot, the UNPROFOR commander in Bosnia during 1993–4, believes that if the archives of the UN-EC peace-making mission are preserved, the direct responsibility of Owen for promoting Abdić’s breakaway bid in his stronghold of Bihac will be confirmed.55

The justification for seeing the conflict as one between three ‘warring factions’ was greatly assisted by the decision of Croatian ultra-nationalists to go to war with the Sarajevo authorities, a conflict that lasted for seventeen months in 1992–4. This was a land grab directed by Croatia’s President Tudjman, long eager to carve up Bosnia with
his Serbian counterpart. The nature and scale of Belgrade’s military involvement in the Bosnian war made it impossible to regard it as a civil war (Mazower 1992:2). The British Liberal Party leader, Paddy Ashdown (who in 2002 would take over as High Representative of the UN in Bosnia), refuted the civil war thesis in parliament in April 1993:

If it is a civil war, what...are units of the Croatian standing army doing in Bosnia Herzegovina involved in the attacks on the Muslims. It is as logical to claim this is a civil war as to claim that the events in the Sudetenland in the 1930s were a civil war.56

**Milošević becomes the key to peace**

Throughout the first half of the 1990s the Belgrade authorities supplied weapons used to kill civilians in areas beyond Serbia during years when not a single part of Serbia ever found itself under attack.57 But at the behest of Britain, the international community preferred to play down the international nature of the conflict and portray the Serbian leader as a constructive force in the search for peace. Britain stuck to the view that a strong Serbia was vital for stability in the region. Michael Sheridan, diplomatic editor of a newspaper critical of British policy, wrote near the end of the Bosnian war: ‘Ministers don’t say so in public, but the fundamental British view remains that only a strong Serbia can ultimately guarantee security in the Balkans.’58 This meant overlooking Milošević’s responsibility for igniting the conflict.

David Owen declared in 1993: ‘I have been very fortunate in my working relationship with him... Milošević is the most important person in the whole region’ (quoted in Almond 1994:292). Hurd, who, upon his retirement from politics, would try to use his connections with Milošević to secure a Serbian privatisation contract for the British bank on whose board he sat (see chapter 7), refused to regard Milošević as a war criminal. He declared in 1993 that American officials might want to, but in his view, ‘It is always a little excessive to use that kind of language in such circumstances.’59

Perhaps the most remarkable tribute to Milošević from a Western statesman came from Warren Christopher, US Secretary of State from 1993 to 1997. He believed that ‘had fate dealt him a different birthplace and education, he would have been a successful politician in a democratic system’ (Holbrooke 1998:235). The unmistakable assumption here is that a talented, even virtuous, individual was simply ruined by the Balkan environment in which he was forced to operate.

Douglas Hurd and Malcolm Rifkind, the two successive British foreign secretaries who substantially shaped international policy on the Bosnian war up to its closing months, saw Milošević as a Balkan Bismarck, imposing political order on a fragmented state, albeit with brutal methods. Serbian defences crumbled in Croatia and north-west Bosnia in the late summer of 1995, when Bosnian and Croat forces launched offensives under the cover of NATO airstrikes. But the accepted wisdom in British official circles had been to regard Serbian military prowess as an absolute given that needed to be considered in any political settlement. This view about Serbian fighting qualities was also transmitted to many British officers at military college. Charles Dick, a lecturer at the
Royal Military College in Sandhurst, wrote in 1992: ‘the Serbs are a warlike, intensely nationalistic people easily mobilised and persuaded to endure great hardships and casualties to resist what they see as unjustified aggression against their homelands’ (Dick 1992:21).

Given the prevalence of such views, it is not surprising that the advice being given to ministers by the British Ministry of Defence was to stay out of the Balkans militarily. Plenty of it was also available in parliament throughout the war. Veteran Conservative MP, Sir Peter Tapsell described the Serbs in 1995 as ‘one of the fiercest, bravest and most patriotic races on earth, and always have been… Greater Serbia is a dream that will never die, however many Serbs may die in its pursuit’.60 A few months later, the left-wing MP Tam Dalyell described the Yugoslav People’s Army as ‘the most formidable, expert, tough guerrilla army in the world’.61 Misha Glenny bolstered such views in 1994: ‘The Serbs were ready to face airstrikes. The idea…that Serb bravado crumbled when a credible threat was issued, does not stand up to scrutiny’ (Glenny 1994).

But as early as 1992, Paddy Ashdown MP, by now becoming a frequent visitor to Bosnia, described Serbian military forces in a less heroic light:

The massive misjudgement the government is making is that these people are not the IRA, they are not the Vietnamese; I’ve watched these people; they are local town thugs. They are not trained, they are not fit, they are not prepared to close with the enemy, they run when someone actually fires back at them; they are cowards most of them.62

Low morale, draft-dodging, desertion and the induction into the army of civilians primarily interested in looting, prevented Serbian forces from delivering a knock-out blow against their poorly-armed opponents (Cigar 2001a). But the British government appeared to be dazzled by the historical images of formidable Balkan warriors tooled up to fight a gruelling ‘people’s war’. Douglas Hogg, Hurd’s deputy in the Foreign Office, told parliament in May 1993:

Unless we—all nations—are prepared to deploy troops in a combat role, perhaps we should not embark on too much bluster… When one is considering the cost in terms of human lives of trying to make peace by force, one must come to the conclusion that it would take about half a million men.63

Rifkind, when Defence Minister, insisted in April 1994: ‘To bring the war to an end militarily would require…hundreds of thousands of men…at enormous risk’ (Simms 2001:40).

Understandably, when Serbian national spokesmen saw that the West was hesitant about placing its forces in a Balkan quagmire, they played up the threat and even extended it beyond ex-Yugoslavia. On 4 March 1993 Karadžić was confronted by a momentarily angry Cyrus Vance in the office of the UN Secretary-General when ‘an open letter to the American people’, signed by Bosnian Serbs, included the unsubtle threat that the first bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York was an example of what might happen if the USA decided to intervene in Bosnia (Boutros-Ghali 1999:73).
Šešelj, of the Serbian Radical Party, warned on television in 1993 that missiles would be launched against civilian targets in Hungary, Croatia and Austria, as well as all other countries serving as logistical bases ‘in the event of NATO-led strikes against Bosnian Serbs’ (Andrejevich 1993:18). Meanwhile, General Mladić told Reuters on 16 May 1993 that ‘if [the West] bombs me, I’ll bomb London’ (Andrejevich 1993:19).

Vietnam and Second World War analogies to block peace enforcement

Mladić believed, not unreasonably, that the West was traumatised by the lessons of Vietnam: ‘The Western countries, affected above all by the experiences which they had in the wars waged from Vietnam up to today, have drawn the lesson that they cannot draft their own children to achieve their objectives outside their homelands’ (quoted in Cigar 2001a:219, n. 60). Indeed, the Vietnam metaphor frequently figures in the speeches of Western leaders urging absolute caution in the Balkans. John Major stated on 10 July 1992 that ‘the territory resembles nothing more than it resembles Dien Bien Phu and we remember the difficulties there’.64 In the spring of 1993, Owen responded to a US Senator advocating military intervention: ‘Do you want another Vietnam?’ But, eight months earlier, before Owen had adopted the standpoint of the Major government, he had turned sharply on the UN’s Boutros-Ghali when the latter had warned of the danger of a ‘new Vietnam’. To Owen, this was ‘nonsense’, and he called for NATO intervention.65

Second World War analogies were also used to discourage a vigorous NATO response. Defence Secretary Rifkind stated at a press conference in Vitez, where a British contingent of UNPROFOR was stationed, that Hitler had been unable to control Yugoslavia with 100,000 troops.66 In October 1992 this view had been refuted by General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley, Commander-in-Chief of NATO forces in Northern Europe from 1979 to 1982:

'It’s utterly different to when the Germans were there… If the Germans had had the sort of helicopters we’ve now got, Tito would never have lasted…you can’t hide people and guns in woods any longer. [Those who say you can] are just talking from profound ignorance.'67

The historian Norman Stone has shown that, of the German divisions pinned down by partisans in 1943, ‘two were manned by Croats, with German officers, three contained elderly territorials, and only one was a serious division, the SS Prinz Eugen’ (Stone 1992:30).

There were relatively few senior British officers who, in the early 1990s, held the view that well-armed democratic states had a moral obligation to intervene in a war in Europe mainly directed against civilians. But General Farrar-Hockley was quoted as saying that two or three divisions, amounting to 30,000 or 40,000 men, should be adequate, combined with maritime air cover, to take offensive action against the Serbs ‘when they’re going in for mayhem and slaughter’. Speaking in the autumn of 1992, he believed that the West should have acted earlier in Bosnia, but the increased difficulty of intervention did not relieve his and other NATO countries of the moral obligation:
One’s blood boils when one sees those poor souls who will soon be down below starvation levels and in appalling cold. Is it right to stand back and say, well this is another foreign country, another distant place? We despise Chamberlain for having said that, is that what we want to go back to?68

He was backed by Colonel Michael Dewar, Director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, who argued that

military intervention is perfectly feasible from a military point of view… Douglas Hurd and others, for entirely political reasons, are fighting shy of saying it is viable. What they mean is that they do not think it is politically desirable.69

**The Vance-Owen Plan and its collapse**

In January 1993 a peace plan devised by the UN and EC joint peace envoys was published. It preserved the shell of a unitary state but it formalised the internal distribution of territory on the basis of ethnicity. A weakened central government remained in Sarajevo, but substantial powers were to be devolved to ten provinces, usually referred to as ‘cantons’ (Allcock *et al.* 1998:318). Nine of the provinces would be predominantly Serb, Croat or Muslim. Each would have its own legislature ‘answerable to an ethnically-cleansed electorate’ (Simms 2001:142). The central government would have no armed force capable of asserting its control over these provinces.

Owen, the chief driving force behind the plan, was an independent member of the British House of Lords who had broken with the Labour Party, in whose last government before 1997 he had been Foreign Secretary from 1977 to 1979. He also founded a new centre party meant to heal the
Map 2 Bosnia: 1993 Vance-Owen Plan

deep divisions in the British politics of the 1980s, only to abandon it at the end of the decade. He was an ally of John Major and publicly endorsed him in the 1992 general election.

In the summer of 1992 Owen had publicly argued that Western nations should enforce peace by using their armed forces. But then Stephen Wall, the Prime Minister’s private secretary, ‘explained the fears of the Chiefs of Staff of being sucked into a combatant role in what was essentially a civil war’ and Owen embraced the minimalist position of the British government (Owen 1996:16). He would adhere to it after the conflict was over, urging NATO to steer clear of Kosovo in the late 1990s.

The Vance-Owen Plan gave the Muslims three of the ten provinces, and some access both to the sea and to Muslim enclaves in eastern Bosnia. It allowed the central
government more powers than later plans, including control of a unified army, while allowing the provinces control of their own police forces, a recipe for confrontation (Touval 2002:118). Owen admitted that it would entail population ‘swaps’, but failed to spell out the likelihood that this would involve a massive and involuntary displacement of people (Kumar 1997:60). There was little room in it for the hundreds of thousands of Bosnians who had made mixed marriages or were the offspring of such unions. Unless they lived in Sarajevo, they would have to choose an ethnic territory (and it wasn’t even clear if the partitioning of that city could be avoided). Serbs loyal to the Sarajevo government belonged to a Serb Civic Council which had 50,000 members in 20 offices in towns under government control. They stood to gain little from the plan. It awarded territory disproportionately to the Croats, who soon occupied those areas, thus intensifying the conflict between Croatian nationalists controlled from Zagreb and the Bosnian government, one which had been building up since late 1992. The UN rapporteur for human rights in ex-Yugoslavia, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, issued a report in May 1993, blaming the Vance-Owen Plan for thus stimulating ethnic purging.

Izetbegović protested that the plan was a prelude for ethnic partition because largely mono-ethnic cantons would be virtually self-governing, but he signed it, arguing that he did so because he was convinced that the Bosnian Serbs would reject it (Kumar 1997:78). Karadžić’s forces would have to retreat from some of the territory they had seized in 1992, but it still gave them under half of Bosnia. Martin Woollacott, the foreign affairs editor of The Guardian, wrote:

Once Europe and America had decided against military intervention in Yugoslavia, it was inevitable that any peace plan would have to be largely on Serbian terms…the equally unavoidable truth is that those who were least responsible for the war are to be punished and those most responsible are to be rewarded. Whatever happens next Monday, the Muslims, and those who represent the idea of a multi-ethnic Bosnia, are being transformed, by the complex workings of international diplomacy, from being victims of war to being obstacles to peace. That perhaps, is the gravest injustice of all.

For the Vance-Owen Plan to be implemented, a large international force was required which would need US participation to be credible. Certainly Owen thought so, and in February 1993 he visited the USA to sell his peace proposal. But there was deep unhappiness on Capitol Hill and in the White House (newly occupied by the Democratic victor of the 1992 election, Bill Clinton) about ‘the territorial and constitutional injustice of its provisions’ (Simms 2001:154). It had few sustainers among heavyweight politician, and Owen lost friends through the arrogant way he sought to foist it on to the American political establishment. Ian Traynor of The Guardian has written:

Owen went to Washington at the start of 1993, demanding that the new President endorse his scheme and put up tens of thousands of US troops to help enforce it. ‘A cheeky, almost condescending lecture to a new US president’ was how the New York Times characterised Owen’s gamble.
At a time when the Bosnian Muslims were being recalcitrant, Owen complained to Johnny Apple, Washington editor of *The New York Times*:

"We can’t get the Muslims on board. And that’s largely the fault of the Americans, because the Muslims won’t budge while they think Washington may come into it on their own side any day now. What do they want down there, a war that goes on and on? This [Vance-Owen Plan] isn’t just the best act in town, it’s the only act in town. It’s the best settlement you can get, and it’s a bitter irony to see the Clinton people block it."

(Owen 1995:149)

Long into the future, Owen insisted that a selfish and parochial American approach had sabotaged the 1993 peace plan. Sir Robert Renwick, at that time British ambassador in Washington, has disputed this: ‘The idea that the VOPP failed because of the Americans is a myth. The VOPP failed because the Bosnian Serbs were never prepared to agree to it and, secondly, it was incapable, in my view, of implementation.’

Owen increasingly relied on Slobodan Milošević to secure the peace plan by overcoming the objections of the Bosnian Serb leadership. Despite having set in motion many of the events which culminated in the Bosnian war, the Serbian leader proved very amenable. Now that his gamble for a quick victory was receding, he was looking for ways to terminate the conflict on terms advantageous to the Serbs. Increasingly, there was no love lost between him and the civil and military leaders of the self-styled Republic of Srpska. They had increasingly acquired an independent power-base and many were right-wing nationalists who despised Milošević’s communist background and who believed him to be an inauthentic nationalist. Above all, sanctions imposed by the UN on Serbia in May 1992 had done tremendous damage to the Serbian economy. On 28 May of that year Milošević had said, erroneously: ‘I believe the sanctions will not be able to last long’ (quoted in Cigar 2001a:217).

Milošević was gratified, and perhaps not a little relieved, that the West was prepared to treat him as a constructive force for peace. Hurd was careful never to identify with the view that one day he might have to answer before a court of law for serious war crimes. A particularly close relationship developed with Owen. Milošević told Tudjman’s emissary Hrvoje Šarinić that ‘Owen is our good friend, Mira’s and mine’ According to Laura Silber and Allan Little, the British envoy ‘would build up an extraordinarily warm relationship with Milošević, winning his total confidence’ (Silber and Little 1996:290).

Despite what Milošević had started, Owen believed in 1993 that ‘he is heading towards leading Serbia back into the European family’ (Almond 1994:293).

But on 6 May 1993 the Serbian assembly in Pale, the ski-resort near Sarajevo which had become the capital of the Republic of Srpska, rejected the Vance-Owen Plan. Pressurised by Milošević and the Greek Prime Minister, Constantin Mitsotakis, an ally of Serbia, Karadžić had signed the plan in Athens on 5 May. Owen had described it as ‘a bright sunny day in the Balkans’ (Silber and Little 1996:313). Karadžić had been half-hearted but, back in Pale, General Mladić convinced the Serb assembly that the plan would result in unacceptable territorial losses. He also had the backing of the vice-president of the Republic of Srpska, Mrs Biljana Plavšić. A former professor of biology
at Sarajevo university, she had toured the battlefronts encouraging the troops, and she declared to a Belgrade newspaper that it was her ‘dearest wish to see the Drina valley cleansed of Muslims… I wish them no good, though to get my peace, I’ll have to give them something, so that they do not disturb me’.  

The Vance-Owen Plan was voted down in front of Milošević. This was an unprecedented act of defiance; ‘opponents were there to be circumvented, removed, or otherwise overcome’ (Silber and Little 1996:318). Later, on 15–16 May 1993, a referendum in the territory controlled from Pale produced a 93 per cent vote against the plan.  

Owen insisted that his plan could have been imposed on the Bosnian Serbs by force (an ironic position given his earlier reluctance to use force to prevent them from continuing their military campaign). But Hurd wrote later: ‘I understand why he thinks that, I understand why he is so critical of the Americans for undermining the plan. I don’t believe it was possible to impose it’ (Hurd 1997:7).  

Milošević, the supreme realist, had come up against nationalism’s true believers who damned him for being deficient in his commitment to the cause of Serbdom. The military analyst Milos Vasić has placed himself close to the school of thought which argues that:

Milošević himself was unaware of the destructive power of the Serb nationalism he had unleashed; that the Pandora’s Box of war went out of control and that he himself was surprised by the fact that the war of ethnic extermination gained such a momentum as to make it a self-supporting suicidal machine.

(Vasić 1996:132)

Tudjman’s land-grab in Bosnia, 1993–4

There was less likelihood of a split occurring between Croatia’s Franjo Tudjman and the radical nationalists whom he promoted and with whom he increasingly surrounded himself. During his nine years as Croatia’s leader (1990–9), he was the number one believer in an enlarged Croatia, greatly expanded at the expense of Bosnia. The obstinacy and indeed cruelty which he displayed in seeking to attain this goal suggest that he would have been likely to join Milošević at the international war crimes tribunal but for his untimely death at the end of 1999.  

Tudjman’s partner in this venture was Gojko Šušak, who came from western Herzegovina, where Croats were the majority of the population. He emigrated to Canada as a young man, where he made money in the pizza business (Allcock et al. 1998:285). He helped bankroll Tudjman’s 1990 electoral campaign and became Minister for the Émigré Community in his first pre-1991 government. Soon he was Minister of Defence, and it was in this capacity that he delivered a speech in the Bosnian town of Travnik, on 12 April 1993, insisting that the Croatian flag should fly alongside the Bosnian one (Remington 1993:368). Travnik was in the geographical centre of Bosnia; its Muslims (45 per cent) outnumbered the Croats (37 per cent), and the town’s population had been greatly swelled by thousands of mainly Muslim refugees and deportees from northern Bosnia. Šušak insisted on Croatian ownership because the town had just been assigned to
one of the Croatian cantons under the Vance-Owen Plan (Remington 1993:368). The British war reporter, Anthony Loyd, has written: ‘The proposed borders seemed so ridiculously advantageous to the Bosnian Croats that even they joked that HVO stood for “Hvala Vance Owen”, thank you Vance Owen’ (Loyd 2000:86). According to one source, these borders ‘correlated almost exactly with the frontiers of the “Banovina Croatia” of 1939 which Tudjman had subsequently agreed with Milošević…in 1991’ (Vulliamy 1994:250).

While Milošević rarely spoke in public about his goal of a Greater Serbia, Tudjman was open to the point of recklessness about his own expansionist goals at the expense of Bosnia-Herzegovina. At a dinner in London commemorating Victory in Europe Day on 6 May 1995, he even drew a map for the guest sitting next to him, Paddy Ashdown, showing where the contours of the state would lie (Ashdown 1999:315–16). Probably no other head of state has been so influenced by the ideas of Samuel Huntington, the American political scientist propelled to fame in the 1990s for his concept of a looming ‘clash of civilizations’ that he believed was poised to replace the ideological conflicts of the Cold War.

Tudjman’s expansionary plans enjoyed strong support in western Herzegovina, parts of which traditionally looked to Dalmatia. The interests of Croatian Herzegovina had been neglected in royal Yugoslavia, which provided the only strong base of support for Pavelić’s wartime puppet state. Western Herzegovina did not fare well when Serbs were mainly in the ascendancy of the Bosnian leadership (until the 1960s). With the introduction of a more liberal passport law, they emigrated in large numbers: in 1971 Croats totalled 20.6 per cent of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s population, yet their share of total outmigration was 42.4 per cent. For the whole of the communist era, ‘the state invested almost nothing in the regional infrastructure, nor did it construct a single industrial facility’ (anić 1995:41).

Most Croats in Croatia proper saw not Muslims in Bosnia but the Serbian army and its political masters in Belgrade as their chief foes. Yet during years in which forces loyal to Milošević occupied one-third of Croatia, Tudjman maintained regular ties with his Serbian counterpart. Before and after the 1991 war, Tudjman believed he could do a deal with Milošević to partition Bosnia-Herzegovina between them. Much is known about these links because Tudjman’s personal emissary, Hrvoje Šarinić, published a book detailing them after being dropped as head of the president’s personal office. Entitled All My Secret Negotiations with Slobodan Milošević, it showed a Croatian leader who complained in public about Serbian aggression but who displayed sympathy and even friendship in private for Milošević. Šarinić described Milošević as declaring in 1993:

I can openly state that with Republic of Srpska, which will sooner or later become part of Serbia, I have solved 90 per cent of the Serb national question, just as Tudjman has solved the Croat national question with Herceg-Bosna.

Herceg-Bosna had been proclaimed as a quasi-state on 5 July 1992. It comprised agriculturally unproductive rural areas, and the small town of Grude became its capital. Beforehand, the Croatian leadership in Bosnia had been drawn from moderates in the republic’s centre. They and their leader, Stjepan Kljujić, were opposed to secessionism,
although they belonged to the Bosnian wing of Tudjman’s HDZ; in February 1992, the Croatian leader was able to arrange the removal of Kljujić, and his replacement by Mate Boban. Under him, the secessionist agenda of the HDZ soon became apparent. On 8 April 1992, the Croatian Council of Defence, HVO, was formed. It described itself as ‘the only institutional form of defence of the Croats in Bosnia’, and would act as the militia for Tudjman’s and Boban’s party. Striking similarities exist between Boban and his counterparts at the head of the nearby Serbian para-state of the Krajina. They were ‘inimical to compromise, insensitive to finesse, and belligerent’ (Štitkovač 1997:161–2). They were unimpressive figures who would never have emerged from provincial obscurity but for the complete collapse of normal conditions over much of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

Boban (1940–97) had held various minor positions, such as director of a publishing company and manager of a supermarket, while displaying his political conformity by becoming local Communist Party Secretary. He ‘was not a nationalist until such time as the price of nationalism rose on the market’. Tudjman needed an obedient placeman in the Bosnian HDZ willing to carry out orders, however unpalatable. Boban’s financial affairs had got him into trouble with the law, but the trial was quashed and he was soon Tudjman’s mouthpiece among the Bosnian Croats.

Boban was prepared to build up the type of political relationship with Radovan Karadžić that Tudjman had preserved with Milošević. Secret talks ensued between them, and The Guardian’s Ian Traynor reported in 1992 that ‘they are delighted with the mediation efforts of Lord Carrington… They both see in Lord Carrington’s plan for a tripartite “cantonisation” of Bosnia a chance to legitimise the territory they have taken by force.’ On 6 May 1992, both men even signed a joint statement noting that the HDZ demanded the whole of the city of Mostar for the Croatian national unit, while the SDS demanded a division along the Neretva river which flowed through the city, both requesting arbitration on the line of separation.

Until 1950, the city of Mostar had been shared principally between Muslims and Serbs (Vulliamy 1994:40). An influx of Croats from the rural hinterland of Herzegovina gradually altered the population balance until, in 1991, Muslims comprised 35 per cent of the city’s population, Croats 34 per cent and Serbs 19 per cent (Udovicki and Štitkovač 1997:181). Community relations in Bosnia’s fourth largest city had been widely regarded as harmonious. The sixteenth-century Stari Most (Old Bridge) over the Neretva river was seen as a symbol of those bonds. But it was the misfortune of Mostar to be located on the intersection of Croatian and Serbian interests in South-West Bosnia.

On 9 May 1993, Croatian forces began an attack on East Mostar, systematically destroying that part of the city (Magaš and anić 2001:367). One hour before the attack, the Spanish battalion of UNPROFOR abandoned its position on the main road to Mostar, giving no warning of what was to come. Soon after, the HVO established several concentration camps for thousands of Muslims within the zone still patrolled by the Spanish troops (Behram 1995:38). The reputation of the West was partly salvaged by the actions of a 32-year-old British woman, Sally Becker, who, in 1993, almost single-handedly rescued children from Mostar’s east side; she was seen as a menace by the British Foreign Office and a meddling do-gooder by the UN for failing to ‘get the paperwork done and…the visas in order’. 
By the second half of 1993, Mostar’s 50,000 Muslims had been forced into cellars in East Mostar where they faced a long siege from Boban’s forces. It is clear from the actions of the HVO elsewhere in Bosnia that Tudjman was ‘intent on the radical destruction of the social order…together with its basic values’ (uneq 2001:113). He was fully prepared to sacrifice the Croats of central Bosnia. Living in ethnically mixed areas, they were a minority and their behaviour indicated a belief in the territorial integrity of Bosnia shared between its different ethnic groups (Moore 1993:12). Boban demanded, in a letter to the head of the Roman Catholic Church in Bosnia, Bishop Puljić of Sarajevo, that he organise the exodus of Croats from central Bosnia to areas where they would form a majority. He also proposed that the seat of the arch-bishopric be moved from Sarajevo to Travnik. Committed to co-existence, and later appointed a cardinal by the Vatican, Puljić refused, and the pro-HDZ press branded him ‘a traitor’ and a pawn of Izetbegović.90

Some of the worst examples of ‘hate speech’ in the Balkans had emanated from the HVO side in order to justify the Croatian betrayal of their former Muslim allies. At one point, Boban declared that ‘we are bound to the Serbs by brotherhood in Christ, but nothing at all binds us to the Muslims except the fact that for five centuries, they violated our mothers and sisters’.91 Uncannily similar language was used by Mladić to justify the actions needed to create a radical separation of peoples: ‘Serbian mothers watched children taken away by Muslims to become Sultan’s slaves, to be sold as slaves’.92

Guilt for alleged historical injustices, ones much coloured by nationalist historiography, was to be collective and hereditary, while no sense of guilt need be felt by those who slaked their revenge by committing horrific acts of violence on descendants of people alleged to have harmed the Serbian or Croatian nations.

The true guilt belongs to opportunists such as Boban and ‘true believers’ such as Tudjman and Serbian counterparts who unleashed bloody pogroms in the parts of Bosnia where their ambitions coincided. But the international community could not be absolved from blame. Genscher’s successor as German Foreign Minister, Klaus Kinkel, proved a spineless figure. He had no political ties with the Croatian Right but he showed no inclination to use Germany’s undoubted weight to bring them to heel. The pope was also irresolute when Vatican denunciations of acts of cruelty and aggression by leaders of a Catholic country were likely to have restrained Tudjman. (The Croatian church was in fact divided, Catholic clergy in Herzegovina often being willing to support the HVO irrespective of its methods (Sells 1996:105).)

Regular army troops from Croatia fought clandestinely in Bosnia just as VJ forces from Serbia did. Despite the presence of three or four brigades, the war went badly for Tudjman. More Croatian soldiers were killed fighting Bosnian government troops than had been killed in Croatia when up against the JNA and later the Serbian Krajina forces (Mesić and Divjak 2001:105, 102). Top military figures who had stemmed the Serbian advance in Croatia in 1991 resigned and publicly expressed their dissension over Tudjman’s proxy war. General Martin Špegelj was convinced that, if the Croatian army had remained in alliance with the Bosnian government forces, the war against Serbia would have been successfully completed by the end of 1992 (Špegelj 2001b:109).

Croatia’s opposition parties accused Defence Minister Šušak of sacrificing the Croats of central Bosnia on the altar of Herceg-Bosna. Civilian Croats here who refused to turn on their Muslim neighbours were beaten up by HVO thugs (Loyd 2000:203). But by
early 1994, the Croats in Bosnia had been sharply reduced in numbers and by 1995 only half the numbers found in 1991 would remain (unec 2001:113). They lost the most fertile part of the country and were halved in number in large industrial centres. Exchanges of population with Bosnian Serbs led to Croats being settled in sparsely populated areas in western Herzegovina, where their economic future seemed bleak (Divjak 2001:176).

It was firm US intervention at the diplomatic level which compelled Tudjman to end the war. From August 1993, Charles Redman, the US special envoy to Bosnia, sought to broker a Muslim-Croat federation. In the late autumn, Redman began to threaten Tudjman with sanctions if the fighting, which had risen sharply, was not halted. When the US ambassador to Croatia, Peter Galbraith, was told in December 1993 that ‘Mate Boban would be taking…a long vacation’, the pressure appeared to be working (Kumar 1997:72–3). But as late as January 1994, Tudjman was proving sufficiently obdurate for Madeleine Albright, the US envoy to the UN, to warn that the presence of the Croatian army in Bosnia was of ‘major concern’. The USA favoured sanctions, but most EU members, apart from Denmark, Spain and Italy, were reluctant to impose them for fear of retaliation against the UN presence in Croatia.

One military expert, Norman Cigar, is convinced that Croatia ‘will pay dearly’ for its destructive tactics in Bosnia. Instead of having a friendly and united Bosnia on much of its eastern flank, it is confronted instead by the para-state of the Republic of Srpska, which, by its attack on Bosnia in 1993, it greatly helped to fortify (Cigar 2001a:109). A Croatian source has described the misalliance between Croatian and Serbian nationalists in Bosnia as ‘acts of political suicide’ in which the leaders of the Herzegovinian Croats ‘allowed a struggle for self-defence of their own people to be reduced to the same practices [carried out]…by those whom they were defending themselves against’.

**Conclusion**

The Serbian aggression in Bosnia after April 1992 gave rise to the worst violations of human rights seen anywhere in Europe since 1945. The Yugoslav army was rearranged and a separate force placed at the disposal of the Bosnian Serb Republic (Republic of Srpska). They operated along with paramilitary formations and their targets were mainly unarmed civilians, in a conflict which witnessed few set-piece confrontations between opposing military forces.

It erupted just when it appeared that Europe had shaken off the last of the totalitarian systems which, for the previous seventy-five years, had licensed waves of repression against civilians seen as ethnically incompatible or ideologically unsound. Almost next door to Bosnia, a dozen European states were stepping up efforts to dissolve their economic frontiers and break down many of their political barriers, stimulated by the desire not to repeat the nationalist bloodletting of the 1939–45 period.

But the European Community, with other transnational institutions supposed to be regulating the post-Cold War world, failed to respond to the Bosnian conflict with any sense of urgency. The chief aggressors in the conflict were clearly known and the UN would officially acknowledge the massive culpability of Serbian civil and military leaderships, from Belgrade and Banja Luka to Pale, in reports and statements in the years ahead. But at no stage was there any effort to enforce peace by sending in an international
force to end the systematic attacks on civilians known euphemistically as ‘ethnic cleansing’. Instead the Bosnian war was treated as a natural disaster; humanitarian aid was provided by a UN force which soon was hardly concealing the fact that its main concern was to protect its own members. Solidarity with the civilian victims of war was often conspicuous by its absence, although it is undoubtedly true that UNPROFOR saved many lives by providing food aid (but in many other places large numbers of lives were lost because UNPROFOR food convoys never came, or, more likely, because UNPROFOR declined to interpose itself between an armed aggressor and its civilian prey).

Britain played a paramount role in shaping the international response to the Bosnian conflict. It desired to bring the war to a quick conclusion without land-grabs being substantially reversed or the identified perpetrators of killings and those who issued them with orders being forced to account for their deeds. The reasons for the British stance are likely to be debated long into the future.

Various theses and excuses were advanced by the Major government and its domestic supporters to justify non-intervention: the ‘equivalence of guilt’ with responsibility spread across all ‘the warring factions’, the persistence of age-old ethnic animosities, and the irreconcilable differences to be found in contemporary Balkan societies are the best-known ones. The argument that the conflict was a civil war not involving international aggression was one also insisted upon by British ‘peace-makers’.

British negotiators from Lord Carrington to Lord Owen encouraged a marathon talks process in London and Geneva and other centres while ‘ethnic cleansing’ and the shelling of civilians proceeded unabated. The Major government was largely responsible for the maintenance of the arms embargo on Bosnia; it tried to block the work of the UN War Crimes Tribunal, an isolated response to state aggression from the Bush administration; and it tried to ensure that refugees, whose fledgling state had been denied weapons for self-defence, should be kept as far away from British shores as possible.

The rehabilitation of Milošević, previously viewed as taking realpolitik too far in his bid to rearrange the boundaries and human geography of Yugoslavia, was a British-initiated process that would be endorsed by France and the USA. By the time of the Vance-Owen Plan in 1993, he was being transformed into ‘a constructive force for peace’. The Plan formalised the internal division of territory on the basis of ethnicity and had nothing to offer Bosnians of mixed ethnic background or a commitment to multicultural living. It also stimulated a land-grab by a Croatian militia in western Bosnia completely under the control of the Croatian president, Franjo Tudjman.

This war of aggression in 1993–4 would be ended thanks to vigorous US diplomacy. But the Clinton administration differed from its British ally only over important details of policy, such as the arms embargo, not over peace enforcement, which it failed to advocate.

The Muslims were seen by Britain and less often by the US administration not as victims of war but as obstacles to the only peace on offer, that based on brutal realpolitik.
Commitment to a multi-cultural entity began to fade as they encountered cynical Western leaders disinclined to defend or enforce their own professed liberal ideals. The policy of limited humanitarian intervention by the West enabled elites with an ethnic agenda to strengthen their hold in Bosnia and neighbouring states. It did immense damage to peace and stability in the Balkans and time would quickly reveal how damaging it was for the effectiveness of international institutions generally.
Survival amidst tragedy and international rancour

Washington: rhetoric well ahead of policy

The failure of the Vance-Owen initiative did not lead to the abandonment of Western-led policies designed to partition Bosnia and enable the Republic of Srpska to keep much of the territory acquired by force since the spring of 1992. Meanwhile, a Croatian-Bosnian Accord, brokered by the USA, was signed in Zagreb on 25 March 1994. US officials tried to breathe life into an artificial federation by promising aid for postwar reconstruction if it was consolidated (Bennett 1995:204). It was probably the most constructive act undertaken by the USA throughout the Bosnian conflict. By now President Clinton was settling into the White House and much was expected of him. Speaking at the University of Wisconsin on 1 October 1992, Clinton had specifically criticised Bush’s record:

A year ago last June, Mr Bush sent his secretary of state to Belgrade, where in the name of stability, he urged the members of the dying Yugoslav federation to resist dissolution. This would have required the peoples of Bosnia, Croatia, and Slovenia to knuckle under Europe’s last communist strongman. When instead these republics asserted their independence, the emboldened Milošević regime launched the bloodiest war in Europe in over 40 years.

(Halverson 1996:10)

He had been most categorical of all in June 1992 when his officials issued a policy statement in his name, saying: ‘The United States should take the lead in seeking United Nations Security Council authorisation for air strikes against those who are attacking the relief effort. The United States should be prepared to lend appropriate military support to that operation’ (quoted in Owen 1996:13).

Influential voices in the new administration lent their backing to what became known as a policy of ‘lift and strike’; it involved lifting the arms embargo on the Bosnian government and launching air strikes on the Bosnian Serbs. The US ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, was strongly in favour, as, to a large extent, was
Anthony Lake, the president’s national security advisor (Halberstam 2001:197, 309). The vice-president, Al Gore, “[F]rom the moment he joined the ticket...had made Bosnia a campaign issue...[and] in office he continued to push for a tougher line against the Serbs’ (Halberstam 2001:196). Clinton’s secretary of state, Warren Christopher, declared on 10 February 1993: ‘Bold tyrants and fearful minorities are watching to see whether “ethnic cleansing” is a policy the world will tolerate... [Our] answer must be a resounding no’ (Daalder 2000:10).

But, in his memoirs Christopher admitted that ‘the rhetoric proved to be well ahead of our policy’ (Christopher 1998:345). Clinton was prepared to devote little attention to foreign policy issues, however pressing. Compared to ‘his primary job at hands...the economy’, they were ‘an inconvenience’ (Halberstam 2001:193). Gore and Albright were minor players in the Washington power game, and not until the Srebrenica massacre of 1995 was Lake prepared to transform his instincts on Bosnia into an alternative policy designed to supplant the one shaped by Britain since 1992.

Warren Christopher soon laid down four strict tests for the use of force: the goal had to be clearly stated; likelihood of success should be strong; there must be an ‘exit’ strategy; and the administration must be able to rely on substantial public support.1

Les Aspin, the US defence secretary in 1993–4, was very much opposed to the US having an active peace-making role.2 The only fresh initiative in the first months of the new presidency was the dropping of food parcels to besieged areas, Serb forces sometimes mowing down people who tried to reach them.3 US advocates of firmer action were emboldened by one of the few resolute actions taken by UNPROFOR in Bosnia before June 1995. General Philippe Morillon, UNPROFOR’s commander since October 1992, made a dramatic intervention on 11 March 1993. The town of Srebrenica (in Muslim hands) was on the point of being overrun by besieged Serbs. Arriving with a few troops, Morillon was swayed by the entreaties of the population and he decided to stay with them (Morillon 1994:161–82). UNPROFOR was able to reach him by land and air, food and medicine was flown in, and the wounded were taken out. Boutros-Ghali soon criticised him for exceeding his mandate and may have been instrumental in securing his removal in July (Gow 1997:143; Rieff 1995:169). Nevertheless, his gesture had a powerful world impact and, on 4 June 1993, the UN Security Council designated Srebrenica a ‘safe area’ along with Bihać, Goražde, Tuzla, epa and Sarajevo (Sharp 1996:27).

The UN failed to lobby for the 34,000 troops which its Secretary-General said would be needed to defend the safe areas. Each one would be manned by only a few hundred lightly armed troops (Sharp 1996:28). Nevertheless, for the first time, ‘the international community had committed itself—morally, if not in any effective practical sense—to the protection of one side in the war against the other’ (Silber and Little 1996:304). Despite the UN resolution on safe areas never really being implemented, UN intervention was no longer confined to providing humanitarian aid and ‘good offices’ for a negotiated settlement.

Morillon’s conviction that force ought to be used in certain circumstances had a big influence on some members of the French government and even more on public opinion. More than in London, the dominant view in Paris was that the Serbian side had ‘overwhelming responsibility for what was happening’ (Gow 1997:163). France was less obstructive to the USA over Bosnia than Britain, and its deep involvement in the crisis
took it ‘even closer to full military re-integration into NATO, and closer indeed to the USA since the 1960s’ (Gow 1997:165).

Warren Christopher was sent to Western Europe in early May 1993 to win over the USA’s European allies to the fledgling policy of ‘lift and strike’. But he lacked conviction despite the strong backing he received from NATO’s Secretary-General, Manfred Wörner (Simms 2001:88). According to Richard Perle, a former member of the Reagan administration, he ‘went to Europe with an American policy, and he came back with a European one’. At a congressional hearing on 18 May 1993, Christopher described the Bosnian issue as ‘a problem from hell’; a ‘morass’ of ancient hatreds with ‘atrocities on all sides’. He said: At heart this is a European problem’ (Drew 1994:162).

The president was also getting cold feet for a policy he was already lukewarm about. While Christopher had been in Europe, he read parts of Balkan Ghosts. This book, by the prominent political journalist Robert D.Kaplan, provided vivid pen portraits of each of the Balkan countries, and supported the view that they were hopelessly riven by ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’ (Kaplan 1993). As he heard Clinton talk about it, Defense Secretary Aspin thought, ‘Holy shit! He’s going south on lift and strike’ (Drew 1994:157).

Clinton’s own pronouncements on Bosnia came to resemble a ‘church-spire weathercock, spinning in a hurricane’ (Vulliamy 1998:82). The administration’s half-baked policy on Bosnia had been taken apart by his European allies. (David Halberstam has written that ‘[T]he failure to act on Bosnia and the contradiction between American speeches and American actions hung over the [State] Department like an immense cloud’ (Halberstam 2001:231). In August 1992, George Kenney, deputy-head of Yugoslav affairs at the State Department, had quit in protest at ‘a classic appeasement policy’. The following April, twelve State Department officials wrote to Clinton calling for a tougher US policy to deter mainly one-sided aggression from the Serbs. In August 1993, Marshall Freeman Harris, Kenney’s successor, quit in protest at what appeared to be a cave-in to Karadžić’s Serbs being proposed at peace talks in Geneva. In his resignation statement, Harris wrote: ‘I can no longer serve in a State Department that accepts the forceful dismemberment of a European state and that will not act against genocide and the Serbian officials who perpetrate it.’

Harris soon became a prominent public campaigner, urging a change of policy. The US press was receptive. Clinton’s hesitancy was derided by influential columnists who would more usually be his allies on foreign policy issues. Thus, Anthony Lewis wrote in the The New York Times on 5 March 1993: ‘How far will Bill Clinton bend his knee to the murderous thugs who lead Serbian aggression in Bosnia? How far can they push him without a response that preserves American honor?’

The civilian victims of the siege made a strong impression through the medium of television. The Bosnian cause acquired a formidable advocate in its ambassador to the UN, Muhamed Sacirbey. Sacirbey was a corporation lawyer on Wall Street who had been a star in American college football, but was also a practising Muslim, the son of parents who had fled the country in the 1940s (Allcock et al. 1998:253; Holbrooke 1998:35). His mastery of media soundbites and his clean-cut moderate image (the antithesis of Islam’s customary image in much of the West) were vital in what was becoming a media-based war. Robert Dole, the US Republican leader in the Senate, also became an outspoken advocate of robust US involvement, lending the cause a bipartisan appeal cutting across normal US political divisions.
But Clinton continued to hesitate about challenging the Bush-crafted policy of minimal intervention until late into his first term. Notoriously hesitant about going too far ahead of public opinion, he was afraid that the American public would not accept the sending of ground troops. He was also influenced by the perception that a public challenge to Serbia, whose alleged longstanding friendship with Russia was accepted as a given, might undermine Boris Yeltsin’s continuation in office, on which the Americans had gambled heavily (Drew 1994:145).

The Pentagon was also extremely lukewarm about ‘lift and strike’. White House policy-makers eager for a more pro-active stance complained that the defence establishment (and also the CIA) usually depicted the Serbian military and its proxy armies as formidable opponents to tangle with (Halberstam 2001:339). General Colin Powell, the much respected chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, harboured resentment about ‘careless civilian decision-making in Vietnam’ and was reluctant to see the army dragged into ‘a Balkan quagmire’ (Halberstam 2001:39, 141). The ‘Vietnam syndrome’ powerfully affected US land forces, but the air force had been less scarred by the Vietnam experience and General Merrill McPeak, the head of the air force, had been the only member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who in the early phases of the Yugoslav war advocated a pro-active policy (Halberstam 2001:39).

It was hard for the USA to act forcefully in Europe when its leading ally there, Britain, was strongly opposed to such action. Most US policy-makers were impressed by the idea that ‘peace-keepers’ from the NATO countries already stationed in Bosnia would be placed in great danger by air strikes or even the lifting of the arms embargo. Thus, US policy on Bosnia for much of Clinton’s first term was essentially that of the lowest common denominator (Hodge and Grbin 1996:74–5).

**British elite dissenters**

Britain, which shaped the West’s Bosnia policy for almost the whole duration of the war there, witnessed far less elite dissent than was seen across the Atlantic. No resignations from the British Foreign Office occurred. Unlike in the USA, there were no bodies such as the Council for Foreign Relations that influenced policy independent of the State Department. The nearest counterparts were too dependent on government funding to dare adopt any strongly independent line.

Retired senior diplomats, civil servants and at least one general dissented from official policy. Sir Anthony Parsons, Britain’s ambassador to the UN from 1979 to 1982, told *The Times* on 20 April 1993 that ‘I have favoured confronting the Bosnian Serbs within the context of the UN from the outset of the civil war’. John Thompson, his successor as Britain’s UN ambassador, was far more forthright:

> The message from former Yugoslavia is that you can continue infringing territories and rights so long as you do not directly threaten the economic interests of the great powers and are prepared to retreat prudently, but temporarily, when they huff and puff.
The nub of the problem is that Western governments have been unwilling to pay a political or military price to maintain stability and moral standards.\(^8\)

Thompson warned that institutions such as the UN, NATO and the CSCE, which were supposed to create a new secure Europe, had been ‘weakened by the success with which the Serbs and the Croats have called their bluff. As a result, the assumption that there is some sort of collective global security has been undermined, making international chaos a real possibility.’\(^9\)

Journalists such as Andrew Marr (later political editor of the BBC) echoed those views:

> We are left largely leaderless, surrounded by strained alliances, and topped by the UN with all the moral authority of the League of Nations after Mussolini had finished with Abyssinia. A small war in the Balkans, which has seen immense courage on the part of Western aid workers and soldiers, has rammed home the old message that international strength comes not from possessing force, but from being prepared to use it to uphold an idea. Our idea, which we have not upheld, has been international law. A world where that is mocked is a more dangerous one, and not only for Bosnians.\(^10\)

In 1993 Marr reported that Field Marshall Sir Richard Vincent, who was then chairing NATO’s Military Committee, and had before that been chief of the defence staff in London, had

> privately compared the West’s response to the Bosnian War to the appeasement of fascism in the 1930s. He is said to be bitterly critical of a policy of ‘too little too late’ that has consistently encouraged and rewarded the Serbs.\(^11\)

In interviews after the Bosnian war, Vincent insisted that the West had been ‘blowing its credibility’ over Bosnia: ‘I was aware that if this was the best NATO could deliver at the end of the Cold War, what the hell were we paying for?’\(^12\)

Manfred Wörner, head of NATO, said in 1993: ‘I am the head of the most powerful military organization in world history and I can do nothing’ (quoted in Simms 2001:103). Bosnia ‘dominated every NATO meeting but none concluded with a clear consensus about how to proceed’ (Daalder 2000:164). It was much the same at the meetings of the Council of Ministers of the European Community. Jacques Delors, the French socialist who was president of the European Commission from 1983 to 1992, publicly called for direct military intervention in Bosnia in August 1992.\(^13\) This put him in unusual harmony with Britain’s former Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, normally hostile to the EC and all its works. She made several high-profile calls for intervention by NATO to end the war. The one with the greatest impact occurred in April 1993, when she declared:
You cannot go on feeding those people and then leaving them to be massacred… The first thing is to see that the Bosnian Muslims are armed. Everyone has a right to self-defence…this is…the heart of Europe… We have been like accomplices to massacre.14

Such views placed her on a collision course with her own Conservative Party colleagues still in government. Rifkind, the Defence Minister, dismissed them as ‘emotional nonsense’15.

Pressing ahead with partition

After the war had begun, perhaps the clearest opportunity to enforce peace militarily would have been in May 1993 after the Bosnian Šerbs rejected the Vance-Owen Plan. Milošević turned his back on them and would soon declare sanctions on the Republic of Srpska (although they were hardly implemented with vigour). However, instead of resolutely confronting Karadžić, Mladić and their successors, it was decided to go for an openly partitionist solution. Cyrus Vance had retired in early May 1993 but Lord Owen was still co-chair of the peace talks, joined now by Thorvald Stoltenberg, an ex-Norwegian Foreign Minister who had served as a diplomat in Belgrade from 1961 to 1964.

Stoltenberg would show that he possessed much of the Serbian world-view on the conflict, openly stating at one point that it was his belief the Bosnian Muslims were really Serbs who had lost touch with their origins. He also remarked that: ‘The occasional unilateral condemnations of Serbia by the international community wound the Serbian soul’, and that guilt was shared for the ‘bloodbath, the violence, the thefts and rapes’ (Almond 1994:294). In early June 1993 both men revived the February 1992 Lisbon proposal for a Bosnian confederation of ethnic cantons (Kumar 1997:65). Serbian and Croatian cantons would enjoy virtual parity with the one designated for the Sarejevo government. Meanwhile, Lord Owen was searching for flexible Bosnian leaders who would endorse such a plan. To this end, he resurrected the ten-strong collective presidency which had been defunct since the start of the war. The move was designed to strengthen the power of Fikrit Abdić, who, from his power base in Bihac, had been prepared to strike a deal with Serb and Croatian forces. In the spring of 1993, there were rumours of an Abdić-led coup within the Bosnian government which, under Izetbegović, had not been effectively led. But Abdić was too marginal a figure to be able to prevail on the Muslim side even with international backing.16

Owen and Stoltenberg piled on the pressure to make Izetbegović sign up to a settlement that effectively partitioned Bosnia. In July 1993 they warned him that ‘death, destruction and suffering’ would reach such a level—unless he negotiated now—as to make them ‘shudder for the future of your country’. The Guardian, which carried these words, remarked that ‘This must be the first time in recent history where an intermediary calls for the surrender of one side’.17

Aid agencies warned that tens of thousands more people would need to be uprooted to make the new ethnic map work.18 At the June 1993 EU summit in Denmark, ‘one minister had been heard to mutter, “I hope we are not preparing a new Wannensee
conference”—a reference to the Nazi wartime decision on the final extermination of the Jews’. On 15 July 1993,

the European Parliament overwhelmingly passed a resolution expressing ‘alarm at the pressure of the representative of the EC, Lord Owen, on the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina to accept the plans of Karadžić and Boban backed by Milošević and Tudjman for a division of the republic into ethnic entities’.

(Simms 2001:167)

Lord Owen was accused publicly by van den Broek, the EC commissioner for external affairs, of ‘a strategy of capitulation’ and ‘legitimised aggression’ (Touval 2002:125). By August 1993, Izetbegović was prepared to sit down at the same table as Karadžić, thus recognising him as a legitimate negotiator (Magaš and anić 2001:368). He was told by Hurd: ‘Do not suppose that there will be military intervention in your favour.’ The number two in the Foreign Office, Douglas Hogg would later be even more emphatic. In 1994, he would write that the Bosnian government ‘have to recognise defeat when it is staring them in the face, that land has been seized by force, and that there has to be a degree of acceptance of that fact’. Not to be outdone, Britain’s former Prime Minister, Edward Heath, declared: ‘So long as you hold out any hopes to the Bosnians… then you abolish any hopes of peace.’

On 20 September 1993, a map giving 53 per cent of Bosnia to Karadžić’s forces, 17 per cent to Boban’s Croats, and 30 per cent to a rump Muslim entity was agreed on board the British ship, HMS Invincible (Kumar 1997:67). But it was derailed by political factionalism. A mutiny was staged in September among Bosnian Serb army units stationed at Banja Luka angered at reports of the corruption of Karadžić and his entourage who were based in Pale. Lord Owen’s gamble on Abdić then soon came unstuck when he withdrew loyalty from the central government and, from his Bihać redoubt, launched attacks on the Bosnian government forces. Izetbegović had refused to sign, deferring a final decision until the Bosnian parliament convened: on 29 September, it rejected the territorial arrangements while approving other parts of the plan (Touval 2002:125).

The final external initiative of 1993 was ‘the European Action Plan’ in December, drawn up by the French and German Foreign Ministers. It was based on previous partition plans but demarcated an extra 3 per cent of land for a proposed Bosnian Muslim Republic (Hodge and Grbin 1996:76). But the plan fell through because of the intransigence of the HDZ and SDS leaders, Boban and Karadžić. Pleased that partition had been publicly accepted by Western officials, they pushed for more concessions, particularly around partitioning Sarajevo and Mostar. Owen and Stoltenberg appeared to countenance such urban carveups if they ‘would bring a speedy end to the war’ (Kumar 1997:70). But there was deep unease within the EC about creating a new partition line in European cities, especially ones such as Sarajevo and Mostar, which had been symbols of ethnic harmony in Yugoslavia before the war (Kumar 1997:70). In January 1994 the EU Action Plan was abandoned by its sponsors (Touval 2002:126).
Tolerance survives the Sarajevo siege

The destruction of Mostar’s Old Bridge by Boban’s HVO on 9 November 1993 was seen by many as a final epitaph to the tolerant Bosnia of old. But its capital Sarajevo managed to rise above ‘the banality of evil’ released by the war (Kumar 1997:70). It became a symbol of tolerance and hope with which international artists, classical musicians and rock stars, such as Bono of U2, identified, and countless ordinary people sought to assist in whatever practical ways they could. One of the episodes which moved many far beyond the siege city was the gesture, in May 1992, of a local cellist, Vedran Smailović, who performed Albinoni’s ‘Adagio in G Minor’ for twenty-two days in front of the bakery where twenty-two Sarajevans had, a short time before, been blown up while queuing for bread (Merrill 2001:36).

A year after the siege began in April 1992, perhaps 60,000 out of 300,000 surviving inhabitants were Serbs. Mladić’s forces continued to rain mortar bombs down on the city even though it was far from inhabited by Muslims alone. By February 1995, 10,000 civilians in Sarajevo had been killed and 80,000 wounded. The presence of foreign television journalists in the city throughout the war meant that the worst killings got worldwide attention: the bread queue massacre of 27 May 1992, twenty-two killed; the market place attack on 5 February 1994 sixty-nine killed; and the second market place attack on 28 August 1995, thirty-eight killed. On each occasion, the Pale Serbs insisted that Muslim gunners had been shelling their own people (Cohen 1998:251).

The multi-cultural character of the city never died, but it was greatly eroded by the influx of ethnically purged refugees from Muslim villages and towns. Non-Muslims started to be terrorised by paramilitary gangs which had helped defend Sarajevo at the beginning of the siege. They enjoyed connections with certain factions of Izetbegović’s SDA (Vasić 1996:136). But, in October 1993, these ‘military—criminal fiefdoms’ were broken up by the regular army and police (Magaš and anić 2001:369–70). Prime Minister Haris Silajdžić showed courage in sanctioning the move. After it, ‘the government and the army emerged from the operation stronger and more respected, in Bosnia and abroad’ (Vasić 1996:137).

Christopher Hitchens has provided a vivid portrait of the survival of tolerance in a city under siege:

The physical contest for the city has enhanced rather than eroded the Bosnian ethos, which is one of symbiosis between the various religions, or rather, between the various secular cultures which those religions represent. Jewish charities support Muslim families. Mosques provide water to Christians from the ancient sadrivan, stone wells which have irrigated their courtyards for centuries. Mixed marriages, long the norm rather than the exception in Sarajevo, are conducted under shellfire. The deputy commander of the Bosnian army, Colonel Jovan Divja, is a Serb. Many of his officers are likewise defectors from the former Yugoslav National Army which now massacres the civilians it was sworn to defend.

Most impressive of all, in a way, is the continuing production of Sarajevo’s daily newspaper. Oslobodjenje (‘Liberation’) has contrived to appear on the streets of the city every day. Its survival is a kind of wager,
because its publisher promised from the beginning not to miss an edition. The staff, who comprise Croats, Serbs, Muslims, Jews and atheists, accept this bet with a combination of secular and religious stoicism.\textsuperscript{28}

UNPROFOR refused to allow its transport flights to be used to bring in newsprint, videocassettes and other equipment necessary for a voice of tolerance such as Oslobodjenje to keep publishing.\textsuperscript{29} Instead, UN soldiers gained an unenviable reputation for smuggling Sarajevans out of the city for prices ranging as high as 5,000 DM.\textsuperscript{30} An internal report exonerated UNPROFOR, but many members of the press corps were sceptical. In August 1993, Maggie O’Kane (who had helped break the story about the Serbian detention camps in 1992), uncovered evidence of ‘profiteering and drug-smuggling in wartime Sarajevo’. She wrote: ‘The Ukrainians are the masters, trading in cigarettes, alcohol, cars, petrol and women… The French specialise in wine, Coca Cola, gold and sex.’ In the previous twelve months nineteen Ukrainian and three French soldiers had been sent home on profiteering charges during a period when the number of hard-drug addicts had risen from 500 to almost 3,000.\textsuperscript{31}

The fact that the name of the UN force stressed ‘protection’ when it was neither willing nor capable of providing much of it created understandable bitterness among many Sarajevans.\textsuperscript{32} This was clear when Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali visited the city at the end of 1992. He was greeted by demonstrators with placards: ‘Please stop defending us your way. We are getting exterminated.’ Inside, at a press conference, the Secretary-General astonished reporters by saying: ‘Sooner or later you will have to co-exist. Moreover, you are better off here than in many other places in the world. The sufferings of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Liberia are ignored. Here you have the UN’ (Di Giovanni 1994:43).\textsuperscript{33}

The minimal protection afforded by the UN led to desperate attempts at escape. That of the two young lovers, Bosko Brkić, a Serb, and Admira Ismiča, a Muslim, made headlines in May 1993. Both were shot as they tried to cross the murderous frontline to safety, their slumped bodies, united in death, shown on television across the world. They believed they had paid enough money to guarantee their escape; nearly three years later they would be reburied in a single grave.\textsuperscript{34}

The other human tragedy to become a major world news story occurred in August 1993 when the BBC’s Allan Little made a broadcast about the plight of 5-year-old Irma Hadžimiratović. She had been badly wounded in shelling and her family had been told by the UN that nothing could be done for her. This was despite the fact that seventy to eighty planes landed daily in Sarajevo and returned empty. The UN announced that, abroad, no hospital beds were available for her but, upon the broadcast of Little’s report, 3,000 were offered across Western Europe. Amidst a fanfare of publicity, Foreign Secretary Hurd announced the evacuation of Irma to Britain. None of the organisations responsible for finding places abroad for wounded people agreed to release a list of forty wounded children in the same position as Irma.

Maggie O’Kane wrote:

The men who have...blocked crucial European and American initiatives now have the gall to climb on to a white horse and drag 5-year-old Irma Hadžimiratović on to their saddle...
‘Every single day for the last year in Sarajevo, 3 children have been killed including 3 of this girl’s playmates’, says Peter Kessler of the UNHCR.\textsuperscript{35}

A week before the Irma story broke, Britain’s Douglas Hogg declared that the government was unaware of any medical crisis in Sarajevo. Yet Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal leader, had sent a report to the ‘Prime Minister demanding to know why Sarajevo hospitals were without essential supplies such as antibiotics, general anaesthetics, or blood and plasma’.\textsuperscript{36}

A rueful Allan Little was to conclude later: ‘I realised then that I had provided a fantastic opportunity for people who in no way deserved it to show a pity that they did not feel.’\textsuperscript{37}

Growing Muslim intransigence

The unwillingness of the British-influenced UN mission to use the airlift to supply medical supplies to Sarajevo’s inhabitants strongly suggests a desire to see their spirit broken and the siege brought to a speedy end. Yet the city survived and became a spearhead of resistance. Engineers repaired and made armaments in full siege conditions (Mahmutćehajić 2001b:263). An Army of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ARBiH) was organised into a modern and efficient force. Created out of territorial reservists, police and volunteers, it had Serb officers, and one unit was given the ironic name of the ‘Mujahedin’ on account of the unusually high number of Serbs it contained.\textsuperscript{38} Another, the 101st Mechanised Brigade, was a mixed Muslim-Croat unit in Sarajevo determined to preserve the ideal of Bosnian unity.\textsuperscript{39} But scarcely twelve miles to the west of their frontline Croats were fighting Muslim forces which were capable of carrying out massacres of civilians, as happened in the village of Uzdol, east of the town of Gornji Vakuf, in 1993 (Loyd 2000:141). The ARBiH used guerrilla tactics similar to those used by the wartime partisans: ‘Small, poorly armed units fought mostly for arms, cutting lines of communication, harassing the BSA\textsuperscript{40} by quick attacks and even quicker retreats into the mountains’ (Vasić 1996:136). Having survived the winter of 1992–3 with a motley collection of arms, the ARBiH’s strength increased as arms began to be smuggled to it: ‘By mid-1993 the Bosnian Army was at stage two of the People’s War, now disposing of bigger, battalion- and brigade-sized units—highly mobile and battle-hardened’ (Vasić 1996:136).

Just as in Croatia and the Republic of Srpska, disputes between the army and its political masters impeded the ARBiH’s effectiveness. The SDA sought to exercise direct control over a whole range of military, political and religious institutions, with its pan-Islamic faction to the fore (Bougarel 1999:7). Concentrating on political goals meant that practical necessities for the defence of Sarajevo were neglected, no single person ever being made responsible for it. The SDA controlled the soliciting of donations from the Bosnian diaspora and the Muslim world, as well as the arms smuggling process. In the army, Muslim brigades, financed directly by the SDA, appeared directly alongside regular units (Bougarel 1999:9). The 600-man Muslim brigade known as the Black Swans became one of the ARBiH’s most effective fighting units. It possessed its own
hodja or religious leader and lived according to Muslim law—daily prayer, no alcohol or women, exemplary personal hygiene.41

A thorn in the SDA’s side was the supreme religious authority, or Reis-ul-ulema, of Bosnia’s Muslims, Jakob Selimovski. He was opposed to the politicisation of Islam and wished to see a union of East European Islamic communities, not just one confined to Bosnia and the Sandjak. But he was ousted in a coup engineered by the SDA in April 1993 (Bougarel 1999:19).

To strengthen its political base, the SDA even welcomed senior civil servants and directors who had been promoted under the communist system.42 This made it easier to extend control over the state apparatus. An important political departure occurred in 1993, when a resolution from the Bosnian parliament to give back to our nation its historical and national name ‘Bosniac’, in order to closely link us to our country Bosnia, to its political and legal continuity, to our Bosnian language and to all the spiritual tradition of our history…

(Bougarel 1999:20)

was adopted. The SDA’s pan-Islamic current tried to insist on ‘Islam as the central element of this new Bosniac identity’ (Bougarel 1999:20). But no full-scale radicalisation of the Bosnian Muslims was noticeable even in conditions of wartime. The SDA’s political preoccupations and concern with expanding its power-base did not endear it to many Muslims fighting for their survival. Leading figures such as Haris Silajdžić, Prime Minister from October 1993 to January 1996 (the son of the chief imam of Begova Dzamija, Sarajevo’s main mosque and an Islamic scholar of note), continued to stand for a multi-ethnic ideal. Izetbegović was more a religious than a political figure, and those in his entourage who were seen as trying to manipulate him were often unimpressive figures. In December 1992, he was persuaded to extend what had been only a one-year mandate as head of the Bosnia-Herzegovina presidency, a doubtful manoeuvre. The Constitution provided for rotation and a Croat was next in line, but the SDA justified his continuation for three more years, owing to war circumstances (Magaš and anić 366). Enough liberal Muslims would continue to insist on preserving a multi-cultural Bosnia to be able to check the overall advance of the SDA. Its main support came from displaced rural Muslims but by no means all of them endorsed the SDA, as shown by the continuing strength of secular parties in Tuzla, one of the main refugee havens (Donia 1996:54, 56). In this working-class city of mixed ethnic composition whose main income earners were the chemical and metal processing industries, the non-nationalist parties had been victorious in the first round of the 1990 elections (Burg and Shoup 1999:57). During ten months when it was under absolute blockade, no inter-ethnic conflicts occurred. When famine endangered the Tuzla region, Croats from the fertile Posavina region supplied enormous quantities of corn at reasonable prices. Most Serbs would have left Tuzla by the war’s close, but the 3,000–4,000 remaining in the city were left largely unmolested thanks to the strength of the civic-minded municipal government (Malkić 1995:36).
Bosnia in the chilly grip of UN proconsuls and bureaucrats

Intransigent SDA politicians like Ejup Ganić who promoted Islamic precepts, drew the ire of several leading UN officials who had to deal with them on an official basis (Rose 1998:25–6, 134–8). General Sir Michael Rose, commander of UNPROFOR from January 1994 to January 1995, barely concealed his deep disdain for Bosnian Muslims. In one telling episode related in his memoirs, while attending a performance of Mozart’s Requiem in the ruins of the National Library in Sarajevo, Rose ‘wondered if [the Bosnian President] understood the Christian sentiments behind the words and music’ (Rose 1998:146). On another occasion, he got an elderly Muslim farmer who had served with the Germans at Stalingrad to give a Nazi salute and scream ‘Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler!’ for the amusement of a visiting NATO commander (Stankovic 2000:243). The clear inference seemed to be that the Muslims were ‘the other’.43

Rose’s impartiality vanished when he referred to ‘the sheer venality and inhumanity of the Bosnian Muslims’ (Rose 1998:227). By contrast, he enjoyed cordial relations with General Mladić, head of the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS). The front cover of Brendan Simms’s book shows the two men shaking hands in a convivial encounter, Rose’s memoirs revealing no strong animosity between them and leaving unmentioned Mladić’s main claim to fame as the perpetrator, in 1995, of the Srebrenica massacre (Simms 2001:177).

Michael Williams, UNPROFOR’s chief of information in Zagreb during later stages of the war, claims that British officers ‘were very pro-Serb on the whole, and I think there were strong elements of anti-Muslim and anti-Catholic prejudice’ (Simms 2001:178). Long service in Northern Ireland, where heavy casualties were suffered at the hands of the IRA, would not have encouraged British officers at the head of certain regiments to be unduly impartial to Roman Catholics in any war zone.44 On training courses, British officers were exposed to the views of John Zametica, an advocate of the Serbian cause in the British media who was employed by the army as ‘an independent expert’ on Balkan security issues (Simms 2001:228). In 1994, Zametica forsook his academic position at the University of Westminster, became Karadžić’s political adviser from a base in Pale, and was soon threatening to down NATO planes which included British Tornadoes and Harriers (Hodge and Grbin 1996:67, n. 57).

Brigadier Vere Hayes, a British officer serving with UNPROFOR, was one of the UN contingent who agreed to the Serb request that the UN must stop describing Sarajevo as a city under siege (Simms 2001:196). When the USA was urging NATO air strikes to break the Sarajevo siege, Hayes was openly critical of Washington, saying: ‘What does President Clinton think he is up to? Air power won’t defeat the Serbs!’45 British commanders sometimes proved to be on better terms with Russian and Serb officers in Bosnia than with their counterparts from other Western countries.

In 1995, General Rose would tell the BBC’s Panorama that ‘we are not here to protect anyone other than our own selves and our own convoys...’ (Simms 2001:205). It was widely assumed that the UNPROFOR mandate derived from Chapter Six of the UN Charter, requiring the consent and cooperation of all sides. But Noel Malcolm has written:
In the case of the UN deployment in Bosnia, most of the essential Security Council resolutions were expressly made under Chapter Seven. They authorise the use of force to carry out specific tasks: above all, to ensure the delivery of aid and to deter attacks against the ‘safe areas’. Also, among the tasks concerning the safe areas is the requirement that the UN forces ‘promote the withdrawal of military or paramilitary units other than those of the government of Bosnia’. This is the very opposite of a mandate to be impartial.

And yet not only has the UN failed repeatedly to carry out those tasks… it has also misrepresented its own mandate, claiming that it has only a peacekeeping role dependent on the consent of the Serbs.46

UN resolution 770 of 13 August 1992, passed under Chapter Seven of the UN’s Charter, had permitted the use of ‘all measures necessary’ to ensure the safe passage of humanitarian aid. UN resolution 836, passed under Chapter Seven on 4 June 1993, authorised the use of force to repel attacks on ‘safe areas’ and ‘to promote the withdrawal of military or paramilitary units other than those of the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina’ (Simms 2001:41). Yet Baroness Chalker, the Foreign Office minister, told the House of Lords that ‘the mandate does not entitle UNPROFOR or NATO to use force to stop one party against another’.47 Brendan Simms has pointed out that, when the international strategy switched to one of peace enforcement in 1995, no new UN resolution was needed, since the necessary instruments were already in place (Simms 2001:42).

It is not surprising that the Bosnian Serb commanders ruthlessly exploited the preference of many UNPROFOR officials to disregard the mandate under which the UN had been sent to Bosnia, ultimately taking hostage thousands of UN soldiers in 1994–5. One of the lowest points in the UN’s Bosnian mission occurred in January 1993 when the Bosnian vice-president, Dr Hakija Turaljić, was returning to Sarajevo in a French military vehicle after meeting with Turkish aid officials. His vehicle was prevented from continuing by a large number of Serbian fighters:

The French battalion commander, Colonel Patrice Sartre, instead of calling for help from the UNPROFOR airport garrison, actually sent away three British Warrior fighting vehicles that had happened on the scene. ‘This is a French problem’, he said. Shortly thereafter, Sartre allowed the rear hatch of the APC to be opened in order, he said later, to demonstrate to the Serbs that there were no arms or ‘mujahedin’ riding along with Turaljić. At this point, according to a French enlisted man riding with the Vice-President, Turaljić was weeping. His terror was entirely warranted. As Sartre stood there, a Serb fighter simply pointed a machine pistol past his shoulder and into the vehicle and cut Dr Turaljić to bits.

Colonel Sartre, far from being sent home…was allowed to carry on in Bosnia and, upon his return to France, was awarded the Legion of Honor.

(Rieff 1995:151)
Yashusi Akashi, the UN Secretary-General’s special envoy to ex-Yugoslavia in 1994–5, epitomised UN readiness to display impartiality in the face of terrible acts of misconduct emanating disproportionately from one side. He was even ready to inform the press that he believed Radovan Karadžić to be ‘a man of peace’ with whom he had been able to develop a ‘friendship’ (Rieff 1995:166).

Akashi showed scant enthusiasm for defending the safe areas, or effectively policing the ‘No Fly Zone’ authorised in October 1992 by UN Security Council resolution 781. Despite banning all military flights in Bosnian air space, repeated violations by the Bosnian Serb air force were ignored until well into 1993 (Allcock et al. 1998:192). Shashi Tharoor, a senior aide of UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali, complained that policing the “No Fly Zone” in 1993 would force the UN peace-keepers into ‘making war and peace at the same time’ (Rieff 1995:165). Nevertheless, despite the irresolute way it was enforced, the ‘No Fly Zone’ resolution does appear to have kept the large Yugoslav air force out of the Bosnian war for much of its duration (Allcock et al. 1998:192).

Boutros-Ghali frequently complained about the lack of resources needed to carry out new tasks such as protecting ‘safe areas’. Yet he advised against redefining the mandates in order to allow for a more effective UN response (Thompson 2000:167). Strains within the different agencies of the UN involved in Bosnia emerged as a result of the vacuum at the centre. José-Maria Mendiluce, head of the UNHCR in Bosnia during 1992–3, declared at the end of his assignment:

Frankly we at the UNHCR feel abandoned by the UN in New York... When the situation deteriorated completely in eastern Bosnia, we found ourselves in the morally impossible situation of furthering the goal of ethnic cleansing in order to save people’s lives. And yet there have been no statements on any of this from the Security Council, the Vance-Owen negotiators, or the Secretary-General... We’re becoming a transport company, and having to ignore all the humanitarian and human rights concerns that lie at the heart of our mandate. We truck in food and act—no offence intended—as a travel agency for foreign visitors.

(Rieff 1995:212)

Louis Gentile, the UNHCR’s head of operations in Banja Luka in 1993–4, allowed his sense of despair about the abdication of the UN in the face of systematic cruelty to spill out in public:

It should be known and recorded for all time that the so-called leaders of the Western world have known for the past year and a half what is happening here. They receive play-by-play reports. They talk about prosecuting criminals but do nothing to stop the continuing war crimes. May God forgive them. May God forgive us all.48

Bosnia became for the UN what Vietnam had been for the USA, a quagmire it was keen to extricate itself from but did not know how to do so. At its head was a man who was barely able to hide his disdain for being in Bosnia, involved in a failed mission which...
prevented him from being renominated for a second term as UN Secretary-General. Boutros-Ghali

was deaf to calls for the overhaul of a huge bureaucracy in desperate need of much better management. He blocked proposals to reorganize the secretariat for fear that his own post might be devalued, clinging instead to an autocratic management style.49

UN officials who challenged Boutros-Ghali’s minimalist approach to the UN’s responsibilities in Bosnia usually did not last long in their positions. General Morillon, the architect of the 1993 ‘safe areas’ initiative, was gone within months. His successor, General Jean Cot, also of France, often ignored his superiors in New York and set up his own press operation to bypass official outlets.50 He was finally replaced after seven months, when he called publicly for air strikes in early 1994 (Simms 2001:35).

Mladić…and Rose and Akashi hamstring NATO

The UN’s ultra-cautious interpretation of its mandate gave rise to prolonged controversy following the Saturday morning shelling of the main marketplace in Sarajevo on 5 February 1994. Sixty-eight were killed in a split second, as many as died each week from the usual shelling.51

Amidst the worldwide outcry, US pressure for air strikes stepped up. NATO was determined that the Serbs should pull their heavy guns back from Sarajevo or face air strikes, and on 6 February Boutros-Ghali wrote to his NATO counterpart asking for preparations for air strikes to be made (United Nations 1999:33). But General Rose, recently installed as UNPROFOR commander, opposed this approach because he believed that it might drag the UN mission into war (Rose 1998:43). He even talked a senior British minister out of supporting air strikes when, ‘under pressure from the Americans and NATO, [he] was wobbling seriously on the subject…’ (Rose 1998:46). Nevertheless, faced with a NATO ultimatum on 9 February, the Bosnian Serbs agreed to a withdrawal of heavy weapons to a distance of 20 kilometres because of the threat of air strikes. On 10 February, Douglas Hurd told parliament that

it was very clear that our main allies—and certainly the United States—felt passionately about the Bosnian issue. If we had frustrated yesterday’s decision [to demand a Serb pull back], I do not doubt that we would have administered to ourselves a severe shock.52

The limitations of Britain’s policy of narrowly focused humanitarian engagement were now beginning to result in real strains on the ‘Atlantic Alliance’. Dr Robert Hunter, Washington’s ambassador to NATO at this time, related afterwards that he ‘was convinced that one of the reasons Britain had troops in Bosnia was to stop the bombing by stressing the threats posed to them.’53 Thus, humanitarian action was designed to forestall purposeful military action when events clearly warranted it. Serb military action soon resumed around one of the UN-designated ‘safe areas’, Goražde. It was the only
Muslim enclave in the Drina valley where there was still an active military presence (Sudetic 1998:232). Mladić had transferred heavy weapons previously ringing Sarajevo to Goražde, and shelling began on 31 March 1994. The US administration was divided about how to respond to the siege. William Perry, Aspin’s successor as defence secretary, said on television that the USA was certainly not going to war to save Goražde. Many in the Pentagon shared Rose’s distaste for resolute measures and would have approved Hurd’s warning after the latest Sarajevo massacre that NATO involvement ‘is something that is not going to happen’ (Simms 2001:117). But the White House was more resolute on this occasion. Despite Rose’s efforts to play down the scale of Mladić’s offensive, documents were leaked by an UNPROFOR official in Sarajevo ‘who was no friend of General Rose’ which gave details of a shelling barrage that had left hundreds of dead and wounded civilians (Sudetic 1998:232). In order to ‘micro-manage any bombing’ and minimise the chances of a strong NATO response, Rose sent a team of SAS commandos to Goražde to act as target spotters for NATO jet fighters. After multiple warnings, the first NATO air strike against VRS positions on Goražde occurred on 10 April 1994. (It was indeed the first offensive action undertaken by NATO in its forty-five-year history.) But these were pinprick attacks and Mladić showed his contempt for them by taking 150 UN hostages. During the main VRS offensive on Goražde which began on 15 April, a member of the British elite SAS regiment was seriously wounded. Rose requested Akashi to grant permission for close air support to facilitate a military evacuation. The authorisation of Akashi, as the chief UN official in ex-Yugoslavia, was needed before NATO military action could be allowed. Incredibly, Akashi asked Mladić via Karadžić if the Serbs would permit NATO air cover, which they refused (Sharp 1996:34).

The VRS entered Goražde on 17 April. On 19 April they stormed the UN’s weapons collection centre, set up in February to store Serb artillery around Sarajevo, seizing eighteen anti-aircraft guns. NATO threatened air strikes unless there was a cease-fire and troops and heavy weapons were pulled back. But Akashi refused to authorise air strikes, claiming that UNPROFOR had reached an agreement with Mladić’s forces under which they would halt their offensive in Goražde and agree to UN troops being deployed there (Kumar 1997:77–8). In the event, the Serbs ignored the truce and pressed on into Goražde, causing Rose to say: ‘It is a very sad day when peacekeeping is used for the presentation of war aims in such a blatant fashion.’

Rose’s behaviour during the siege of Goražde, and not only then, brings to mind a concluding passage in the UN’s own report on the 1995 Srebrenica massacre which, in many ways, is an inquest into the whole UNPROFOR mission:

> The approach by the United Nations Secretariat...had certain consequences... At the military level, it resulted in a process of negotiation with and reliance upon General Mladić, whose implacable commitment to clear eastern Bosnia...of Bosniacs was plainly obvious and led inexorably to Srebrenica. At various points during the war, these negotiations amounted to appeasement.

> (United Nations 1999:111)

Western powers had succumbed to the biggest humiliation in the war to date for their ‘reluctance to commit resources to guarantee the protection... promised’. Vitaly
Churkin, the Russian deputy Foreign Minister, who was involved in brokering various cease-fires, declared on 18 April: ‘I’ve heard more broken promises in the last 24 hours than I have in my entire life.’

The Bosnian Serb leadership’s propensity to lie, which never prevented Akashi and Rose from attempting to strike a deal with them in order to shore up a policy of minimal engagement, had struck numerous visitors to their headquarters. A notable example of Karadžić’s duplicity had occurred in October 1993, when three British Labour MPs, Calum Macdonald, Kate Hoey and Malcolm Wicks, arrived in Pale. Wicks describes ‘a bizarre incident before our meeting’:

we were talking to two UN monitoring officers when suddenly there was a huge explosion loud enough for the two officers to run outside to investigate. They concluded that it was a shell fired from close by in the direction of Sarajevo. Our first question to Dr Karadžić was therefore obvious: ‘Why do you continue to bombard the city despite the ceasefire?’

Dr Karadžić pretended to look puzzled and denied that there was any shelling. ‘But what about the shell that we ourselves just heard being fired?’ Dr Karadžić said that he had not heard it. When I asked him why his forces had pursued the terrible practice of ‘ethnic cleansing’, including the mass rape of Muslim women, he said categorically that ‘the Serbs did not do atrocities’. As for mass rape, this was ‘a complete lie’. ‘Why not stop the siege?’ we asked. Answer: ‘We don’t keep a siege’.

That the West now expects the Bosnian Government and its people to sign a peace agreement, forced upon them by Serbian aggression, and dependent on assurances from this kind of Serbian leadership, is outrageous.

(Wicks 1994)

On 16 April the Bosnian Serbs shot down a NATO plane, the first one ever to be lost in action. *The New York Times* fulminated that the most powerful military alliance in the world was being ‘intimidated by a minor force of ultra-nationalist …Serbs’. In the following days, Mladić blanketed Goražde with artillery fire, one tank shell hitting a makeshift first-aid station and killing twenty-eight people who were already wounded (Sudetic 1998:234). Another ultimatum was issued which Mladić ignored. NATO’s commander in southern Europe, Admiral Leighton Smith, requested clearance from Akashi for air strikes. When Akashi resisted, Smith contacted NATO’s Secretary-General, Manfred Wörner, who tried to contact Akashi. The UN diplomat was in Belgrade meeting Milošević but he refused to pick up the phone (Sudetic 1998:234–5). In the event, Goražde barely managed to survive.

Six weeks later, during the commemoration of the D-Day landings in Europe on 6 June 1944, *The Independent* somberly commented:

Bosnia provides perhaps the most painful of reminders that the comparatively placid Europe born in the deathly hush of 1945 has run its course. British troops are serving in Bosnia today at least in part because European Foreign Ministers, Douglas Hurd included, did not act in unity
and strength to guide the states of the former Yugoslavia towards a peaceful resolution of their arguments.59

**Russia becomes the West’s alibi**

For the first time, Russia was now a major player in international efforts to settle the Bosnian crisis. In the early stages of the February 1994 crisis, when the Bosnian Serbs faced a NATO ultimatum to withdraw their heavy weapons from Sarajevo, Russia had suddenly deployed hundreds of its troops in the city. This occurred a matter of days after a lightning visit paid by Britain’s John Major to Moscow for talks with Boris Yeltsin, at the end of which the Russian leader strongly condemned ‘unilateral [NATO] action without Russian participation’ (Sudetic 1998:230). The troops were there less to protect their fellow Orthodox Bosnian Serbs than to reaffirm Russian influence vis-à-vis NATO in the Balkans and on the world stage at large. At that moment ‘Bosnia was actually the one place where Russia could reaffirm its role as a great power’, according to the diplomatic analyst Alexei Pushkov in *Moscow News*.60

Hurd backed the Russian action as a ‘constructive move’. It certainly was for the proponents of minimalist action. Russian troops were sent to Serb-held areas of Sarajevo from which Mladić had been persuaded to withdraw artillery pieces. It was difficult for NATO to take offensive action against the VRS in Sarajevo with Russian troops now in the immediate area (Sudetic 1998:230–1). Russia and Britain felt at that time that they had much in common (Malcolm 1994b). They were two powers much reduced in status but still reluctant to allow nation-states to lose their freedom of action to regional or multi-lateral entities in international relations. At the close of 1993, the strength of their shared outlook had been shown when Hurd and his Russian counterpart, Andrei Kozyrev, co-authored an article in which it was stated that armed conflicts in ex-Soviet republics were ‘a source of legitimate concern to the Russians who are worried by clashes close to their borders’. Noel Malcolm observed that the fact that ‘many of these conflicts were being actively stirred up by Russia for its own strategic purposes…was of course conveniently ignored’ (Malcolm 1994b).

Britain welcomed the growing interest in Bosnia of a power, with a track-record of previous interventions in the Balkans, which was likely to greet with disfavour any forceful NATO actions there. Anatol Lieven was able to write in 1994 that ‘if Russia had not existed, then Britain and France would have had to invent it as an excuse for their cowardice and indecision’.61 Britain was particularly grateful for Russian support in the escalating dispute with the USA about whether to lift the arms embargo on the Bosnian government. Noel Malcolm has drawn attention to a confidential memo circulating in the Foreign Office in 1994, part of which read:

> The most useful Russian contribution of all has been its firm resistance to U.S. pressure for lifting the arms embargo against the Muslims... It has been reassuring to know that when the crunch came, the Russian veto would be forthcoming.

(Malcolm 1995:12)
When Foreign Minister Kozyrev claimed in July 1994 that lifting the arms embargo could lead to a third world war, Malcolm ‘suspected that he had been egged on to say such things by… Hurd, who would gain useful ammunition… for his arguments against the Americans’. But over Bosnia and indeed other Yugoslav trouble-spots, the Russians were pragmatic. Only once in the Bosnian conflict did Russia use its Security Council veto (Simms 2001:42). There was no love lost between Yeltsin and Milošević, who, in August 1991, had hailed the coup attempt by his hardline Soviet opponents. The pro-regime media in Belgrade regularly abused Yeltsin as ‘a traitor and a lackey’ for his failure to defend Serbia in the interests of a pan-Slav solidarity that had usually been honoured more in the breach than the observance. Stung by the way he was being lied to by Karadžić and his people, Vitaly Churkin had warned them during the Goražde crisis that ‘in Russia they were dealing with a great state not a banana republic’ (Sharp 1996:34). Certainly, Hurd had never shown much appetite for standing up for the West in his encounters with the Pale leader.

Enter the Contact Group

Russia was included in the Contact Group which superseded the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) in April 1994. It comprised high-level representatives from five countries—Britain, France, Germany, the USA and Russia—as well as the EC commissioner for foreign affairs and the two co-chairs of the ICFY, and was based in Geneva (Kumar 1997:78). Owen and Stoltenberg were increasingly seen as lacking the necessary clout to obtain a settlement (Sharp 1996:35). The EC (renamed the European Union (EU) at the end of 1993) was divided about how to proceed, especially when Greece, the only member state not to hide its open sympathy for the Serb cause, held the EU presidency in the first half of 1994. In July 1994, the Contact Group prepared a 51/49 per cent division of Bosnia between the Muslim-Croat federation on the one hand and the Serbs on the other (Sharp 1996:36). The Bosnian government reluctantly accepted it, but the Bosnian Serbs rejected it outright. Milošević imposed a trading blockade on the Republic of Srpska in August as a gesture of displeasure over the failure to accept what was seen as an excellent deal (Sharp 1996:38). The Contact Group responded by relaxing or lifting some of the sanctions imposed on Serbia in 1992. But reports persisted that war materials and other support were continuing to flow to the Republic of Srpska from its former patron. Furious at being left in the lurch by fellow Serbs, Karadžić’s forces unleashed a wave of ethnic purging in Banja Luka and Bijelinja—these fresh outrages prompted the US Congress to decide in mid-October 1994 that, if the Contact Group plan was not accepted in Pale within two months, the President should unilaterally lift the arms embargo on the Bosnian government.

Clinton himself had been warning the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Contact Group plan or the USA would seek to terminate the arms embargo by introducing a resolution in the Security Council to that end. Britain had slim grounds for insisting on the arms embargo. Article 51 of the UN Charter offers the right to individual or collective self-defence to its members. Bosnia-Herzegovina had been a member since mid-1992. At one stage, the Sarajevo authorities actually threatened to sue Britain at the World Court of Justice in The Hague ‘for failing to prevent genocide’ through its Bosnia policy.
and no other country, was accused because it was at the forefront of maintaining the embargo, a policy which the Bosnian government argued had directly led to massive loss of life.65

The arms embargo

The arms embargo was the centre-piece of Britain’s policy in Bosnia because it was seen as the most efficacious way of bringing the conflict to an end. Ivor Roberts, then ambassador in Belgrade, claimed that ‘if yet more weapons had poured in, many more people—civilians and soldiers, Muslims, Croats and Serbs—would by now have been killed’ (Roberts 1995:21). But Milos Vasić, a Serbian opponent of Milošević, affirmed that ‘A strong armed force in the hands of the legal government of Bosnia-Herzegovina would have deterred much of the fighting. Not arming the legal government has meant more ethnic cleansing, more massacres, more refugees’.66 Douglas Hogg, number two in the British Foreign Office, actually admitted in 1992: ‘the Bosnian Serbs are already well-equipped. Further supplies from Serbia would be unlikely to have a significant effect on their military capacity’.67

If the Bosnians had been better equipped, there would have been far less chance of Muslim civilians being killed in circumstances where they were unable to defend themselves. Hurd feared that a lifting of the arms embargo might lead to a situation ‘in which different western and eastern powers were “backing” different sides, thus disrupting the fragile post-Cold War consensus in Europe and the UN’ (Malcolm 1994b). The danger that lifting the embargo would force ‘a chaotic end to the UN operation in Bosnia, with peacekeepers obliged either to fight their way out or to abandon their equipment and depart in humiliation’, also preoccupied the British.68

But the untenability of the Major government’s position on this crucial element of the conflict was underlined by the UN when it did its own stock-taking on the UNPROFOR mission during its 1999 report on the Srebrenica massacre:

The arms embargo did little more than freeze in place the military balance within the former Yugoslavia. It left the Serbs in a position of overwhelming military dominance and effectively deprived the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina of its right, under the Charter of the United Nations, to self-defence.

(United Nations 1999:108)

The Bihać crisis and the rift in Anglo—American relations

The Contact Group was no more effective than the ICFY. The search for compromises between the major states now directly involved led to obfuscation and delay. The division of labour between the Contact Group and the ICFY, with Owen still involved in direct negotiations with the disputants, was also unclear, with multiple negotiations and bilateral contacts adding to the sense of incoherence (Touval 2002:128).
In the autumn of 1994, a fresh crisis exposed the severity of splits within NATO over Bosnia and resulted in a fresh round of humiliation at the hands of Bosnian Serb forces. The 5th corps of the ARBiH drove Abdić’s forces out of Bihać and, in September, inflicted defeats on Bosnian Serb forces. In October, around Sarajevo, ARBiH forces made gains on the strategic Mount Igman over-looking the city, but were pushed off what had been a demilitarised zone by UN forces, General Rose threatening the ARBiH with airstrikes (Magaš and anić 2001:372). Later in the month, the ARBiH enjoyed a string of victories against the Bosnian Serb VRS in its attempt to break out of Bihać and advance into other parts of north-west Bosnia. However, a strong Bosnian Serb counter-attack in November pushed government forces back into Bihać town itself (Kumar 1997:84). On 19 November, aircraft belonging to the Krajina Serbs dropped napalm and cluster bombs on south-west Bihać. Two days later, NATO shelled the runway of the Udbina airstrip from which the Serb aircraft had taken off. Despite the token nature of the NATO attack, the Serb reaction was swift and unequivocal.69 Two hundred and fifty UN personnel were taken hostage (many being French soldiers in the Sarajevo area) while the advance through the safe area of Bihać continued. In France, the televised ordeal of French personnel at the hands of VRS soldiery caused an outcry and there was talk of a unilateral French pull-out (Kumar 1997:85). Boutros-Ghali declared safe areas such as Bihać to be indefensible (Kumar 1997:85). But the Bosnian Serb leadership refused to see him when he offered to intercede.70 Leaked classified UN reports told of armed men crossing into Serb-held territory in vehicles with Belgrade licence plates which suggested that the embargo imposed by Milošević on his erstwhile allies was being only fitfully observed.71

The Bihać crisis produced a new level of humiliation for the failing UN mission in Bosnia. American dissatisfaction was evident when Clinton withdrew US warships and spotter-planes from the joint NATO-WEU operation in the Adriatic to block arms supplies to combatants. The main reason was to fend off the likelihood of stronger measures from the incoming Republican majority in Congress.72 The new Senate majority leader, Robert Dole, called for ‘the lift and strike’ policy to be adopted while on a visit to London on 30 November. Earlier, he had blamed ‘primarily Britain’ for vetoing Bosnian Serb targets for NATO air attacks which he believed might have halted the Serb advance in Bihać.73

The UK defence secretary, Rifkind, rejected Dole’s demand for lift and strike with the words: ‘You Americans don’t know the horrors of war.’ Dole had been a combat soldier in the Second World War during which he had lost an arm.74

Senior British and American elected officials, as well as diplomats and military officials, were now openly at loggerheads, something unprecedented since the Suez Crisis (which had only been a very brief disruption in British-US relations). John Major himself admitted that disagreement over Bosnia had built up into the biggest transatlantic crisis since 1956 (Major 1999:540). Dole called for the removal of Akashi and Rose, claiming that ‘what they’ve done has been to help the Serb aggressors’.75 In his criticism of the British-led approach he got support from one of Rifkind’s predecessors as defence secretary, Sir John Nott, who wrote in The Times of 1 December:

I am ashamed to say that the British Government, by a huge miscalculation, has been an unwitting accomplice to the destruction of these people. For every Bosnian saved from starvation by the outstanding
efforts of British troops, thousands have died, been made homeless or become refugees, through a policy of such incompetence and arrogance that it is akin to the appeasement of the Nazis.

(Quoted by Hodge and Grbin 1996:88, n. 119)

In Sarajevo, Rose’s relations with the US ambassador to Bosnia, Victor Jackovitch, were ‘poisonous’: ‘You’re only accredited to one of the warring factions’, he told him scathingly (Cohen 1998:262). At the height of the Bihać crisis, faced with a refusal from Rose for air strikes, Jackovitch went over his head to Washington and an order from the UN to carry them out was issued. But it has been claimed that Rose frustrated the attacks by ordering British SAS spotters in the field ‘not to identify any targets’.

The breakdown in trust between Washington and London was shown by the fact that ‘hostile briefings’ from Whitehall about President Clinton had been circulated in late 1993 (Simms 2001:97). Further negative briefings occurred in late spring 1995 on attempts by ‘pro-Muslim elements’ in the CIA ‘increasing the risk of war’ (Simms 2001:98). In 1994, Iran had been able to deliver weapons to the Bosnian government, via Croatia, with the apparent collusion of the US government (Sudetic 1998:232). The fact that two countries which had been inveterate foes since the Iranian revolution and the storming of the US embassy in Tehran in 1980 were de facto allies in the Bosnian conflict was one of its most unusual by-products.

At least one senior official in the State Department who had pushed for a more forthright US response to the crisis in Bosnia has said: ‘I learnt to treat Britain as a hostile power, out to block anything, everything… I came to think of the British as like having the Russians around the State Department.’

For his part, General Rose was convinced that his US military colleagues had been listening in to his communications and even bugging his headquarters. Rose had never served with the US forces, nor had any assignments in NATO or Germany. The highlights of his military career had been in ‘the special operations field’, particularly in the Falklands and the Middle East (Simms 2001:174). In his memoirs, he did not conceal his suspicions of NATO, of which Britain was a founder member: ‘given NATO’s apparent wish to find an excuse to bomb the Serbs’, I ‘did [not] altogether trust the organization’ (Rose 1998:123).

Adhering to this view made conflict with the senior British officer who was Chief of NATO’s Military Committee virtually inevitable. General Sir Richard Vincent condemned UNPROFOR for ‘going soft’ and tolerating unacceptable actions by the Bosnian Serbs (Rose 1998:142). Vincent was surprised at Rose’s unwillingness to see the Serbs as the principal offenders and he remarked that he did not emerge from his one-year tenure as head of UNPROFOR forces with great credit (Simms 2001:212). In January 1995, not long after the European Parliament had voted for Rose’s dismissal, the General resigned and soon after left the British army (Sharp 1996:44).

In December 1994 Bosnian Serb forces held back from overrunning the whole of Bihać. Pressure from Belgrade, and perhaps fear of Croatian intervention, may have had a restraining effect. The former US President Jimmy Carter’s arrival in Bosnia on a peace mission also coincided with a reduction in military activity. He had been looking for an international role ever since his lobbying efforts at the start of the Clinton administration to be the president’s international special representative, had been rebuffed (Halberstam...
He soon generated controversy, lauding the Bosnian Serbs for their commitment to peace after visiting Karadžić at his headquarters in Pale. Criticism followed in the Western media. Noting his view that the ‘Bosnian case had been misrepresented’, The Independent complained about his ‘astonishing insensitivity to the sufferings of the Bosnian Muslims’ and said that he ‘has handed a propaganda success to the chief aggressors in the war. He is utterly out of his depth and next time should be urged to stay at home.’

But on 23 December, following mediation efforts by Carter, the ARBiH and the VRS signed a four-month truce and talks on a permanent cessation of hostilities were also scheduled (but failed to get under way). With Serb military strength ebbing slowly and the prospect of a decisive military victory receding, the international arena of the conflict was becoming an increasingly critical one.

The war for hearts and minds beyond Bosnia

Television crews were in Bosnia during all stages of the war. Although the worst acts of repression in north-west and eastern Bosnia failed to be reported, enough footage was broadcast worldwide about the suffering that was the daily lot of civilians to make a profound impact. It was the first war of the Internet age, which enabled text and visual images of fresh events to be downloaded onto computer screens within minutes of their happening: protagonists of different sides were also able to use the Internet to launch websites or lobby elected representatives, especially in the USA.

War reporters, normally a hardened breed, found themselves strongly identifying with the story in a way perhaps not seen since the Spanish Civil War. Martin Bell of the BBC was sufficiently affected by the war to believe that perhaps the time had arrived for a new form of journalism:

I was brought up in the old and honourable tradition of balanced, objective, dispassionate journalism. I would move from war zone to war zone without being greatly affected by any of them. And clearly I have been affected by the Bosnian war, enough passionately to want to see an end to it… What I believe in now is what I prefer to call the journalism of attachment; a journalism that cares as well as knows.

The Major government was receiving fierce criticism from newspapers normally supportive of the Tory cause, not just over the Bosnia issue, and it closed its face against its tormentors. But in the USA, the Clinton administration was more receptive to viewpoints outside the narrow confines of government. The fourth estate of journalism, as well as foreign policy think-tanks and academic commentators, carried more weight than in Britain, at least when the Democrats were in office. The White House was attacked for its weak-kneed Bosnia policy, particularly in the pages of The New York Times. In what was far from untypical, in an piece in the issue of 15 February 1993, William Safire sought to stiffen the resolve of the incoming Democratic administration:
France was probably the only other large Western country where the government was under similar pressure over Bosnia. The narrowness of the victory in the French referendum staged in September 1992 to ratify the Maastricht Treaty expanding the powers of the EC had been a jolt to the authorities. It was partly attributable to public scepticism about the ability of a more powerful EC to defend the security of French citizens in the light of what was being tolerated in Sarajevo. Intellectuals continually pressed the government to adopt a policy of active peace-making. Their public activism elicited an outburst from Dobrica Ćosić, the doyen of Serbian intellectuals who said, in 1993, that he longed for a Europe ‘where there would be no room for Finkelkraut, Bernard-Henri Levi, Kouchner’. (For good measure he accused the Czech President, Vaclav Havel, of being ‘a militant cosmopolitan’ because of his outspoken concern about Bosnia.) With Levy to the fore, leading intellectuals actually drew up a list ‘For Sarajevo’ for the June 1993 European elections. It scored well in opinion polls but enthusiasm for the idea faded and the candidates were withdrawn (Martel 1994:150). But at least this initiative obliged the socialist government to try to justify its Bosnian policy, and Michel Rocard made Bosnia a central theme of his campaign (Martel 1994:150). The NGO Médecins Sans Frontières proved an awkward voice for the government. From its own considerable knowledge of the aid effort in Bosnia, some of its luminaries, including Bernard Kouchner, a former Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, were scathing about the West’s ‘empty humanitarianism’ (Rieff 1995:190).

But other groups, normally critical of French state ignorance or collusion in acts of injustice elsewhere in the world, were largely silent over Bosnia. Friedrich Martel thought the silence of French associations for the defence of human rights and against racism astonishing, ‘especially after the publication of Tadeusz Mazowiecki’s reports detailing the scale of human rights violations’ (Martel 1994:145).

Throughout the conflict, Le Monde Diplomatique championed ‘a pro-Yugoslav and anti-secessionist role’. Turning now to Britain, the only counterpart was the monthly, Living Marxism, the vehicle of the Revolutionary Communist Party. Between 1991 and 1994, its assistant editor, Joan Philipps, filed articles claiming that acts of repression carried out by Serb forces had actually been invented by the West. Writing in July 1995, the month of the Srebrenica massacre, she said that ‘our criticism of the West is that it has intervened too much’ and that ‘this is a civil war… I do not accept for a minute that the Serbs should be singled out as responsible’.

In 1993 Philipps helped to stage an exhibition of alleged atrocities by Arab mercenaries against Serbs. The photographs emanated from the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, which had claimed in 1985 that Serbs were facing genocide in Kosovo (Hodge 1999:23). In August 1993, in her own documentary called Journalists at War, shown on Channel 4 television, Philipps criticised ‘the liberal moral crusade’ to save
Eventually Living Marxism, which, by 1997, had changed its name to LM, was sued by the British television journalists Penny Marshall and Ian Williams, who had been among the first reporters to enter the Serb-run camp in Trnopolje in August 1992. LM claimed that they misrepresented images of an emaciated Muslim, Fikaret Alic, who had become one of the symbols of the conflict, in order to exaggerate conditions in the camp. A subsequent LM cover story: ‘Radovan Karadžić: War Criminal or Whipping Boy?’, gave a further indication of LM’s position. The ITN journalists sued over what they believed was an attack on their professional integrity after LM refused to retract or issue an apology. In March 2000, a jury in a London court returned a unanimous verdict in their favour and LM had to pay damages. The British liberal press generally welcomed the verdict. Ironically the strongest public support for LM came from the staunchly right-wing magazine The Salisbury Review, which praised LM’s editor for ‘[T]aking a bold stance against sentimentality in all its forms’ as well as ‘the ingrained mendacity of the television networks’. This pillar of the right appealed for ‘some rich benefactor’ to ‘step in to save the journal’.

Radicals on both the Left and the Right were able to find common ground by gathering around a position of moral relativism, reflecting ‘a belief in the non-universality of human values, including human rights’ (Conversi 1996:246). The Bosnian war became a conflict without aggressors and victims and all parties were equally guilty of acts of violence.

Despite being known as ‘Red Ken’, Ken Livingstone belonged to the mainstream British Left and he was one of the most outspoken Labour MPs on the Yugoslav conflict:

Like Hitler with the Jews, Milošević has inflamed and exploited the fears of some Serbs about their Muslim and Croat neighbours in order to rise to power…

When Milošević first sent his armoured columns into Slovenia and Croatia in 1991, I was the first member of parliament to call for air strikes to defeat his aggression. Air strikes alone at that point might have been enough to deter his future plans.

A Labour colleague, Dale Campbell-Savours MP, insisted in 1994 that Margaret Thatcher would have sorted out ‘the bloody nonsense’ eighteen months ago. This normally fierce critic of Britain’s most controversial prime minister of recent times stated in parliament that ‘At least [Thatcher] stood up and demanded that fascism be stopped in the heart of Europe whereas the government has ducked the issue.’

The Committee for Peace in the Balkans brought together luminaries of Right and Left disinclined to condemn Serbian actions in the conflict. Founded in June 1995, the Committee included Tony Benn MP and Alfred Sherman, former adviser on Thatcher’s privatisation policies and confidante of the French neo-fascist, Jean-Marie Le Pen. On a platform with Benn, Sherman declared himself proud to have advised Karadžić. The Committee insisted that the war in ex-Yugoslavia was a civil war from which the rest of the world should stand apart. The UN should only have a humanitarian or medical role, and the arms embargo should remain in place (Hodge 1999:17). One of its spokesmen, Monsignor Bruce Kent, former chair of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, had
criticised the Vance-Owen Plan for being ‘unacceptable to the Serbs and the Croats’ and argued publicly that ‘partition is a reasonable answer’.91

According to Labour MP Malcolm Wicks, opposition on the left to intervention stemmed from ‘anti-Americanism’: ‘Those brought up on anti-USA protest could not bring themselves to support US-led intervention, even when lives were at stake and even when many have died as words were not translated into action’ (Wicks 1994).

The British Labour Party’s leadership was cautious during most stages of the Bosnian war. In August 1992, Tribune, a publication identified with the party’s left wing, criticised the party’s defence spokesman, George Robertson (later Secretary-General of NATO), for ‘opening his mouth only to express his sense of helplessness and, unforgivably, to back the government’s rejection of the use of armed force except in a “peacekeeping role”—a position that guarantees Serbian hegemony in Bosnia’.92 David Clarke, Robertson’s successor, was anti-interventionist, ‘treating it as a civil war between barbarians’.93 John Reid, who became Defence Minister after 1997, went on three trips to meet Serb leaders in 1993 with expenses paid by the Serbs, Clarke going on two of these (Hodge 1999:14). Until Robin Cook became shadow foreign secretary in 1994, the Bosnian conflict was described as one between ‘warring groups’ with those of the Sarajevo government seen as more acceptable than those of Karadžić’s Serbs.94

Paddy Ashdown, the British Liberal Party leader, made frequent visits to Bosnia, not financed by any local sources. He tried to raise sympathy for the Bosnian Muslims, arguing that ‘we are, daily, making Europe’s Palestinians of the future. The Bosnian Muslims are the very opposite of fundamentalists, but they are being radicalised’.95

The electronic media tended to provide more of a platform for those who were sceptical of intervention in the peace-making capacity, such as the BBC’s David Sells and its chief international correspondent, John Simpson. In contrast to Martin Bell, whose exposure to Bosnia made him seek out ‘a journalism of attachment’, Simpson wrote:

I didn’t enjoy it…to be honest. I didn’t like the place at all… I found each of the population groups—Serbs, Croats and Muslims—equally unattractive. The Serbs overall, were the least lovable, but I found the international media’s demonization of them outrageous… There were no good guys… When I think back to those days, it is with a sense of dull dislike.

(Quoted in Hodge 1999:48)

The op-ed pages of the British serious press were mostly pro-interventionist, with the exception of dissenting voices such as Simon Jenkins of The Times. Andrew Marr, the editor of The Independent in the mid-1990s, perhaps summed up the views of commentators such as Martin Woollacott, Noel Malcolm and Hugo Young by arguing: ‘We have been lessened by our inaction and our little corner of the world has been made significantly more dangerous.’96

Christopher Hitchens showed the rawness of his feelings in 1993, when he wrote: ‘I carry murder in my heart when I think of Bosnians and Bosnia dying in order that that mediocre nonentity, John Major, may continue in office.’97 A month earlier, Douglas Hurd had complained about the critical tone of press coverage, Baroness Chalker adding in 1994 that ‘there are far too many armchair critics in this country who think they know
best’. Such views got the support of Labour’s Tony Benn. On 19 April 1993, he asked the foreign secretary if he was ‘aware that media coverage of the atrocities has aroused much of the pressure for further action’.

British MPs on different sides of the spectrum wanted Bosnia kept off front pages and television screens. Malcolm Wicks MP claimed that, in the House of Commons, ‘There is an embarrassed silence, sometimes an open sniggering on Tory benches, when someone dares to mention the mass rapes, ethnic cleansing, and the lives lost because of Western apathy’ (Wicks 1994). Certainly John Major feared that his government might lose its tiny majority if it alienated the isolationists in his own Tory Party ranks.

But, as the crisis continued, the level of public support for forcible action in Bosnia increased. A poll carried out by NOP in August 1992 found that 53 per cent of respondents were disenchanted with Britain’s handling of the Bosnian conflict, compared with 62 per cent who had approved of the way the Gulf War had been handled. But only 37 per cent shared Paddy Ashdown’s view that Britain should be prepared to use the RAF, in cooperation with other Western countries, to bomb Serbian artillery positions.

By April 1993, 61 per cent of respondents to a Gallup poll believed ‘it would be desirable to send an international force to Bosnia to try to enforce a peace settlement’. In the event of such a force being sent, 67 per cent believed British troops should be part of it. Nearly half of the 61 per cent believed such a force would still be desirable even if it ‘would be likely to suffer heavy casualties’. Interestingly, 46 per cent of all respondents believed the Bosnian war ‘poses a threat to the peace of Europe outside the Balkans’.

The centralised nature of the British political system meant that the government could sit out strong public unhappiness about its handling of Bosnia. But the government could still have been vulnerable to an imaginative and well-targeted campaign of civil disobedience. The Helsinki Citizens Assembly (HCA), co-led from Britain, could have challenged the state directly over Bosnia, and promoted a Europe-wide effort to change policy. It promoted an embryo civil society movement transcending East-West boundaries and had raised awareness about Bosnia during different stages of the crisis. But its leaders, several of whom at their conferences found it hard to disguise their nostalgia for the Marxist state project, failed to use this resource to encourage peaceful protest and civil disobedience around the Bosnian issue. The HCA was reluctant to challenge the European institutions upon which it relied for sponsorship of a range of projects. Since it is hard to see any other organisation that extended so far across Europe, involving greens, socialists and civil society groups, it may well be that an historic opportunity was lost to show effective solidarity with civilians suffering, and under siege, in Bosnia.

In the absence of imaginative transnational initiatives, it was left to national efforts to raise awareness and mount practical assistance for the victims of war in Bosnia. The United Kingdom Citizens Committee of Bosnia-Herzegovina, under the chairmanship of Adrian Hastings, did effective work on behalf of the cause of an independent and multi-ethnic Bosnia. In 1993, it merged with the Alliance to Defend Bosnia-Herzegovina, which kept up the effort and has been responsible for the regular appearance of Bosnia Report: among other things, it translated articles and carried interviews with local figures committed to a peaceful co-existence in the former Yugoslavia, documenting facts that rarely got into a press largely concerned with the latest political negotiations or acts of violence.
Perspectives from the Islamic world

The sight of efforts to eliminate an Islamic culture indigenous to Europe not unnaturally had its biggest resonance in the Muslim world. The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), a fifty-one-member forum for countries with largely Muslim populations and governments that identified themselves as part of the Islamic community, became an arena for strong-worded resolutions. At its June 1992 conference in Istanbul, the OIC passed a unanimous resolution that asked the Islamic countries to take ‘armed action by land, sea and air’ to end the conflict in Bosnia (Jansen 1992:12). Later in the year, delegates to an emergency OIC meeting pledged to take concrete measures to assist Bosnia if the UN peace process continued to stall. Impressive amounts of humanitarian aid were provided and the Bosnian government received funding for its activities from Middle Eastern sources; Islamic states placed none of the restrictions on refugees from the conflict existing in Western Europe. Not unnaturally, it was Turkey that made most of the running (Gallagher 1995b:23–4). It belonged to the CSCE, NATO and the Council of Europe, where it was able to raise the issue. It remained a Balkan state by virtue of the fact that its territory included Eastern Thrace. Perhaps as many as two million Turkish citizens could be of Bosnian origin, while over a million ethnic Turks resided in Balkan countries outside Turkey (Kut 1994:10). Especially when President Turgut Özal was alive (he died in 1993), Turkey lobbied the USA, warning that the British-led policy of minimal engagement threatened the stability not just of the Balkans but also of the Eastern Mediterranean (Unal 1995:129). There were fears in the secular elite that the Islamic Welfare Party might profit from Western indifference to the fate of Bosnia’s Muslims, and indeed it emerged as the largest party in elections held at the end of 1995. But, according to one local commentator, Turkey could have done more to pressurise the British into changing their policy, a trade embargo on British goods and the expulsion of British aeroplanes from ‘Operation to Provide Comfort’ in aid of the Kurds of northern Iraq being two strategies recommended (Unal 1995:129).

The oil-rich Middle Eastern countries could have raised the price of oil on the world market. But the West never faced strong pressure from the Middle East over the international policy on Bosnia it was orchestrating. Perhaps the fact that the Bosnian Muslims were largely secular acted as a brake on their commitment. It should not be overlooked that Milošević’s FRY continued to have full diplomatic relations with a large number of Muslim states, particularly ones of a radical leftist persuasion such as Libya and Syria. It traded with them and the head of state of FRY from 1993 to 1997, Zoran Lilić was even given full honours while on a state visit to Libya in 1995.

Iran was the state that showed the most conspicuous interest in Bosnia. In August 1992, its Foreign Minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, had urged Muslim countries to defend Bosnia. Soon there were reports of Islamic guerrillas, or mujahedin, operating in Bosnia on the government side. Around 200 were based in Zenica by the last year of the war. According to Ed Vulliamy, they were ‘disliked by most Bosnian Muslims and totally estranged from the political project of Bosnia-Herzegovina’ (Vulliamy 1994:259). The USA consistently linked them with Iran’s efforts to exert leverage in the region. In February 1995, the arrival of a very senior Iranian cleric, Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, contributed to a short-lived political crisis after he told the government to be wary of Western help. Five members of the seven-strong presidential executive which advised
Izetbegović quickly issued a public protest about the growing prominence of Muslim radicals who wished to turn the army into an SDA militia. But both the USA and Iran found themselves de facto allies in their common opposition to the arms embargo and, thanks to the Bosnian war, crisis relations between them may have improved somewhat. Professor Carl Wiebes, who carried out an investigation on behalf of the Dutch government into the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, examined operations conducted by various intelligence agencies during the war. He reckons that elements in ‘the Pentagon maintained secret alliances with Islamicist groups and Middle Eastern countries in an effort to assist the Bosnian Muslims’. He claims that the USA, responsible for monitoring from the air the UN arms embargo, ‘often rerouted its surveillance aircraft when planes carrying smuggled weapons…landed in eastern Bosnia’ (Poolos 2002).

Richard Holbrooke, architect of the Dayton Peace Agreement, in sworn testimony before the US Senate Intelligence Committee, said that

the ‘covert’ support given to Bosnian Muslims by Islamic nations (including Iran), had helped keep the Sarajevo government alive at a time when its survival hung by a thread. For the United States to have continued to object to such assistance without providing something to replace it would in my opinion have been unconscionable.

(Holbrooke 1998:51)

The road to Srebrenica

The cease-fire which largely held during the first quarter of 1995 increased Serbian nervousness about their ability to terminate the war in their own favour. The weakness of Serbian forces was already evident by the middle of 1994. Fuel and spare parts were running low. The morale of infantry soldiers in the VRS had plummeted as they came up against better-motivated Bosnian forces which were starting to obtain good-quality weapons. In Montenegro (increasingly apprehensive about continuing the union with Serbia), the draft was widely evaded; and refugees of draft age in Serbia were increasingly unhappy about joining up (Udovicki and Štitkovać 1997:195).

Serbian vulnerability was shown on 1–2 May 1995, when the Croatian army recaptured Western Slavonia in ‘Operation Flash’. In retaliation, the Serb army of the Krajina (SVK) fired rockets at Zagreb and other Croatian towns killing seven. On 22 May, the Bosnian Serbs removed two artillery pieces from UN storage to begin a new onslaught on Sarajevo. Since February, UNPROFOR had had a new commander, another British general, Rupert Smith. But, unlike his predecessor, Michael Rose, he was disinclined to mollify the Serbs and give them successive opportunities to improve their behaviour. He soon issued an ultimatum to Mladić’s forces to comply with the heavy weapons exclusion zone or face air strikes (Sharp 1996:52). This time he had the backing of the UN as well as NATO and, on 26 May, the main VRS ammunition site at Pale was destroyed, the most significant NATO action to date.

Before Smith’s resolute stance, there is evidence that the VRS was aiming for a final military push, afraid it would run out of time if the Bosnian war extended into a fourth year. On 25 May, the VRS had shelled the central square of Tuzla, leaving seventy-one
dead, and the shelling of Sarajevo was resumed. Over 350 members of UNPROFOR, many of them French soldiers, were taken hostage by the VRS to be used as human shields. Perhaps as Mladić anticipated, disagreement flared up in the UN about the wisdom of General Smith’s actions. General Bernard Janvier, the French officer who was the overall UN commander based in Zagreb, engaged in secret meetings with Mladić at which it was agreed that the UN hostages would be released provided there were no more air strikes (Bell 1996:264). Smith was not consulted and he contemplated resignation (Bell 1996:264). But he stayed on, perhaps encouraged by the progress he was having in persuading the British government to back a ‘Rapid Reaction Force’ (RRF) which would respond speedily to Bosnian Serb aggression (Sharp 1996:52; Kumar 1997:88). On 28 May the Cabinet in London agreed to augment the British contingent to the UN force by 6,000, the new troops being trained for a rapid reaction role. France, which had just elected a new president, Jacques Chirac, was also keen. The rest of NATO and also the UN soon gave its backing to the RRF idea (Sharp 1996:52).

But the Bosnian Serbs were not getting an unequivocal signal from NATO countries that their policy of treating them as respectable negotiating partners, despite the brutality of their actions, was being substituted by a robust one. Jane Sharp has written:

On 3, 9 and 11 June Chirac had lengthy telephone conversations with Slobodan Milošević to negotiate the release of French hostages, during the course of which it is claimed that Chirac not only promised Milošević there would be no more NATO air strikes, but also that the RRF had been deployed not for action against the Serbs, but only to get peace negotiations back on track.105

Previous influential commentators continued to warn about the dangers of strong action. On 30 May 1995, Misha Glenny wrote that:

the West must understand that the [Yugoslav army] leadership will not hesitate to enter a war with NATO and the Bosnian government… Disaster is looming. It is the result of a disgraceful macho policy, egged on by Western opinion makers from across the ideological spectrum.106

Except for General Smith’s determination to face down an armed faction whose government in Pale was unrecognised by any foreign state, there was in fact little sign of the ‘macho policy’ so deplored by Glenny. This was abundantly clear in the sequence of events leading up to the most bloodthirsty event of the whole Yugoslav conflict, the massacre at Srebrenica in south-east Bosnia on and after 10 July, in which 7,000 people, mainly civilians, were killed.

The Srebrenica massacre and its impact

In July 2000, on the fifth anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, Kofi Anan, Boutros-Ghali’s successor as UN Secretary-General, issued a statement in which he said: ‘The most important lesson of Srebrenica—that we must recognise evil for what it is, and
confront it not with expediency and compromise but with implacable resistance—has yet to be fully learnt and applied.’

He went on to say that:

the tragedy of Srebrenica will forever haunt the history of the United Nations. This day commemorates a massacre on a scale unprecedented in Europe since the Second World War, a massacre of people who had been led to believe that the UN would ensure their safety.107

In 1999, the UN published a 155-page report into the disaster at Srebrenica, which concludes: ‘Through error, misjudgement and an inability to recognise the scope of the evil confronting us, we failed to do our part to save the people of Srebrenica from the Serb campaign of mass murder’ (United Nations 1999:111). Kofi Annan, who had a senior role in peace-keeping operations, does not escape censure, and it is to his credit that he declined to tone down the report before it was published. He is prepared to place himself alongside Boutros-Ghali, General Janvier and Yasushi Akashi:

What is clear is that my predecessor, his senior advisers (among whom I was included…), his Special Representative and the Force Commander were all deeply reluctant to use air power against the Serbs…

…we did not use with full effectiveness this one instrument at our disposal to make the safe areas at least a little bit safer. We were, with hind-sight, wrong to declare repeatedly and publicly that we did not want to use air power against the Serbs except as a last resort, and to accept the shelling of the safe areas as a daily occurrence.

(United Nations 1999:107)108

The 1999 UN Report also concedes that UNPROFOR played into the hands of Mladić’s forces by frequently alleging that ‘the Bosnian defenders of Srebrenica…provoked the Serb offensive by attacking out of that safe area’. It found that ‘[E]ven though this accusation is often repeated by international sources, there is no credible evidence to support it’ (United Nations 1999:106). But the search for evidence that both the besiegers and their besieged quarry were strongly at fault proved a comfort for the Serbs. They ‘repeatedly exaggerated the extent of the raids out of Srebrenica’ to justify their offensive (United Nations 1999:107). Thus the doctrine of equivalence, evident in the high-level international reaction to the conflict from its very beginnings, played a significant role in the events that would mark the bloody climax of the war.

On 24 May 1995, General Janvier had warned the UN Security Council that none of the safe areas were defensible, and all should be abandoned.109 In the following weeks General Rupert Smith argued with Janvier and Akashi for a tougher response to the Serbs, but he was at a disadvantage because the RRF had not yet been assembled (Sharp 1996:55). According to the UN Report, Smith

noted that the reluctance of his superiors and of key troop contributors ‘to escalate the use of force’ in the wake of the hostage crisis would create the conditions in which we would be always ‘stared down’ by the Serbs.
Later in the month, by listening to Mladić’s phone conversations, the GIA learned that the attack on Srebrenica was in preparation, but the information was not shared with UNPROFOR (Sharp 1996:56). The fault in this regard seems to lie mainly with the Dutch UNPROFOR contingent stationed in Srebrenica. It failed to get information on the situation on the ground from its Canadian predecessors and it refused, on no less than five occasions, offers of eavesdropping equipment from the CIA out of fear of being compromised (Judah 2002:6; Poolos 2002).

Enormous controversy surrounds a meeting Janvier held in Paris on 8 July 1991 with officials of his own government. By now, Mladić’s forces were massed around Srebrenica and it was clear that an attack was imminent. Janvier claims that, in a meeting with Premier Alain Juppe on 8 July, ‘we did not even discuss Srebrenica’. But *Médécins sans Frontières* has argued that Janvier and Mladić had come to

a written or verbal agreement whereas the Bosnian Serbs promised not to take UNPROFOR personnel hostage in exchange for non-intervention. Its spokesman has asserted that President Chirac had full knowledge of Janvier’s restrained policy.

(Sabljković 2001:7–10)

A French parliamentary enquiry, investigating General Janvier’s role in the events leading up to the massacre, sat in 2001, but the public and press were cleared from the room when the general gave evidence.\(^{110}\) It has been alleged that French reticence stemmed from a fear that Janvier might be indicted by the UNTFY in The Hague on account of the agreement he is alleged to have made with the Serb general.\(^{111}\)

Recriminations ensued between the Dutch government and Juppe in the aftermath of Srebrenica, with the former French premier claiming that a brief air raid against Serb positions on 11 July was called off at Dutch insistence owing to fears for the safety of their soldiers, and the Dutch Foreign Minister riposting that ‘It is not true that we refused help. On the contrary, we did not stop requesting intervention, but General Janvier refused to offer it to us for reasons that have remained unclear to this day’ (Sabljković 2001:9).\(^{112}\)

What is undeniable is that when Srebrenica was bombarded on 9 and 10 July, the Dutch UN contingent defending the ‘safe area’ put up no resistance. Around thirty of their number were held hostage at the time, but they also lacked back-up support, equipment or the will to impede the Serbs in any way.

Expecting a massacre once Srebrenica fell, many Muslims who had sought sanctuary in the town tried to escape into the mountains, but they were hunted down, as many as 3,000 dying in the countryside to the north-west of Srebrenica.

There is little dispute about the craven and unheroic attitude of the Dutch soldiers once the town had passed into Mladić’s control on 11 July. They drove Muslim families from the UN compound and gave their blue peace-keeper’s helmets to the Serbs, ‘who later used them to trick the Muslims who had fled to the hills into giving themselves up’.\(^{113}\) The Dutch even refused to protect the lives of relatives of UN employees; one interpreter begged them to include his 21-year-old brother in the official list of UN employees but
they refused. Later, when all the Muslims were ordered out of the UN compound by the Serbs, ‘three armed Dutch soldiers insisted that [the interpreters] father, mother and brother should all go, none of whom he ever saw again’.  

Ever alert to the politics of symbolism, the Serbs filmed the surrender of Colonel T. Karremans, the head of the Dutch peace-keepers.

On Serbian television [he] was deftly portrayed as an accomplice to the fall of Srebrenica. He appeared to be celebrating the fall of Srebrenica—with a glass of champagne perhaps? In reality, it was a glass of water for an exhausted man.

(Halberstam 2001:315)

About 4,300 men were detained after the Dutch surrendered Srebrenica. They were taken on buses to what proved to be a number of killing grounds:

Some were killed by grenades lobbed into their midst, then finished off by machine guns, but others had to wait their turn on buses and trucks, watching their friends and relations being shot. The Serbs left very few witnesses. Indeed it is said that even the bus drivers who were called to transport the Muslims were made to kill one man so that they could not testify without confessing their own guilt. By 17 July, the vast majority of men handed over by the Dutch were dead.

Two of the executioners, Drzen Erdemović and Radeslav Kremanović, confessed their role in the massacre in Belgrade after falling out with a superior officer in the VRS. They related how they had worked all day to kill 1,000 male prisoners at Banjovo farm, north of Zvornik. Many who failed to die at once pleaded to be released from their misery. One soldier managed to dispose of 700 victims with a handgun shot to the head (Bell 1996:297).

Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the UN special rapporteur on human rights for ex-Yugoslavia, resigned in the aftermath of the Srebrenica massacre. In his letter of resignation to the UN Secretary-General, he said: ‘One cannot speak of the protection of human rights with credibility when one is confronted with the lack of consistency and courage displayed by the international community and its leaders.’

George Soros, the international financier and benefactor who, among other things, provided a water plant for Sarajevo during the siege, said after a visit to the city in 1993: ‘Sarajevo is a concentration camp, and the UN is part of the system that maintains it.’ By the third year of UNPROFOR’s presence in Bosnia, ‘it was working full time to feed itself, to protect itself, and to negotiate the release of its hostages. This was all it was doing’ (Bell 1996:265). Even in better times, its provision of humanitarian relief to those most in need was meagre. Carol Hodge and Mladen Grbin have observed:

UNHCR Information Notes [1992 to 1995] and various NGOs have produced numerous accounts and statistics which reveal the horrific results on the ground of the persistent failure of UNPROFOR in delivering food, medical supplies and sheltering materials to areas most in
need, especially the Eastern Bosnian enclaves and Bihać. While large amounts of aid did get delivered, much of this was to areas where there was no fighting anyway, or to Serb-conquered territories. In other words, the majority of aid by road convoy, accompanied by UNPROFOR, appears to have gone to the ethnic group that was the main aggressor in the conflict, and was not under siege or attack.

(Hodge and Grbin 1996:65, n. 78)

Despite the individual bravery, resourcefulness and empathy with the victims of the Bosnian war shown by many individual UN personnel (mainly attached to the UNHCR), ‘humanitarianism without a heart’ was the damning verdict on UNPROFOR’s role in Bosnia by one New York Times editorial writer.118 In the same paper, Leslie Gelb wrote:

Western policy is increasingly to provide enough humanitarian relief for Bosnian Muslims to quiet Western opinion… The idea is…to feed them until they become refugees or get shot—or until they realise hopefully much sooner, that they must surrender… On behalf of realism, Western policy punishes the principal victims. In the name of peace, it shames any sense of justice.119

Ironically, the main architects of Western policy were gone or on their way out by the time of the Srebrenica massacre. Douglas Hurd resigned in a hurry as British foreign secretary in late July, only to surface over a year later as an emissary for a British bank which wanted to use his good connections with Milošević to buy the Serbian telephone system. In June, Owen had been replaced as the EC’s official mediator by Carl Bildt of Sweden. He had had no standing in the EC and frequently clashed with EC officials, the European Parliament having voted for his dismissal in 1994 (Hodge and Grbin 1996:85). Little further was heard of Akashi after the ‘dual key’ he had consistently used to block resolute military action against Mladić’s forces was withdrawn and NATO was able to order its forces into action without seeking the permission of such UN bureaucrats.

Perhaps opportunistically, France’s President Chirac compared Serb crimes in Srebrenica with those of the Nazis, and the Western response to the Bosnian tragedy with the appeasement policy of Chamberlain and Daladier (Sharp 1996:56).

Conclusion

Though the rhetoric of the Clinton administration towards Bosnia was more engaged, like that of President Bush, his administration regarded it as a European problem. When Peter Galbraith asked for the ambassador’s post in Zagreb because of his interest in refugee work and the belief that he could make a difference there, he was appalled by the lack of interest on the part of his superiors, who declined to give him instructions about what his role should be (Halberstam 2001:76). Enthusiasm for a policy of ‘lift and strike’ soon faded in the Clinton White House, and containment of ‘a problem from hell’ became the order of the day.
UNPROFOR, despite ‘protection’ being the third word in its title, offered little comfort to the besieged or homeless other than food relief, which was sporadic. Its commanders were involved in regular negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs and often relations were more cordial with the chief aggressor than with the political representatives of the Muslims, particularly so in the case of General Michael Rose. An energetic response was not usually urged or taken when ‘safe areas’ were attacked or ‘No Fly Zones’ violated. A strong enforcement mandate allowed the use of force in the face of blatant aggression, but the main national sponsors of the UNPROFOR mission, Britain and France, were determined not to go down this road, repeatedly citing the danger to their contingents. They also enjoyed significant backing in the US Pentagon for a policy of minimal engagement.

The presence of foreign journalists and TV cameras in Sarajevo enabled the effects of war to be beamed into millions of homes in hours, and public opinion became a major element in the conflict. The war in Bosnia was the first war of the Internet age, and protagonists on different sides were able to use this medium to promote their cause. The print media was often fiercely critical of government policy towards Bosnia in the major Atlantic democracies. This increased the difficulties of winding up the war on terms that would be viewed as a total sell-out of the Bosnian Muslims, though it wasn’t for want of trying. Interestingly, it was the first well reported war in which left- or right-wing allegiances were no guide to a person’s stance. Vocal advocates of peace enforcement from both the Left and the Right joined forces, as did conservatives and radicals keen to uphold national sovereignty or ‘anti-imperialism’, many of whom eagerly embraced increasingly fashionable positions of ‘moral relativism’.

Anglo–American disagreements over the efficacy or justice of the arms embargo brought relations between the two chief NATO allies to a low point not seen since the Suez crisis of 1956. The UN later officially acknowledged that a member state had been left largely defenceless because of it; it contributed substantially to more ethnic cleansing, more massacres and a growing tide of refugees. To checkmate calls for the lifting of the arms embargo, Britain dragged in a previously disinterested Russia, which was encouraged to assert its traditional interests in the Balkans. The re-involvement of a power which during the nineteenth century had encouraged anti-Muslim policies in the Balkans was a cynical gesture that did no service to Western security in the region.

Russia joined the Contact Group which, from 1994, searched fruitlessly for a compromise peace still based on partition. By mid-1995 the Bosnian Serbs were increasingly reckless and provocative in their behaviour now that the tide of war was slowly turning away from them. The manifold flaws of an UNPROFOR mission were laid bare by its failure to protect the civilians entrusted to its care in the ‘safe area’ of Srebrenica, 7,000 of whose inhabitants were massacred in July 1995. Recriminations between France and The Netherlands over the respective culpability of their military personnel showed how much of a chimera a common EU security position was over an issue such as Bosnia, where the dreadful ordeal of civilians should have been a powerful incentive for agreement. The behaviour of Dutch UN forces on the ground was much criticised. The subsequent resignation of the Dutch government in April 2002, after the publication of a damning official report on their conduct, at least allowed some West European honour to be redeemed. Srebrenica also paved the way for an apparent change of Western policy during the final months of the conflict.
Limited goals and capabilities

For over three years, the West’s military, humanitarian and political approaches to the Bosnian conflict had been in misalignment. Following the Srebrenica massacre of July 1995, the political will to impose a compromise peace on Bosnia increased. The impact on Western opinion, at elite, as well as mass level, of the systematic and cold-blooded round-the-clock killings resulting in the deaths of 8,000 unarmed people was undoubtedly very significant. Several of the key policy-makers in Western Europe who had staked their reputations on a minimalist policy of limited engagement also left the political stage at this time. The USA, the rhetoric of whose leaders had previously emphasised the need to avoid an unjust peace, stepped forward increasingly to shape a more engaged policy towards Bosnia. It would be one based on coercive diplomacy, combining political concessions with military force (Burg and Shoup 1999:318).

At a White House meeting of senior officials on 17 July, as the magnitude of the Srebrenica massacre was starting to sink in, Vice-President Al Gore mentioned the photograph in the previous day’s Washington Post of a woman at Srebrenica who had committed suicide by hanging herself from a tree. His 21-year-old daughter had seen it and had asked her father why the administration could fail to act in such circumstances. Gore pointedly asked: ‘Why is this happening and we’re not doing anything? My daughter is surprised the world is allowing this to happen. I am, too. I want you to tell me how to answer her—my own daughter’ (Halberstam 2001:330–1).

The position of those in the US administration who had what could be described as a moralist perspective on the Bosnian tragedy was now much stronger. But the political realists who had not decisively broken with the Bush-led approach because American national interests were not perceived to be at risk retained their predominance. US actions between July 1995 and the Dayton Agreement in November continued to be shaped by domestic and global politics. Geo-strategic concerns involving relations with Russia, the Islamic world and the evolving shape of NATO, were primary ones (Burg and Shoup 1999:411). They took precedence over what needed to be done to stabilise an inflamed local situation and put in place the conditions for an enduring regional peace. So did domestic political considerations.
President Clinton could point to no clear-cut foreign policy success in his first term. He was receptive to those advisers who warned that, if the news channels continued to show footage of civilians being terrorised and NATO forces humiliated in Bosnia during the presidential election year, it might have a heavy cost for him. With his Republican presidential rival looking increasingly likely to be Robert Dole, one of those who had argued since 1991 for Milošević to be confronted, the risks of standing still now appeared too great.

The first major turning-point in the summer of 1995 was the re-capture by Croatia of all the remaining territory that had lain in rebel Serb hands since 1991. The offensive, code-named ‘Operation Storm’, got under way on 28 July and, by 5 August, Knin, the capital of the Serbian Krajina, had been taken. The speed and success of the Croatian attack took many by surprise, including apparently the Pentagon and the CIA. They had argued that Krajina Serb forces were strong enough to repulse a Croatian attack, and, if they faltered, would assist them with VJ troops (Halberstam 2001:339). The fighting capabilities of the Croatian army had improved, thanks to a number of factors. Not only was it now well equipped, but, since 1994, it had also been receiving intensive training from a team of US officials, led by a talented former army Chief of Staff, Carl Vuono (Halberstam 2001:335). When Šušak, the Defence Minister, had asked the Pentagon for military assistance in 1994, he had been referred to a private contractor, Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), who had supplied the military expertise (Burg and Shoup 1999:339).

During Operation Storm, Croatian forces were not engaged in any critical military actions. Under orders from Belgrade, Serbian forces staged a tactical withdrawal to Republic of Srpska territory. This suggested that political factors were crucial in deciding the outcome of Operation Storm.

The State Department accepted the advice of the ambassador in Zagreb, Peter Galbraith, that no effort should be made to impede Croatia after being informed in advance of the impending US attack (Magaš and anić 2001:114). Speculation was also rife that a political deal had been worked out between Tudjman and Milošević to facilitate the capture of the Krajina (Burg and Shoup 1999:328). To strengthen his role as a peace-broker in the eyes of the Contact Group, Milošević seems effectively to have written off the Krajina by 1994. The political leadership of the Krajina Serbs had lost its remaining standing in Belgrade by agreeing to unify with the Republic of Srpska in August 1994 (Purdy 1995:29–30). The rejection of an eleventh-hour initiative by the USA and Russia, proposing the Krajina have substantial autonomy if it rejoined Croatia, showed how out of touch Milan Martić and his die-hards were (Kumar 1997:94).

According to one commentator, ‘Milošević [by now] was willing to sacrifice most Serb territorial gains to end his isolation from the international community’ (Daalder 2000:123). He had prudently refrained from granting official recognition to the Krajina statelet or the Republic of Srpska, even though he had engineered their revolts in the early 1990s (Glenny 1996:277). Soon a vast human exodus from the Krajina got under way, with nearly all of the estimated 150,000-strong Serbian population fleeing towards secure Serbian territory. Four hundred and ten Serbian civilians were killed in August 1995. The Croatian army shelled fleeing civilians and burned villages.

To prevent worse atrocities, Ambassador Galbraith headed a column of refugees, sitting on a tractor, after failing to get assurances from Tudjman that his forces would
behave correctly. Many critics of the more engaged US-led approach claimed a moral equivalency between Srebrenica and the refugees from the Krajina. But nearly all of the Krajina Serbs had a future, however miserable, something denied to the Muslim men of Srebrenica, who disappeared forever from their families in July 1995.

Nevertheless, most of the key international players remained silent about the enforced deportation of a group whose continued presence in the Krajina would have complicated peace-making efforts based on de facto partition. The EU failed to respond when the reports of its own monitors described serious human rights violations (Williams 1996:7). Croatia’s use of UN peace-keepers as human shields in the early stages of the operation was quietly overlooked (Kumar 1997:94). Nobody was prepared to act on the suggestion of the Swede, Carl Bildt, Lord Owen’s successor as the EU peace negotiator, that Tudjman could be charged with war crimes for the shelling of Knin:

If we accept that it is all right for Tudjman to cleanse Croatia of its Serbs, then how on earth can we object if Yeltsin cleanses Chechnya or if one day Milošević sends his army to clean out the Albanians from Kosovo?

(Glenny 1996:285)

Milošević was politically secure enough to absorb the shock—waves from the fall of the Krajina, and indeed the even more devastating events shortly to unfold in Bosnia. On 8 August, he was publicly denounced as a traitor to the Serb cause by Karadžić, with thousands of demonstrators in Belgrade endorsing the view (Burg and Shoup 1999:333). But it was increasingly obvious that the solidarity which the Serbs of Serbia exhibited for their co-ethnics (known as precani) in Bosnia and Croatia, and indeed Kosovo, had its limits. They were deeply reluctant to get involved directly in the wars that erupted in these places, and the welcome extended to fellow Serbs who arrived in Serbia as refugees was distinctly lukewarm. Milošević probably spoke not just for himself when he told American negotiators in 1995 that the Bosnians were very different from the more ‘civilised’ Serbs of urban Serbia: ‘They have more in common with the Bosnian Muslims than with us’ (Holbrooke 1998:256). In August 1994, he had denounced their leadership for ‘insane ambitions’ and ‘greed’ (Burg and Shoup 1999:309). Ample confirmation for this view was supplied on 28 August, when the Serb shelling of the Sarajevo marketplace left twenty-eight dead. This proved to be the catalyst for massive retaliatory action by NATO against the VRS. By now UNPROFOR’s Akashi had lost ‘the key’ to block air strikes. Willy Claes, NATO’s Secretary-General, decided to authorise NATO commanders to take military action rather than calling a formal meeting of NATO countries to make this decision (Holbrooke 1998:99).

Over the next fortnight, NATO carried out 2,500 missions and 850 bombing sorties (Sharp 1996:58). The targets were Bosnian Serb communication lines, ammunition dumps, anti-aircraft installations and military headquarters (Woodward 1999:140). A lull on 3 September was meant to allow Mladić to pull back heavy weapons and stop attacking ‘safe areas’. When he agreed to the second but not the first condition, General Janvier argued that the condition was sufficient to halt the air strikes, but this was overruled (Sharp 1996:58; Holbrooke 1998:118). His superior, Admiral Leighton Smith, the US officer in command of NATO’s Southern European theatre, was of the same mind. He had little feel for, or interest in, the complicated politico—military dilemmas of
the Bosnian war. Certainly, he had little enthusiasm for US involvement in the conflict, claiming, after the first week of bombing, that NATO had run out of targets (Halberstam 2001:349).

By 14 September, the Serbian missile defence and communications systems had been destroyed (Kumar 1997:95). At this point, the VRS agreed to pull back its heavy weapons, marking the lifting of the siege of Sarajevo and other Bosnian areas. Much weakened militarily, the VRS was now confronted with a joint Bosnian government and Croatian military offensive. The ARBiH had been reorganised from early 1995, with mobile formations suitable for offensive operations being introduced (Burg and Shoup 1999:328). In just under a month, the Serbs lost huge swathes of territory. Under American pressure (with even the threat of air strikes against them being alleged), the federation forces agreed to a cease-fire on 12 October (Woodward 1999:140). By then, what remained in Bosnian Serb hands coincided with the 51.49 per cent of territory offered to them by the Contact Group. Meanwhile, the Croat forces controlled some 21.8 per cent of Bosnian territory, and government forces held 29 per cent (Kumar 1997:96).

NATO’s air campaign concealed the fact that the USA was prepared to make large-scale concessions to the Republic of Srpska (Burg and Shoup 1999:413). Or as Herb Okun, senior international official, put it: ‘The Serbs are being bombed into accepting their own peace plan’ (Bell 1996:285). The upcoming US-brokered talks at Dayton, Ohio, would finesse and impose what had already-been agreed, Bosnia being divided 51 to 49 per cent between the Bosnian-Croat Federation and the Republic of Srpska. Bosnian Serb recalcitrance started to fade on 1 September when Karadžić’s SDS agreed that Milošević could act on their behalf in the next peace talks (Kumar 1997:95). Milošević had already been deep in negotiations with US State Department officials, headed by Richard Holbrooke, a career diplomat who, in late 1994, had been appointed US special envoy to the former Yugoslavia after a period as ambassador to Germany. Both Karadžić and Mladić were now liable to arrest since, on 25 July, they had been indicted for war crimes by the UN court sitting in The Hague. Like David Owen before them, Holbrooke’s team found Milošević wily but refreshing because he did not allow nationalism to intrude much into his dealings with them (Owen 1996:127). In a bid to remake himself as a pragmatist, Milošević declared in July: ‘Why think about national states and ethnic purity at the end of the twentieth century? The main role of the contemporary world is integration. Nationalism isolates people. It is crippling.’ Robert Frasure, the US diplomat who was close to him at this time, described him as ‘rather like a mafia boss who’s gotten tired of doing drugs in the Bronx and now wants to move down to Palm Beach to do junk bonds’ (Glenny 1996:271).

In order to get a hopefully reformed Milošević to police a wild neighbourhood, the Americans in turn were prepared to ignore the evidence incriminating him in the high crimes committed during 1991–2 in Croatia and Bosnia. Henry Porter has written:

> The telephone intercepts during the Bosnian war, the unwitting testimony of his high officials and generals...are enough to make the case against him. There was also the very useful legal groundwork carried out by Paul Williams and Norman Cigar in their book, ‘War Crimes and Individual Responsibility: A Prima Facie Case for the Indictment of Slobodan Milošević’. But...the West was happy to buy the argument that the
atrocities...were committed by elements over which Milošević had no control.\footnote{8}

To draw the Bosnian Serbs into negotiations, US officials were prepared to agree to recognising the existence of their statelet, which, in many eyes, amounted to the \textit{de facto} partition of Bosnia \citep{Burg and Shoup 1999:318}. Milošević, in turn, conceded in late September that Bosnia ‘would continue its legal existence with its present borders and continuing international recognition’. However real those borders would prove to be, until that point the Serbs had denied that Bosnia had any legal existence. According to Holbrooke, it meant ‘a retroactive acceptance of Bosnia’s claim of independence’ \citep{Holbrooke 1998:129}.

The stage appeared to be set for ‘partition under international supervision rather than as a result of an armed power-grab’ \citep{Kumar 1997:97}. In his absorbing memoir of the diplomatic negotiations leading to the Bosnian peace treaty, Holbrooke shows occasional unhappiness that the Bosnian Serbs came out of it so well in terms of territory. He expresses regret that Christopher and Lake, his superiors, recommended that the Muslim-Croat offensive be halted on 12 October once they had gained control of 51 per cent of Bosnian territory: ‘As a matter of both simple justice and high strategy, we should not oppose the offensive unless it either ran into trouble or went too far’ \citep{Holbrooke 1998:158}. But ‘flawed intelligence assessments’ from ‘experts’ suggested there was a real chance of the Yugoslav army entering the war if further successes occurred \citep{Holbrooke 1998:159}. He was more willing to listen to his ally Peter Galbraith in Zagreb: he feared that if Banja Luka fell, it might lead to a humanitarian catastrophe with up to 400,000 refugees trying to get to Serbia.\footnote{9} Galbraith also reckoned that Holbrooke was influenced by what Milošević told him about an alternative Serb leadership different from Karadžić’s in Pale being located in Banja Luka. Given the way that the Dayton Agreement worked out, both men have expressed public doubts about the decisions then taken. Galbraith declared in a 2001 interview:

\begin{quotation}
The reason for allowing Croatia to take Banja Luka was that it would have meant the total collapse of the Bosnian Serbs and the fascist principles they espoused. It would have been far easier to reconstruct the country in the conditions of a total Serb defeat than it is at present. And we did think about this at the time. But even today I don’t know the right answer.\footnote{10}
\end{quotation}

Holbrooke, in his memoirs, declared:

I am no longer certain we were right to oppose an attack on Banja Luka. Had we known then that the Bosnian Serbs would have been able to defy or ignore the key political provisions of the peace agreement in 1996 and 1997, the negotiating team might not have opposed such an attack. However, even with American encouragement, it is by no means certain that an attack would have taken place—or, if it had, that it would have been successful. Tudjman would have had to carry the burden of the attack, and the Serb lines were already stiffening.

\citep{Holbrooke 1998:166–7}
Under an intractable leader incapable, unlike Milošević, of ditching his nationalist script, the Croats had proven to be awkward negotiating partners. The USA had got absolutely nowhere when it tried to persuade them to set up a joint military command with the Muslims after March 1994 (Burg and Shoup 1999:374). Fighting had actually broken out in September 1995, when, after capturing the town of Jajce, the Croats refused to allow Muslim residents to return to their homes (Burg and Shoup 1999:374). Several months later, when violence erupted in Mostar, a Serb soldier remarked: ‘We Serbs hate the Muslims, but the Croats…wow!!…do they hate the Muslims!!’¹¹ That much of this hatred came from the apex of Croatian politics was shown in the summer of 1996, when NATO officials heard Tudjman referring dismissively to the Muslims as ‘Turks’ and ‘mujahedin’.¹²

The Americans assembled the different negotiating parties at the Wright—Patterson airforce base at Dayton, Ohio, in the USA’s Mid-West. Holbrooke persuaded sceptical White House colleagues that what was needed was a relatively remote spot where the USA would have complete control of the environment (Halberstam 2001:352–3). He was the master of proceedings, ‘somehow equal in guile and physical stamina as well as intelligence to the other participants…’ (Halberstam 2001:353).

The Dayton talks lasted from 1 to 21 November. The settlement agreed at the end of the third week was finally signed in Paris on 14 December after being ratified by appropriate political bodies in the former Yugoslav states. Six days later, on 20 December, UNPROFOR’s mission in Bosnia officially came to an end. It was replaced by a 60,000-strong Implementation Force (IFOR) provided by NATO military command to allow the conditions of the agreement to be implemented. A High Representative of the UN was also appointed. The holder of this office was meant to supervise the transfer to a viable state, and coordinate the work of a range of international agencies seeking to implement the civilian aspects of the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA).

Under the agreement, a single Bosnian state was created, but it was one where the central state had meagre powers. Foreign affairs, customs, foreign trade and monetary policy were its main responsibilities, hardly vital ones given the collapse in economic activity and the fact that in practice the UN authorities dealt with most international questions. Rather than being a fulcrum of power, the central state was a thin shell overlaying ethnically based states.

At central level there was to be a rotating collective presidency whose three members represented the three constituent peoples of the state. Decision-making in all other areas was to be devolved to the entities, the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republic of Srpska. Within the Federation were ten cantons which quickly became important centres of economic and political power, dwarfing the collective and federal institutions. Plainly, the DPA contained many elements of previous peace proposals. Despite lip-service being paid to an integral Bosnia whose borders could not be changed by force, it was founded on a division of territory on an ethnic basis. It was hoped that the sweeping devolution of power to three tiers of entities might promote transethnic power sharing, but there were no mechanisms to encourage this goal. Instead an electoral process was provided for, the rapid timetable and crude implementation of which, in a demolished society reeling from years of intense conflict, would enable wartime nationalist elites to entrenched their positions.
Dayton allowed for two distinct political entities which enjoyed exclusive political authority on their respective territories. Each of them was permitted to enter into parallel relationships with neighbouring states and to make agreements with international organisations (Kumar 1997:104). In practice, there was a third entity, the para-state of Herceg-Bosna. This continued to exist despite an agreement reached at Dayton on 10 November 1995 to dissolve it and locate four federal ministries in Mostar. In reality, the ties between the three Croatian cantons and Zagreb were probably closer than the ones between the Republic of Srpska and Belgrade. While at Dayton, Tudjman showed how uncommitted he was to starting a new cooperative relationship with the Bosnians, by promoting Tihomir Blaskić to be general inspector of the Croatian army not long after he had been indicted by the Hague Tribunal on war crimes charges (Gutman 1995:8).

The existence of a distinct army in the Republic of Srpska was a big concession by the USA (Burg and Shoup 1999:362). The three de facto entities would each have their own armies and police forces. The International Police Task Force, designed to create a police service committed to upholding human rights and not differentiating between citizens on ethnic grounds, would prove to be one of the least effective of the missions designed to create the conditions in which Dayton could work (Is Dayton Failing? 1999:109).

The Muslim or Bosniak side had to give up much at Dayton. On the eve of talks, Foreign Minister Sacirbey had spoken openly about ‘disguised partition… I am concerned that what we are building is an infrastructure that will implode’ (Pajić 1995:18). He was part of a delegation that was not well prepared for the trials of Dayton. Since the start of the war, the Sarajevo government’s strategic goals had in fact been poorly defined. Often the overstretched authorities defined their goals according to their daily needs (Milicević 1995:25). At Dayton, the delegation failed to maintain a united front. Long into the talks Prime Minister Silajdžić tried to hold out for a centralised, unified, multi-ethnic state (Borden and Hedl 1996:34). Izetbegović, for his part, was more willing to compromise the unity of the state in exchange for securing control over a compact territory for the Bosnian Muslims (Burg and Shoup 1999:362). The main concession his side obtained was over Sarajevo. It was to be a unified capital under Federation control. Milošević told Holbrooke that the Bosniaks ‘deserved’ the city because of their long resistance. He also conceded that there should be a land corridor from Sarajevo to the one remaining Muslim enclave in eastern Bosnia, Gora de (Cohen 1998:461–2).
Map 3 Bosnia: 1995 Dayton Agreement

On the final day of the talks, their collapse had seemed imminent over the status of the northern town of Brcko and the width of the land corridor on either side of it linking Serb-held territory in western and eastern Bosnia. Silajdjić argued that, if it went to the Republic of Srpska, the territorial integrity of Bosnia was in the balance. Holbrooke rounded on the Bosniaks: ‘This is a terrific deal for you, but it’s not perfect. You have to
decide. Let us know in one hour’ (Borden and Hedl 1996:28). In fact Milošević would be the one to give way, acquiring territory further west (most of the Posavina pocket) in return for leaving the status of Brcko to be decided by international arbitration (Holbrooke 1998:303; Burg and Shoup 1999:365–6). Without Milošević in charge of the Bosnian Serb delegation, no such progress could have been made. He did not hide his contempt for them, excluding them from substantive discussions and saying at one point to Holbrooke: ‘They are shit’ (Holbrooke 1998:106). The more unwieldy Bosniak delegation was far more difficult to break in, eliciting an outburst from the normally polite Secretary of State Christopher, who rounded on Izetbegović on 20 November: ‘Mr President, I am totally disappointed at the fuzzy, unrealistic, and sloppy manner in which you and your delegates have approached this negotiation’ (Holbrooke 1998:305).

The Bosniak delegation finally consented to sign an agreement which appeared to ratify territorial changes achieved by force because of (a) the external commitment to defending a common state in Bosnia’s original boundaries, however opaque the state structure might be in practice; (b) the degree of external financial aid promised to reconstruct Bosnia; and (c) the commitment in the agreement actively to facilitate the return of refugees to their homes. Holbrooke, despite the rough tactics he sometimes employed to coax the Bosniaks into accepting a plan much of which had been drafted in advance by US State Department lawyers, seemed genuinely committed to undoing the effects of war as far as this was possible. He had been the administration member most committed to resolute action to end a war mainly directed against civilians, and many of the Bosniaks saw him as being in a different league from previous negotiators: Carrington, Owen and Stoltenberg.14

The Bosniaks had also been induced to swallow their reservations about the DPA by an informal promise from Holbrooke that large amounts of military equipment, including heavy weapons, would be supplied to the government army the ARBiH. A US ‘train and equip’ programme ensued which eliminated the military disparity between the ARBiH and the Croatian and Serbian military formations (Burg and Shoup 1999:366). Indeed, an unnamed NATO source alleged in 1996 that the Sarajevo authorities were importing additional heavy weapons with the help of Turkish and Malaysian troops participating in the NATO-led force (Burg and Shoup 1999:380).

Bosnia was divided on an almost fifty-fifty basis at Dayton, but human and material resources were not shared on an equal basis. Most educated people were found in the Federation, with the Serbian entity having only one urban district, Banja Luka. The Federation enjoyed a clear economic advantage: it had the bulk of energy supplies, most mines and thermo-electric power stations being located on its territory. Forestry and wood-processing industries were dominated by the Federation, but the Republic of Srpska possessed most of the cultivated areas in Bosnia. With a much higher population, the Federation needed to import a lot of its food to feed urban dwellers. Sarajevo had contained 11 per cent of Bosnia’s population before the war and its population had swelled during its course. Thirty per cent of prewar economic activity was located in Bosnia’s capital, where pharmaceuticals, textiles, cars and other industrial goods were produced (Metiljević 1995:30–1). But this counted for little in 1995, with industrial production at between 5 and 10 per cent of prewar levels (Cousens and Carter 2001:25).

Even if war damage could be overcome, it was pointless to revive prewar industries since so many of them were dependent on spare parts made elsewhere in Bosnia and
indeed ex-Yugoslavia. No Bosnian market existed anymore to absorb prewar types of economic production. Of its 4.3 million inhabitants (1991 figure), 1.2 million were refugees in host countries and another 1 million were internally displaced persons, not to mention the 250,000 estimated dead and missing, and the 200,000 wounded (Cousens and Carter 2001:25). Bosnia was a demolished society. The Bosnian Muslims had been almost completely driven out of eastern Bosnia, where once they had formed a compact majority. The Serbs had lost considerable ground in formerly majority Serb parts of western Bosnia. The Croats had seen a disastrous fall in their numbers in central Bosnia. Every major Bosnian city found itself devoid of a large part of its pre-war population (half in the case of Banja Luka) or facing the prospect of partition (Mostar). Despite provisions in the DPA for freedom of movement across the entities and refugee returns, new internal borders continued to keep dispossessed citizens trapped in ghettos (Magaš 1995). It soon became clear that IFOR and its successor would interpret its mission as one of patrolling these borders instead of helping to remove the barriers, thus preventing people from traversing them and returning to their former homes.

IFOR’s cautious interpretation of its mandate was deplored but was hardly surprising given that ethnicity was the basis for political representation and decision-making in postwar Bosnia (Burg and Shoup 1999:370). Appointments to government bodies as well as internationally supervised bodies such as the Federation’s Constitutional Court and Human Rights Court were made on an ethnic basis. Ethnic rights would take precedence over individual human rights. Thus an individual seeking redress would be encouraged to go to an ethnic representative (Kumar 1997:97). No mechanisms were put in place to assist people who wished to choose a non-ethnic or mixed ethnic identity (Woodward 1999:143).

Mazowiecki, the UN Human Rights commissioner in ex-Yugoslavia from 1992 to 1995, stated the eve of Dayton that it was crucial for provision to be made for the development and recovery of civil society when deciding reconstruction priorities (Mazowiecki 1995:54). But groups capable of transcending the barriers imposed by war were completely overlooked at Dayton. The failure to include individuals and groups who comprised a ‘peace constituency’ was mainly, but not entirely, the fault of the agreement’s US architects (Lederach 1997:94). Izetbegović and his colleagues failed to include in their delegation representatives of regions likely to be traded away, or anyone from Tuzla, which had been successfully self-governed through the war (Gutman 1995:7).

Had the architects of Dayton invited to the talks individuals and groups unambiguously committed to multi-ethnicity and democracy, it would have done no harm to the latter’s chances in the upcoming elections (Udovicki 1997:302). This was not the only missed opportunity to empower those really committed to making a compromise peace work. There was no provision in the DPA for an electoral law requiring candidates to court votes from all communities in order to win elections. Also overlooked was the establishment of a television station aiming to set ‘standards of fairness and decency’ and provide a platform for ideas and initiatives that had something to say to all groups (Doder 1999:185). Nor was any guarantee offered to try to restore the common education system that had existed before the war. Eventually, attempts were made by the Office of High Representative to rectify some of these glaring omissions. But the damage had already been done by creating a hyper-decentralised state with multiple tiers of decision-making
that rivalled Yugoslavia (after the 1974 Constitution) in its complexity. Elections held nine months after the DPA would enable rival nationalists to acquire formal legitimacy and frustrate the efforts of the UN administration to give teeth to those annexes of the agreement designed to undo some of the human misery caused by the war. The blunder of holding elections when emotions were still raw and a desire for vengeance was widespread was arguably eclipsed by one other critical oversight. That was the unwillingness to ensure proper coordination between those international agencies given the task of implementing the civilian and military provisions of the DPA. The cautious way the US military interpreted its mandate, particularly its unwillingness to protect minority residents or refugees seeking to return to their homes, emboldened the ethnic hardliners.

The DPA has been described as ‘a brilliantly negotiated agreement to support a dubious objective: the creation of a nation where no sense of national community existed’ (Boyd 1998:43). Albert Wohlstetter, an American defender of a multi-ethnic Bosnia, was reminded of George Orwell’s quote about ‘political language designed to make lies sound truthful’. The New Republic called it ‘a lawyer’s agreement of partition’ which ‘did not condemn the consequences of ethnic cleansing. It codified them.’ Bosnia was ‘a unitary state’ with at least two entities that enjoyed effective sovereignty. Milošević and Tudjman, ‘the predators who plotted the division of Bosnia’, were its chief local guarantors (Doder 1999:187). The USA, its main external guarantor, planned to withdraw all its troops by December 1996.

Before problems with implementation even became evident, Dayton appeared a fundamentally unstable peace, allowing rivals to pursue incompatible aims by political means while preparing for the resumption of conflict (Burg and Shoup 1999:318). ‘The most expensive ceasefire in history’ was how one former UN insider saw it (Williams 1996:6). ‘Psychologically and practically all sides are preparing for war’, an experienced journalist wrote after the DPA was fifteen months in existence. The agreement depended on the presence of a large international force and on ensuring that the military strength of the parties remained in approximate balance (Burg and Shoup 1999:318). In June 1996 Tudjman told NATO’s Secretary-General, Javier Solana, that he had not budged from the view that Bosnia was bound to be divided between Serbs and Croats. Izetbegović’s SDA, for its part, was orchestrating the return of refugees to strategically located places in the Republic of Srpska, which, to one observer, was the continuation of war for territory by other means (Woodward 1999:145).

Much work needed to be carried out in order for the momentum established during the last four months of 1995 to be maintained. In early 1996, a variety of countries pledged $1.8 billion to rebuild Bosnia as part of a five-year recovery programme costing $5.1 billion (Ramet 1999:280). Much of the funding was coming from EU states, but European Finance Ministers had not been invited to Dayton or consulted afterwards by the Americans about how this would be done (Woodward 1996b:15). Holbrooke himself admitted that there was scant recognition from Washington that Western Europe was footing much of the bill for Dayton (Holbrooke 1998:362).

IFOR was due to oversee the implementation of the military annexes of the DPA in less than three months. Rival forces were due to be pulled back to either side of the inter-entity boundary lines. Various obligations concerning cessation of hostilities had been met. Meeting them proved relatively straightforward. The same could not be said about
carrying out the civilian requirements concerning the security and well-being of civilians within the entities (Cousens and Carter 2001:39). These were distributed among different ‘lead agencies’: the UNHCR handled the return of refugees and displaced people; the International Police Task Force (IPTF), meant to rebuild Bosnia’s police, was given to the UN peace-keeping operation—not perhaps a decision calculated to inspire local confidence that hoodlums and murderers in uniform would be speedily got rid off; the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe had multiple responsibilities: it supervised the forthcoming elections and shaped the vital human rights portfolio with three other agencies. Finally, the World Bank was given the task of dealing with postwar reconstruction.

Much assistance was needed from the commanders of the 60,000-strong IFOR if efforts to frustrate the implementation of civilian aspects of the DPA were to be foiled. Article 6.3 of the DPA clearly stated that IFOR has the right

\begin{quote}
\textit{to help create secure conditions for the conduct by others of other tasks associated with the peace settlement to assist the UNHCR and other international organizations in their humanitarian missions...to observe and prevent interference with the movement of civilian populations, refugees and DPs, and to respond appropriately to deliberate violence to life and person.}
\end{quote}

\textit{(Is Dayton Failing? 1999:24)}

But by July 1996, a veteran US analyst of the Yugoslav lands had seen enough to convince him that IFOR had ‘interpreted its mandate in a narrow, literal sense to the point that it has been unwilling to enforce cardinal principles of the Dayton package’ (Moore 1996:6). Richard Holbrooke, who had left public service in February 1996 to work on Wall Street, should have expected this. Before the Dayton talks, the Pentagon had been bent on minimising the US military’s involvement. This placed it at odds with the State Department, which knew that, as the lead nation then contributing one-third of IFOR’s force, the USA had to be seen as unafraid of taking risks when diplomatic efforts proved unavailing against hardliners (Daalder 2000:144). But the Pentagon wanted little or no role in the civilian implementation of the DPA. With undisguised frustration, Holbrooke, in his memoirs, described the blocking tactics of the Pentagon. Not only did it reject police functions for IFOR, but it was unwilling to give the IPTF a strong enforcement mandate. More seriously, it refused to accept any obligation to arrest indicted war criminals (Holbrooke 1998:221). Perhaps more fateful for Bosnia than the Dayton negotiations were the equally tough negotiations between the State Department and the Pentagon. On the eve of the summit, citing the long list of Pentagon objections, Holbrooke writes that ‘we contested every one...winning some, losing many others. The implementation of Dayton...was determined in those meetings, with decidedly mixed results’ (Holbrooke 1998:221).

Most IFOR commanders were determined to avoid ‘mission creep’—‘extending their activities beyond the strictly military aspects of Dayton’ (Sharp 1997:38). They, and not a few of their UNPROFOR predecessors, appeared to be strongly affected by ‘Mogadishu syndrome’, a term first coined after the deaths of twenty-five US soldiers in 1993, when the UN famine relief mission to Somalia went badly wrong. At its most pervasive, it
meant that avoiding casualties became the top priority of US-led peace-keeping missions. A frustrated Holbrooke wrote in his memoirs that far more civilians—diplomats and aid workers—lost their lives in Bosnia than military men. (They included Robert Frasure, Holbrooke’s right-hand-man in his Yugoslav mission and US ambassador to the Contact Group, who was killed on 19 August 1995, when the military vehicle in which he was approaching Sarajevo fell down a mountain side (Holbrooke 1998:353). Pentagon bureaucrats knew that Clinton shared their concern for avoiding casualties, at least for domestic reasons. To get Dayton passed by a Congress that was now in Republican hands, he needed to show that it had the military’s agreement (Daalder 2000:155).

Washington opposed a French suggestion for some kind of political control over IFOR (Daalder 2000:155). The High Representative, responsible for the civilian aspects of Dayton, was ‘not fully answerable to anybody of uncontested international authority and operates in an uncomfortable and unconvincing limbo’ (Neville-Jones 1996–7:51–2). Initially, there was no intention of introducing a strong figure as High Representative. Carl Bildt, a former Swedish Prime Minister, the first High Representative, was slow to take up his responsibilities, and he departed early in 1997.21

The decisive international figure in early post-Dayton Bosnia was Admiral Leighton (‘Snuffy’) Smith, IFOR’s commander. Holbrooke was in no doubt that he was ‘the wrong man’ for the assignment (Holbrooke 1998:328). He made his first extensive statement to the Bosnian people during a phone-in programme on the TV station run from Pale, Karadžić’s power-base, during which he insisted: ‘I do not have the authority to arrest anybody’ (Holbrooke 1998:328).

At a meeting with Holbrooke on 18 January 1996, both Smith and his British deputy, General Michael Walker, ‘made it clear that they intended to take a minimalist approach to all aspects of implementation other than force protection’ (Holbrooke 1998:328). Admittedly, they showed some enthusiasm for enforcing that part of Annex 2 of the DPA concerning the presence of Islamic fighters. On 15 February 1996, a day after the US Secretary of State had visited Sarajevo, IFOR raided a training camp north-west of the city where it was believed Bosniak police and intelligence staff had received training in espionage and terrorist skills in the previous eight months. General Walker handed three Iranian instructors over to the authorities with the written demand for legal proceedings to be started against them (Latin 2002). On 26 June, the White House declared that the Sarajevo authorities had ended its ‘military and intelligence’ relationship with Iran, which opened the way for the US to begin training and equipping Federation forces.22

The implications of IFOR’s minimalist approach to key aspects of the Dayton Agreement soon became clear. On 19 March, the Federation was due to take over three formerly Serb-held suburbs of Sarajevo. Living there were Serbs who had moved from the countryside and ‘tens of thousands of Serb Sarajevo families [who] had lived in peace for generations in this once cosmopolitan city’ (Holbrooke 1998:336). Holbrooke quoted Kris Janowski, spokesman for the UNHCR, who estimated that 30,000 of the 70,000 Serbs wished to stay (Holbrooke 1998:336). But Karadžić’s regime in Pale ordered all Serb residents in Sarajevo to burn down their apartments in advance and leave the city Detailed instructions on how to set fires were broadcast. Thugs from Pale arrived ready to mete out punishment to those who refused (Holbrooke 1998:335–6).

Karadžić was determined to enforce ethnic separation, and it was a disaster for the credibility of the DPA that he was able to do it with such impunity. After 12 March,
Muslim gangs replaced Serb ones, looting and threatening 3,000 mainly elderly Serbs who remained (Kumar 1997:111). Izetbegović had earlier said that, whereas women and children in the Serb areas of Sarajevo were safe, he did not extend the same guarantees to men. High Representative Bildt was joined by Silajdžić (who had resigned in January as Prime Minister after mounting disagreements with the SDA) in believing that partition was now being pushed by elements in the SDA, but not to the same extent as in the HDZ and SDS (Kumar 1997:114).

One of IFOR’s spokesmen said that the Serbs ‘have the right to burn their own houses’ (Holbrooke 1998:337). Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Robert Gelbard (who would soon be appointed to coordinate the faltering implementation effort) was on a visit to Sarajevo; he watched ‘in disgust’ as IFOR and the IPTF ‘refused to apprehend the marauding arsonists and IFOR kept its own firefighting equipment inside the IFOR compound’ (Holbrooke 1998:336). He observed General Walker, IFOR’s number two, rejecting the pleas of Deputy High Representative Michael Steiner for IFOR intervention (Holbrooke 1998:336). Holbrooke found Leighton Smith unmoved that ‘IFOR’s passivity was endangering fundamental policy goals of the United States and NATO’ (Holbrooke 1998:337).

IFOR did intervene to allow departing Serbs to make use of its vehicles to move their families, possessions and the remains of their dead. It intervened to enforce ethnic separation rather than to guarantee the right of people to remain in their own homes in safety. It was an unmistakable message to the Bosnian Serb leadership that they need fear no frontal assault on their power structure, or indeed the values underpinning it. One of the most humiliating defeats for the Western democratic camp had occurred in Bosnia with UNPROFOR gone and a force with a supposed peace-enforcement mandate in its place. IFOR had the same self-protective stance as UNPROFOR (Kumar 1997:111). This time it was not West Europeans but men at the highest levels of US decision-making who were to blame for abandoning core humanitarian values in Bosnia. US Vice-President Al Gore was prepared to say to the defence representatives in the cabinet room that the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Pentagon were undermining the Clinton administration’s policies on Bosnia (Holbrooke 1998:316). But this policy had been uniquely Holbrooke’s, and several times he would need to put aside the writing of his memoirs and his life as a Wall Street businessman and return to breathe life into it.

At the end of 1995, it would not have been unreasonable for Karadžić to assume that a NATO force with a stronger mandate than the UN one would shortly sweep him into prison. The writing must have appeared to be on the wall when, on 18 December, the Republic of Srpska parliament elected Rajko Kasagić as premier. He was a relatively moderate figure willing to cooperate with both the international community and Milošević over Dayton.

Karadžić would have been well aware that the DPA required all its signatories to remove indicted war criminals from public life and cooperate fully with the UN Hague Tribunal (UNTFY). By early 1996, NATO commanders had been given records of all fifty-two men so far indicted by the UNTFY (Kumar 1997:111). But in what Holbrooke described as ‘an unfortunate signal of reassurance to Karadžić’, Leighton Smith made it clear that his restrictive interpretation of his mandate did not extend to the pursuit of indicted war criminals (Holbrooke 1998:329). He claimed not to have the authority to arrest anybody, and that the countries providing him with forces were not prepared to risk
the casualties likely to be incurred in pursuing Karad ić.\textsuperscript{26} Not surprisingly, Karad ić was seen more often in public after the disposition of IFOR towards him was made clear. On one occasion, while on a trip from Pale to Banja Luka, he drove unchallenged through four NATO checkpoints, two manned by Americans. On 21 May, Richard Goldstone, the South African judge who then headed the UNTFY, publicly voiced his anger about the failure to arrest both Karad ić and Mladić (Kumar 1997:118). A week earlier, at the behest of Karad ić, the moderate Bosnian Serb premier, Kosagić, had been ousted and replaced by a hardliner. Evidently, individuals ready to cooperate with the international community were not going to prosper, and might even risk far worse than political demotion if indicted war criminals enjoyed virtual impunity from IFOR.

On 31 October 1995, Holbrooke had told the US administration, with Clinton in attendance, that if Karad ić and Mladić ‘are not captured, no peace agreement we create at Dayton can ultimately succeed’ (Holbrooke 1998:226). In early June 1996, he wrote to the President reiterating this view. Clinton was told that ‘Karad ić uses television and the controlled media to prevent local reconciliation efforts. IFOR has the ability and the authority to cut these lines but has refused to do so. Those communication lines should be cut now’ (Holbrooke 1998:340). It would take many months before any such action would be taken. Paul Wolfowitz, a defence analyst who served in each of the Republican administrations in office from 1981 to the present, has argued that Holbrooke got little support from his own President when it came to overriding opponents to Dayton from within US policy-making circles.\textsuperscript{27} Clinton would have been keen to avoid any risk of US casualties in Bosnia in an election year when he was bidding for a second term, a position exponents of a standstill approach to Dayton such as Leighton Smith were bound to exploit.

On 12 July 1996, Holbrooke was asked to return to Bosnia to breathe life into a faltering peace process. He concentrated his efforts on Milošević. In May, US and European officials had tried, without success, to persuade him to move against Karad ić.\textsuperscript{28} The best Milošević was prepared to offer was to use his influence with the Greek authorities to allow Karad ić and Mladić to be given sanctuary on Mount Athos, the Orthodox monastery community that was out of reach of the UNTFY.\textsuperscript{29} In a June 1996 interview, Milošević even refused to view the UNTFY as ‘legitimate’, then tried to spike the interview (Markotich 1996:36). He had little interest in seeing Karad ić and Mladić testifying at The Hague, fearing they might incriminate him. After ‘inconclusive’ talks with Milošević, the best Holbrooke could achieve was a decision announced on 19 July 1996 that Karad ić had ‘immediately and permanently’ withdrawn from all political activities, including public appearances and interviews.\textsuperscript{30} But Holbrooke conceded that, having stood down as Republic of Srpska President and SDS party leader, Karad ić might still exercise considerable influence from behind the scenes.

The true disposition of Western governments towards the UNTFY’s main suspects was perhaps shown by the comment of German Foreign Minister Kinkel, who said on 19 July 1996, that the arrest of Karad ić and Mladić ‘by force would have other repercussions and we have had enough of violence’.\textsuperscript{31} Until he went into hiding in September 1997, Karad ić continued to live openly at his home in Pale, accompanied by bodyguards, and he even registered to vote in the 1996 elections.\textsuperscript{32} He and his Republic of Srpska supporters had begun to resist on every non-military clause of the DPA once it was clear that they faced little threat from IFOR. For the next two years, determined
efforts were made to consolidate the sovereignty of the Republic of Srpska. The return of refugees was blocked. No cooperation with the UNTFY occurred. The formation of a central bank and a common currency was impeded. Momčilo Krajišnik even refused to attend his own inauguration as Co-President of Bosnia on 30 September 1996. The strongest response the High Representative could make was to cut off external assistance to the Republic of Srpska; by the end of 1997, the Federation had received 98.3 per cent and the Republic a mere 1.7 per cent (Woodward 1999:151–2). Unemployment stood at 90 per cent in Serb-controlled Bosnia, but the politically powerful avoided hardships thanks to their deep involvement in the illicit economy based on smuggling of various commodities such as fuel, cigarettes and arms. The hardliners’ goals were ideological, not developmental. They appeared to enjoy considerable support from a local population traumatised by war and convinced by nationalist media outlets that the international community was completely on the side of their Muslim opponents.

On 12 June 1996, Clinton had said that he expected IFOR to complete its mission in Bosnia by the end of the year. A month later, France’s President Chirac told him that NATO would be needed in Bosnia for at least twenty years (Mihalka 1996:45). The pull-out date was then postponed until June 1998. Aware that a US withdrawal, leaving in place the forces NATO had intervened to check in 1995, would cast a pall over his presidential record, Clinton announced on 18 December 1997 that a US-led international armed presence would still be necessary after the expiry of the mandate of what was now called the Stabilisation Force (SFOR). Indeed, a few days later he went to Bosnia with his defeated presidential opponent, Robert Dole, to announce that the US intended to stay on. By now, with an election out of the way, and as a result of changes in the administration, there was a greater will to implement the provisions of the Dayton Accord. But an abdication of leadership by the Clinton administration in 1996 had ensured that the Dayton experiment had got off to a disastrous start. The effects of this lack of will to carry out the key provisions of the DPA were being felt as its fifth anniversary approached. In May 2000, the Peace Implementation Council, which advised the High Representative on policy direction, concluded that ‘narrow nationalistic and sectarian political interests had impeded everything from refugee return to economic reform and the functioning of governing institutions’ (After Milošević 2001:135).

NATO and EU policy towards the rest of the ex-communist Balkans, 1992–6

Following the Dayton treaty, there was growing interest in the stability of the former communist states bordering ex-Yugoslavia, especially among US officials. The need to isolate nationalist hardliners in Bosnia, and promote moderate forces capable of arranging compromises across the various ethnic divides, was at the centre of the strategy identified with Richard Holbrooke, former US Assistant Secretary of State. The architect of the Dayton Accord realised that the success or failure of the initiative depended, in part, on efforts to delegitimise conflictual nationalism in South-East Europe. It is perhaps no coincidence that the criticism made by the US ambassador in Romania on 22 February 1996 about the presence of ultra-nationalists in the Romanian government came not long
after a visit to Bucharest by Holbrooke to discuss with Romanian officials the aims
behind his Bosnia peace plan.36

Successive US Presidents had politely rebuffed requests from former Soviet satellites
to apply to join NATO for fear it would jeopardise the position of Russian moderates
during the troubled presidency of Boris Yeltsin (1991–9). Albania had been the first post-
1989 Balkan state to make a formal application to join, as early as December 1992 (Stan
2000:153). But signs of a rethink on NATO enlargement emerged towards the end of
‘NATO: Out of Area or Out of Business’. In which, he said: ‘the common denominator
of all the new security problems in Europe is that today they all lie beyond NATO’s
current borders’. Luger argued that the Balkan region ‘is the strategic heart of the
world… If NATO doesn’t deal with it, the alliance will become irrelevant’ (Kober
1995:6). Different groups of US policy-makers supported enlargement for different
reasons. James G.Goldgeier has written:

The ‘Wilsonians’, such as Strobe Talbot, US deputy Secretary of State
and National Security Adviser Anthony Lake hoped that NATO
enlargement would help encourage the adoption of market democracy and
respect for human rights in Central and Eastern Europe, while ‘the
hedgers’,; including the Senate Foreign Relations Chair Jesse Helms and
prominent former officials Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski,
emphasised expanding the Alliance to protect against the possible
resurgence of Russia in the region.

(Goldgeier 2002)

On 27 January 1994, the Senate adopted by a vote of ninety-four to ninety-three an
amendment urging ‘prompt admission to NATO’ of countries qualifying for membership,
with no mention of international political considerations. In the same month, NATO
launched a ‘Partnership for Peace’ (PfP) programme open to all former communist states.
It opened the possibility of future NATO membership without allowing any real
participation in NATO’s current decision-making (Seidelmann 2001:130–1). At least it
was a tentative sign of the willingness of the Atlantic democracies to incorporate the
Balkan states in post-Cold War security structures.

Romania was the first former satellite to apply to join the PfP. Iliiescu increasingly
hoped that Romania could join Western institutions while shaping its own particular
approach to democracy and the free market (Gallagher 2001:393). Earlier, it had
appeared that it was ready to place a side-bet on the survival of neo-communist influence
in the region. A treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union in April 1991 gave the latter an
effective right of veto over any Romanian alliance with a Western country. If it had not
been abrogated by the collapse of the Soviet Union six months later, it might have placed
Romania more firmly in the Soviet sphere of influence than it had been before 1989
(Gallagher 2001:392). Romania had also retained close ties with Serbia despite that
country having become an international pariah for its role in the 1991–5 wars in several
of its neighbouring ex-Yugoslav republics. The decision to breach the inter national
embargo and allow large shipments of oil to be shipped clandestinely to Serbia was made
by Iliiescu himself, according to his former security chief.37 Iliiescu’s closeness to the
Serbian leadership would later be displayed when he and his party sharply condemned NATO’s intervention in Kosovo in 1999.

Bulgaria was not in a strong position to benefit from increasing NATO interest in its region. The year 1994 witnessed the return to office of the leftist BSP. It was disinclined to jeopardise remaining economic ties with Russia, and the Videnov government bought Russian tanks and aircraft in 1995 (Bell 1998:308). The Bulgarian military had not established practical links with NATO (in contrast to its Romanian counterpart), nor had it been active in international peace-keeping operations. From 1997, the IMF was discouraging the reformers now in office from increasing the size of the defence budget (Simon 1998:4).

Despite the deepening crisis of governance it faced in the mid-1990s, Bulgaria had successfully overcome many of its problems with the Turkish minority. The Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), which championed its interests, had surmounted legal obstacles and was allowed to take part in the 1990 elections; by 1991, it was in coalition with the UDF. Thus Bulgaria appeared to comply with NATO’s expectations that minorities be permitted to play a mainstream role in national affairs and not be subject to harassment.

In Romania, it was far harder to overcome external misgivings about the position of the 1.6-million-strong Hungarian minority. Riots in the Transylvanian town of Tîrgu Mureș in March 1990, widely felt to be orchestrated by members of the secret service, had shown the Hungarians still to be in a vulnerable position after enduring harsh treatment under Ceaușescu. The state’s perceived anti-minority stance held up Romania’s admission to the Council of Europe, widely seen as a gateway to wider European integration. Romania was finally admitted to the Strasbourg-based assembly in October 1993, a year after Bulgaria. But the Council insisted on monitoring, on a regular basis, Romania’s human rights record for the next four years. There was also concern about the presence of ultra-nationalist parties in the Romanian government. On 13 July 1995, the European Parliament adopted a resolution in which it expressed concern about ‘a further deterioration of the situation of minorities in Romania’, this move occasioned by a new law on education felt to discriminate against Hungarians.

Following President Yeltsin’s defeat of a strong communist challenge in the July 1996 Russian elections, the way was clear for NATO openly to contemplate eastern enlargement. Clinton recommended that the alliance formally admit its newest members on the occasion of NATO’s fiftieth anniversary celebrations in 1999 (Goldgeier 2002). As it became clear that NATO was prepared to envisage ex-communist Balkan states inside a common European security umbrella, provided they met stiff military and civil conditions, Romania began to respond to the new opportunities. Chauvinists in the government lost ground. More importantly, a bilateral treaty regularising ties with Hungary was signed on 14 September 1996. Hitherto, these had been two unfriendly neighbours who seemed quite capable of importing their differences to NATO in the way Greece and Turkey had done, undermining its cohesion. William Perry, the US Defence Secretary, had even publicly observed in 1995 that at one time he was concerned about the possibility of armed conflict between them (Gallagher 1997:85).

But Romania had simply too much catching up to do for it to stand any chance of being admitted to NATO when the first round of enlargement got under way in 1997, and no other Balkan states were in contention. By the time of the 1993 Copenhagen summit
of the EC, when agreement was reached on allowing fast-track entry from East European applicants able to fulfil the political and economic conditions, it was clear that Romania and Bulgaria would not be among their number.

European Union states had been content to fall in behind the USA as it built up its security interests in the Balkans. Two EU initiatives showed how ill-prepared it was to engage purposefully with the region. The first was the Royaumont Declaration on Stability and Neighbourly Relations in South East Europe, launched on 18 December 1995 in the wake of Dayton, largely at the instigation of France (Lopandić 2000:71). By 1998, it had only eighteen projects under consideration, most of them concerned with strengthening the independent media. A coordinator was only appointed in 1999, and a modest sum of funding for these and other projects was released by the EU bureaucracy only afterwards. A Pro-EU integration voice in Serbia remarked that the Royaumont saga ‘illustrated the low level of European institutions when dealing with the situation in South East Europe’ (Pantić 2000:99).

Humiliation in Mostar

The consequences of a second, much higher, profile EU initiative in the region were far more serious.

In July 1994 the EU accepted a UN mandate to try to reintegrate the Bosnian city of Mostar. Until the February 1994 cease-fire ending the Croatian-Muslim conflict in Bosnia, Croatian extremists, backed by the Tudjman government in Zagreb, had been seeking to expel the city’s Muslim inhabitants. They were now crammed into the east side of the city where they had previously endured months of siege conditions. The EU accepted the task because it was the only organisation prepared to invest heavily in the reconstruction of the city. In the next two years, member states provided $180 million towards this end (Mihalka 1996:45). But the biggest challenge was to restore the mixed character of the city. This meant defying ‘the entrenched group of paramilitaries, arms dealers, and money launderers’ most linked, in one way or another, to Tudjman and the HVO (Kumar 1997:86). They were happy to divert much of the EU money into their own pockets while forging ahead with making Mostar the capital of their para-state prior to its absorption by Croatia. Hans Koschnick, a 65-year-old former mayor of the German city of Bremen, agreed to head the EU administration in Mostar during its two-year mandate. From the outset, he failed to receive the EU backing needed for the phased reintegration of the city. Brussels had promised to supply 200 police officers in order to show effectiveness in the critical areas of policing and security, but months later only ten had arrived. An exasperated Koschnick complained to a British journalist in 1994:

EU bureaucracy is a wonderful thing… They’re still discussing what colour the cars will be and what symbols to put on the uniforms. But don’t ask me why it’s not secure here. Ask your government why they don’t send the police they promised.38

In November 1995, Koschnick openly declared that EU support for his mandate had been inadequate, and he asked the EU to clarify the aims and authority of the administration he
headed (Behram 1995:38). His powerlessness had been shown after a paramilitary leader had shot his Uzi sub-machinegun outside the Hotel Aero where many EU officials stayed. He was briefly arrested by the international police (by now sixty strong), but the local Croat authorities demanded and got his release, and ensured he kept his weapon (Kumar 1997:86–7).

Koschnick told EU Foreign Ministers that the reintegration of the city had been blocked thanks to the power enjoyed by hardliners. A person from Mostar could more easily travel to any European destination than to other parts of his or her own city (Behram 1995:39). By now, Mostar was becoming known as ‘the car theft capital of the world’, with police officers from EU countries apparently powerless to prevent thousands of luxury cars, stolen in Western Europe, ending up there (Kumar 1997:116). Evidence from Mostar seemed to provide powerful vindication for the claim by the French writer, Alain Minc, that the most important new economic class to emerge from the Cold War was a ruthless, amoral mafia (Kaplan 1997:242).

Instead of being strengthened by the Dayton Agreement, Koschnick’s peace-building role was fatally undermined as soon as it became clear how little international resolve there was to confront ethnic hardliners in Mostar. This was shown after Koschnick published plans for the creation of seven city districts: three Croat, three Muslim and one neutral. Enraged that the city centre ‘neutral zone’ might slip from their grasp, Croat extremists stormed the Hotel Aero on 7 February 1996, besieging Koschnick in his car for over an hour.³⁹ Croat police stood by, and the international force was powerless to act since their mandate prevented them from arresting anyone.

A summit in Rome on 16–18 February, to try to revive the Dayton Accord, with Mostar high on the agenda, actually agreed to Tudjman’s request that Mostar’s integration plan be renegotiated.⁴⁰ The EU was thus prepared to engage in trade-offs with the political figure who had orchestrated the attacks on its own offices in Mostar. For Koschnick this was the last straw. He resigned on 8 March, saying ‘they should find someone else to appease the Croats’.⁴¹ He was particularly bitter about the desertion of his own government. The German Foreign Minister Kinkel was conspicuous in declining to offer him support, and proved to be the EU figure most willing to renegotiate the plan Koschnick had painstakingly drawn up.⁴²

In March 1996, Koschnick was succeeded as EU administrator by Ricardo Perez Casado, who said he did not know very much about issues in Bosnia.⁴³ Casado had to prepare for municipal elections within a three-month period, but he was criticised for repeatedly absenting himself from Mostar at crucial times.⁴⁴

Elections were held on 30 June. Three thousand IFOR troops and hundreds of local and international police were required to ensure freedom of movement.⁴⁵ A very narrow victory was obtained by the mainly Muslim ‘United Mostar’ list, which meant that a technically united city council would have a Muslim mayor. Tudjman’s HDZ claimed electoral irregularities and refused to recognise the new body. It took a phone call from Clinton to the Croatian President on 2 August for him to back down (Kumar 1997:127). For a second time he agreed to dissolve the institutions of Herceg-Bosna, something supposedly decided at Dayton.

A third EU envoy took over in August. Britain’s Sir Martin Garrod described the Croatian mafia, who were the real masters of Mostar, as ‘scum’ who ruled by terror and must be ‘cleared out’.³⁶ But the EU’s mandate expired in December 1996 when it was
replaced by the OSCE. It in turn retreated before a defiant HDZ, which, according to a German police captain working for the EU in Mostar, ‘is the mafia’ there. The OSCE’s impotence was shown on 10 February 1997 when a group of Muslims tried to visit a cemetery in west Mostar on the holiday of Bajram. Croatian police and HDZ militia fired on them and beat many with iron bars, leaving one dead and many injured. International police took pictures of police shooting women in the back, but failed to intervene (Udovicki 1997:286). Later, Croatian police held up Muslims and confiscated their identity papers in full view of heavily armed Spanish troops from the 2,000-strong SFOR, who looked on from an armoured car.

Narrow interpretation of a mandate that required them to be peace-builders made a mockery of the EU and OSCE’s supposedly new pro-active role in Bosnia. It recalled the worst moments of UNPROFOR in pre-Dayton Bosnia and greatly emboldened Croats whose political and criminal activities it was often impossible to tell apart.

Albanian crisis catches Europe unawares

Western complacency in the face of rampant gangsterism in Albania would help detonate a full-blown crisis in 1997 requiring international intervention.

During the last months of 1996, Italian police confiscated about 3,000 kilos of marijuana from Albanians trying to ship it across to Italy in high-speed launches. Widespread lawlessness and the prevalence of tight-knit families, especially in the social structure of rural Albania, were appropriate conditions for the emergence of an Albanian mafia smuggling illegal commodities and people westwards. By the spring of 1997, the Albanian mafia was such a power in its own right that it had chased the Italian mafia, once its ‘big brother’, right out of the lucrative business of trafficking migrants. But there had been considerable Western complacency about the precarious condition of Albania. The embassy of one major foreign power in Tirana filed only two or three political reports on Albania in the six months before a full-blown crisis erupted in early 1997, concentrating instead on developing commercial opportunities. According to a senior official in the country’s foreign ministry, ‘I have learned as much about Albania from the media as I have from my own embassy’.

For nearly all of the previous four years, Western governments had displayed a united front by backing the rule of President Sali Berisha, despite its increasingly arbitrary character. A fitful stability had descended on Albania after this leading physician had deserted the communist camp and swept to power in 1992 at the head of the Democratic Party. By now with war threatening to spread from Bosnia southwards to the rest of ex-Yugoslavia, Albania was seen as vital for the maintenance of peace in the southern Balkans. The likelihood of full-scale conflict enveloping Macedonia, with its large Albanian minority, or Kosovo, where the Albanian majority was kept down by Serbian might, appeared high. Berisha kept his Western sponsors happy by not reviving Albanian irredentism; relations with Greece were occasionally stormy over the political and religious rights of the small Greek minority in the south of the country but this never appeared likely to give rise to a wider conflict. Tirana’s meddling in the tinderbox of Kosovo could well have provoked such a conflict but Berisha (despite harbouring strong nationalist feelings) preferred to consolidate his authority at home.
During Berisha’s years at the top, Western Europe and the USA fell into ‘the trap of supporting one interest group and tolerating violations of basic democratic principles’ (Schmidt 1997:65). A crackdown on the independent media and the jailing of opposition leaders elicited few negative reactions and, in 1994, Albania was invited to join the Council of Europe, membership of which was usually seen as conferring a democratic clean bill of health. State property was arbitrarily privatised in order to benefit supporters. It was even reported that artefacts from state museums in Albania were removed by Albanian officials and showered on Berisha’s hosts during a 1994 official visit to Britain.

Albania appeared to show promising signs of recovery at this time. On paper, it enjoyed some of Eastern Europe’s most impressive growth rates. But most of the revenue derived from criminal activities or artificial sources such as foreign aid and remittances sent home by Albanian workers. There was still little in the way of a legitimate, productive economy. Ministers and top officials benefited hugely from their ability to divert part of the proceedings from money laundering, drug trafficking and the breaking of the Yugoslav oil embargo into their own pockets. Upon being asked in 1993 why he was able to afford an Armani suit on a $100-a-month salary, one leading minister replied: ‘I believe someone in my position is entitled to such suits’ (Nazi 1998:61).

Britain was the Western power most ready to buttress Sali Berisha. His main sponsor until his death in 1996 was Julian Amery, a veteran Conservative MP known for his hawkish anti-communist views. Amery had been an intelligence officer with a British military mission to Albania in 1944 led by Colonel David Smiley. Both men had returned to the country in 1991 and became promoters of Berisha’s cause. They were old men whose wartime mission to keep Albania in the British sphere of influence had been foiled by Hoxha and who were now determined to prevent his heirs hi-jacking the new democratic Albania. A critic of their impetuous behaviour, Sir Reginald Hibbert, a former UK ambassador to France, who himself was sent to Albania late in the war, wrote in 1997 that ‘Albania is still in the shadow of the bitter events of 1944 and influences from the UK have helped keep it there’.

The British diplomatic mission in Albania proceeded to shun the opposition and intelligentsia, looking for commercial opportunities that British firms could exploit. But this strategy yielded few rewards since foreign investors usually found themselves shut out of Albania’s clientelistic economic system.

A breach in the pro-Berisha position of the West opened up when he used strong-arm methods to win re-election for his party on 26 May 1996. Moments after polls closed, in a country where communications remained primitive, state-run TV announced a landslide victory for the Democrats.

The USA urged Berisha to call new elections and refused to recognise the new parliament when the Democrats captured 122 out of 140 seats. Appalled at the extent of vote-rigging and intimidation, a number of observers from the OSCE delegation, monitoring the conduct of elections, denounced them as fundamentally flawed. The OSCE went on to produce a heavily critical report, while that of the Council of Europe’s monitors was much milder. As a result, opposition parties used the OSCE findings to justify their parliamentary boycott, while Berisha’s Democrats quoted that of the Council of Europe to uphold their landslide victory.
The Italian and German ambassadors were reported to have exercised pressure on the Swiss-led OSCE team not to invalidate the 1996 elections ‘and to bury their reports in the drawers of realpolitik’. Western Europe thus continued to be a partisan player in a deeply polarised political situation.

Already a crisis was looming that would sweep away Berisha’s flimsily based regime. It took the shape of unregulated pyramid savings schemes in which large numbers of Albanians had invested their savings. Public appearances of pyramid sponsors with government officials gave the impression that these makeshift banks would continue to pay out spectacular rates of interest to their clients (Nazi 1997:4). In June 1996, the World Bank had urged the government to intervene to control the pyramids but no action was taken until payments began to be withheld in January 1997 (Schmidt 1997:63).

Rioting erupted after 16 January, when the government seized around $150 million deposited in state banks by the pyramid schemes. Escalating violence showed how brittle Berisha’s power base actually was. In desperation he imposed a news blackout towards the end of February. For a while even the transmissions of the BBC World Service were blocked, a gesture reminiscent of the Hoxha era. On 2 March, the day martial law was proclaimed, the offices of Koha Jone, the main independent newspaper, were burned down.

Berisha hoped to use the army to quell unrest. When officers refused to carry out his draconian orders, they were replaced by hand-picked loyalists (Nazi 1997:4). But by March an armed rebellion had engulfed the entire south. Citizens’ committees were in charge of some towns; others were held by armed gangs and mafia groups. Berisha blamed his Socialist Party foes, but the opposition was disorganised and it appears to have had few links with the rebellious south (Nazi 1997:4). Some journalists wrote about a north-south conflict along the ‘fault-line’ separating the Albanian Ghegs of the north and the Tosks of the south, but soon the unrest was stretching as far as Shkodra, the main northern centre.

Events bore out the view of one journalist that it was ‘more of a popular revolt against a corrupt leadership fuelled by fear and a plentiful supply of weapons’. Thousands of weapons were seized from the armouries of a disintegrating army and from police depots. Disaffected ex-officers from the pre-1991 era, dismissed by Berisha, added to the turmoil (Sunley 1998:45). The destruction of the public infrastructure, noticeable in 1991–2, resumed. So did vendettas as the turmoil was used as an excuse to exact personal vengeance. Around 1,800 people would lose their lives before unrest finally abated in July, the largest loss of life in the post-1989 Balkans apart from the wars in ex-Yugoslavia.

Western backers of the cornered Berisha, such as the British Tories and German Christian Democrats, began to distance themselves from their discredited protégé. A rare exception was the UK-based European Foundation. When its journal carried an article by a former Economist correspondent in Albania referring to the excesses of the Berisha regime, the commissioning editor was sacked and the record was set straight in the next issue by John Laughland, who complained that Berisha’s critic had omitted to mention ‘the most important point about Albania: that the present government is staunchly anti-communist’.

The Albanian crisis would see the beginnings of an alliance between elements on the hard Left and Right of British politics who previously would have been at odds about
developments in the Balkans. Their common ground was a deep opposition to post-nationalist ideologies which undermined the authority of the nation-state. They saw institutions such as the UN Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and even the European Court of Human Rights as pernicious examples of interference with the rights of states. They described themselves as ‘sovereignists’ opposed to ‘the hypocrisy of human rights’. John Laughland, a dedicated opponent of the EU, was the most prolific exponent of this view on the right. He later made common cause with David Chandler, formerly of the Marxist Left, who slammed international intervention in Bosnia for interfering with the sovereign right of peoples to determine their own affairs. Such a coalition proved capable of drawing together admirers of Hoxha’s Albania and Pol Pot’s Cambodia because of their ability to screen their countries from all external influences, as well as ultra-nationalists in Britain and the USA who favoured isolationism and were deeply opposed to big government. It was a fringe movement that would start to gather support, especially among young Europeans of a vaguely left-wing disposition, as opposition to globalisation gathered pace at the end of the 1990s.

For a long time Western European leaders had no idea how to respond when their Albanian protégé collapsed. The viewpoint of Nicholas Bonsor, the number two at the British Foreign Office, summed up their collective funk: ‘This is an internal Albanian matter of enormous complexity I don’t think it would be right for the international community’ to become further involved. But the former Austrian Chancellor, Franz Vranitzky, appointed by the OSCE to mediate in the crisis, came to a different conclusion. Unable to get to Tirana on 15 March because of the breakdown of order, he had to consult with Albanian officials on board an Italian frigate in the Adriatic. Afterwards, he called for ‘a coalition of those willing’ to take action belonging to the EU and OSCE who would intervene to try and stem ‘the chaos and anarchy’.

It was obvious that no contingency plans had been drawn up in the two months since the crisis had steadily worsened. The USA was unwilling to get involved, especially when it was still intent on pulling its forces out of Bosnia by 1998. Unlike its European allies, it had substantially distanced itself from Berisha nearly a year previously. American frustrations at the lack of European capacity in the region had already been expressed by Richard Holbrooke. In January 1996, he had complained that the Europeans were ‘literally sleeping through the night’ when President Clinton was on the phone to political leaders in Greece and Turkey after a confrontation between these two unfriendly NATO states over a disputed island in the Aegean had raised fears of war. Holbrooke had pointedly remarked:

You have to wonder why Europe does not seem capable of taking decisive action in its own theatre… Unless the United States is willing to put its political and military muscle behind the quest for solutions to European instability, nothing really gets done.

In April 1997, Italy agreed to lead an international force to Albania. It had most to lose if the country disintegrated completely and a human exodus began streaming westwards. ‘Operation Alba’, as the mission was known, was not under the direct control of any international security organisation. Prospects of success appeared remote. One headline in a British newspaper proclaimed: ‘EU allies abandon Italy to a doomed Albanian
mission’. But its mandate, as laid down by the UN, was quite limited, which reduced the chances of a major collision with lawless elements. It was authorised by the Security Council to create a secure environment for the provision of civilian and humanitarian assistance by bodies such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe. But the UN Secretariat’s Department of Peacekeeping held aloof (Favretto and Kokkinides 1997:30). The 7,000-strong contingent, drawn from eleven countries, refused to intervene in gunfights between looters and foreigners defending their property, even when the fighting was taking place within sight of military outposts (Corti 1997:30). Nevertheless, the force provided an important degree of stability when fresh elections were held on 29 June and 7 July 1997. The timing was questionable in the immediate aftermath of an uprising and amidst continuing anarchy. In large parts of the country, freedom of movement was still impossible. Nevertheless, the crushing defeat of Berisha and his Democrats helped to ease the situation. The opposition won the two-thirds majority necessary to remove him. But he became an MP even though, as head of state, he was technically barred from other elective office. As his power drained away, he defiantly told reporters: ‘I will continue politics until the last day. I will never withdraw.’ This remark neatly encapsulated one of the greatest problems the region faced—the presence of leaders with proprietorial attitudes towards their party, or even the entire country who saw themselves as uniquely placed to guide its destiny.

The international force withdrew from Albania on 12 August 1997, but left thousands of looted weapons still unaccounted for. It had been a guarded success for Italy and helped to bury memories of an earlier unconstructive foray into the politics of the Eastern Adriatic.

In April 1994, concern had been expressed among its EU partners that Italy might become embroiled in the Balkans. Mirko Tremaglia, a deputy for the far-right Alleanza Nazionale (and soon to be appointed head of the foreign affairs committee of the Chamber of Deputies), demanded that Rome should disown the 1975 Treaty of Osimo which defined Italy’s north-east frontier with Yugoslavia. He also reopened the issue of property formerly belonging to Italians, thought to have been settled by a bilateral agreement in 1983.

Tremaglia argued that, since Yugoslavia had disintegrated, Italy was not bound to honour this treaty, and he advocated that the Istrian peninsula and parts of Dalmatia which had belonged to Mussolini’s Italy should be returned to Rome’s jurisdiction. He had fought for Mussolini’s Salo Republic in 1944, and President Scalfaro had intervened to ensure that he was not given a cabinet post when the business-mogul-turned-politician Silvio Berlusconi formed a coalition with the Alleanza Nazionale (AN). But the leader of his party, Gianfranco Fini, now Italy’s Deputy Prime Minister, declined to repudiate Tremaglia. The irredentist views he expressed were enormously popular in the party and also in Berlusconi’s Forza Italia movement. Before long the government in Rome declared that, until Slovenia agreed to compensate Italian nationals who had fled from what would later become Slovenian territory after the Second World War (and who had thereby lost their property), they would obstruct Slovenian efforts to join the EU. Successive waves of persecution and expulsion had affected Slovenians and Italians living in the hinterland of the city of Trieste, which remained in Italian hands after 1945. Tens of thousands of Slovenes had been forced out of territory that had been under Mussolini’s control in the decades before 1945. After 1945, an estimated 350,000 Italians
emigrated or were forced out of Istria, 60 per cent leaving the Croatian part and 40 per cent the Slovenian part.\textsuperscript{71}

Slovenia was willing to continue compensating Italians who had lost property in the 1940s, something Italy and Yugoslavia had agreed in 1983. But Italy now demanded that Italians should have the same rights as those given to Slovenian citizens—to claim back property taken from them by the Yugoslav state, and to bid for publicly owned real estate when it was put up for sale. Slovenes feared that the superior purchasing power of the Italians would allow them to buy up property on a massive scale, and might even lead to the border question being reopened.\textsuperscript{72}

It made no difference that Slovenia had the most developed economy of any of the East European post-communist states, with a GDP surpassing that of at least two existing members, Greece and Portugal (Pucer 1994–5:28). While disapproving of Italy’s action, other EU states were powerless to overturn the Italian veto and Slovenia’s attempt to join the EU was put back by several years. Speculation also mounted that the AN was cultivating links with Karad ić’s rebel Serb regime in Bosnia in the hope that Italian influence in the Eastern Adriatic could be restored if the Serbs triumphed in the war.\textsuperscript{73}

One source believes that Fini hoped to reach an agreement with Milošević to acquire former Italian territory in Istria and Dalmatia (Tarchi 1995:82). (Berlusconi at this time was also seeking to promote the electoral fortune of the ultra-nationalist Vladimir Meciar in Slovakia).\textsuperscript{74}

Because of its destabilising role in the former Yugoslavia, Italy was refused entry to the Contact Group of leading nations which from 1994 worked to obtain a peace settlement in Yugoslavia. But, by the end of 1994, Berlusconi was out of office, not to return for seven years, and Italy’s constructive role in Albania enabled it to join the Contact Group in 1997.

**Conclusion**

A more engaged policy towards the Bosnian crisis appeared to be followed by the Western powers, with coercive diplomacy at the heart of it. With the assistance of Milošević, the USA browbeat the Bosnian Serbs into coming to the peace table. But the outcome of the negotiations at Dayton in November 1995 suggested that the geo-strategic concerns of the USA and the domestic agenda of its incumbent President had won out over the need to build an enduring peace. Bosnia was divided 51 to 49 per cent between the Bosnian Muslim-Croat Federation and the Republic of Srpska, with its own armed force: in many eyes, the recognition of the Republic amounted to the \textit{de facto} partition of Bosnia. Despite promises to roll back ethnic purging, ethnic rights took precedence over individual human rights in the documents and state structures of the multi-layered political entities in Bosnia. According to one commentator: ‘Dayton represented not the vindication of the liberal ideals with which Bill Clinton ex coriated George Bush on the 1992 campaign trail…but rather a version of the chilly realpolitik that kept the US administration out of Bosnia’ (Bass 1998:96).

Human agency had contributed to a peace, however flawed, that would last out the century. Richard Holbrooke, had shown himself a quick learner in the art of Balkan power politics, but he was less adept at securing institutional domestic support for the
Dayton Agreement. His rapid departure from the administration before the ink of the agreement was barely dry meant that US military personalities entrusted with implementing it became the crucial actors. They fully shared the distaste of much of the Pentagon bureaucracy for involvement in a region still seen by them as peripheral to American security interests. They were committed to ethnic separation, as shown by their deep reluctance to support the civilian side of the agreement, which allowed civilians to stay in, or return to, their long-term places of residence. Ethnic hardliners, briefly in real fear of losing their power bases, were able to dig in and strengthen their positions.

Holbrooke took out his frustrations on the USA’s European allies. On 12 May 1996, he blamed them for a ‘messy, ineffective arrangement’ involving ‘multiple chains of command’ and ‘little enforcement authority’, which meant that progress in implementing civilian aspects of the Dayton Accord moved at a snail’s pace until the end of the 1990s. The EU’s disastrous handling of its first-ever peace-building assignments, in the divided Bosnian city of Mostar from 1994 to 1996, seemed amply to confirm his criticisms. EU disarray was further in evidence during the 1997 Albanian crisis. It had been partly fuelled by the readiness of Britain, Germany and Italy to turn a flawed leader into a guarantor of local and regional stability while ignoring his trampling of democratic rights.

The EU’s forays into collective foreign policy in the Balkans were bound to be difficult, with foreign policy effectively conducted by committee, a new member of the fifteen-strong body taking up the responsibility for coordination every six months. William Pfaff wrote in 1996 that ‘15 nations possess only a limited number of interests in common—interests important enough for soldiers to die for’.75

With their respective headquarters in Brussels, the EU and NATO held each other in mutual disregard, acting sometimes as if they were on different planets.76 Both organisations held aloof from each other even though they were unveiling plans for eastern enlargement and faced common foes in the Balkans.

Recognition of the need to stabilise the wider South-East European region in order to make the shaky Dayton peace deal work was one positive outcome of the end of the Bosnian War. With the exception of Greece, all the other Balkan states had largely refrained from exacerbating the Yugoslav conflict. It was an unsung achievement that the war did not extend beyond Yugoslavia’s frontiers despite unresolved ethnic disputes in some of its neighbours. But these nations continued to be viewed in stereotypical terms by influential policy-makers and opinion-formers in the Atlantic democracies. On the ground, the often unimpressive performance of the international agencies entrusted with consolidating a shaky peace in turn bred cynicism about the motives and capabilities of the Westerners now involved to a greater extent in Balkan affairs than at any previous time in history.
Authoritarian rule in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia

Serbia and Croatia: adversaries with the same taste for intolerant politics

The incomplete nature of the retreat from openly communist rule across the Balkans during the 1990s enabled well-placed figures from that era to prolong their influence under new rules which allowed varying degrees of political competition.

Managers of state firms, ruling party officials and private businessmen dominated the new political establishments throughout much of the region. But in Serbia and Croatia, war conditions also enabled people from marginal backgrounds who had been completely anonymous figures in communist times to push their way to the forefront of national life. When they used war as an instrument of policy designed radically to alter human geography, Milošević and Tudjman needed to employ people not lacking in recklessness, cruelty or rank opportunism, ones who were sometimes in short supply even within the old party-state structures. Village criminals, scrap metal dealers, the heads of football supporter clubs, released prisoners and returning members of the diaspora (especially in the case of Croatia) became enormously wealthy on the proceeds of goods seized through the process of ethnic purging. They were ready to act as enforcers, carrying out orders from patrons at the apex of politics in Belgrade, Zagreb, Mostar and Banja Luka and passed on down the line through various intermediaries. The route to wealth and dubious respectability was not so different in either country: the wholesale seizure of private property, often at the point of a gun, which enriched many small-time figures from Croatian-populated Herzegovina and the Republic of Srpska after the killing spree against ethnic opponents in these areas was over; the smuggling of drugs, weapons and people, which involved figures sometimes quite high up in the power structures of these territories; and dubious privatisation schemes, first in Croatia and later in Serbia, in which state assets were transferred to those in or near the ruling circles.

At the outset, in 1990, Milošević and his allies set an example for their minions to follow by simply taking an estimated $4 billion from private hard currency accounts in the Yugoslav National Bank, part of which was used to pay for various wars. In Croatia, allies of Tudjman captured the lucrative retail and tourist sector by being allowed to borrow large sums from the banks in order to purchase a company, using only its assets as security. Much of the existing middle class (once a more numerous grouping than in
other Balkan states) became trapped in poverty as state salaries failed to keep in line with inflation and waves of sackings took place based on political or ethnic criteria. A huge brain-drain occurred, particularly in Serbia, with well-qualified and often liberal-minded people fleeing abroad to remake their lives.\(^1\) Urban elites whose status and prosperity derived from their professional skills lost ground to individuals from a small-town or rural background who had little formal education but had done exceedingly well out of the war. The contrasts were on display in Dubrovnik, empty of tourists through the 1990s, where the new money belonged to young men from the rural hinterlands who owned turbo-charged sports cars and swaggered through the old town, with pistols tucked under leather jackets, to the disdain of local youngsters.\(^2\)

Both Milošević and Tudjman had swept to power with provincial and rural support from men and women ‘sometimes filled with hate for the culture of the capital city’ (Jowitt 1992:275). Urban-rural rivalry was given a new intensity across the Balkans in the 1990s as gangsters, refugees and political supporters of a successful leader from a rural background crowded into cities such as Belgrade, Split, Banja Luka and Tirana, altering their character, sometimes quite radically.

Both Milošević and Tudjman had swept to power with provincial and rural support from men and women ‘sometimes filled with hate for the culture of the capital city’ (Jowitt 1992:275). Urban-rural rivalry was given a new intensity across the Balkans in the 1990s as gangsters, refugees and political supporters of a successful leader from a rural background crowded into cities such as Belgrade, Split, Banja Luka and Tirana, altering their character, sometimes quite radically.

Formal democratic structures were in place in Serbia and Croatia but none functioned properly. Elections were never postponed because of war conditions, but they were rigged or flagrantly manipulated to ensure the desired outcome. In December 1992, Milošević was facing a strong challenge from the former Serbian Prime Minister, Milan Panic, but elaborate measures were taken to avoid defeat. Two hundred and thirty thousand refugees from outside Serbia were placed on the electoral lists (Thomas 1999:132). Voters who had not participated in an election during the previous spring (when there had been an opposition boycott) were removed and a complicated procedure was devised before they could be reinstated. On election day, university students, a key group supporting Panic, were required to register for subsidised housing and pick up stipends for the following semester, which made it difficult to reach their home town or village to vote (Doder and Branson 1999:171). Despite such measures, Panic was still able to obtain 34 per cent of the vote. In Croatia, ethnic Croats who were technically citizens of Bosnia, a different state, were able to vote in post-1990 elections.

In neither Serbia nor Croatia was a proper separation of powers permitted. Tudjman and Milošević dominated the judiciary and packed the courts with pliant supporters. Ministries were populated by officials whose key priority was to serve the ruling few rather than protect the wider public good. Often no distinction existed between a state career and personally serving the ruler.

Parliaments became increasingly decorative institutions. Through his control of the Supreme Defence Council after 1995, Tudjman was able to bypass the Croatian Sabor in many vital policy areas. In Serbia, an opposition deputy was beaten up in the chamber of the federal parliament in June 1993 without any action being taken (Thomas 1999:156–7). Days later, the best-known opposition leader, Vuk Drasković, was himself badly beaten up by the police when he led a march protesting about the assault on his colleague. Such ruthless behaviour was a warning to the opposition not to step beyond the narrow limits in which the regime allowed it to operate.

Under Tudjman, the powers of the presidency increased to such an extent that the government became a mere extension of his private office. Personal friends and cronies served as Prime Minister after the resignation in 1992 of Stjepan Mesić, an independent-
minded figure with a record of opposition to the pre-1990 authorities at least as long as Tudjman’s. By contrast, the 1990 Serbian constitution allowed Milošević to occupy the office of President for only two terms. In 1997, he simply changed offices, the federal parliament electing him President of Federal Yugoslavia, with his power over the state undiminished.

Milošević faced no challenges from the two provinces whose autonomy Serbia had abolished in the late 1980s. Voivodina provided much of the electoral backing for the democratic opposition; communal relations remained good in what was still one of the most ethnically mixed parts of ex-Yugoslavia, despite an influx of Serbian refugees from war-torn regions. The Kosovar Albanians arguably did Milošević a strong favour by abstaining en masse from all elections from 1990 onwards on the recommendation of their leader Ibrahim Rugova. The Kosovo Democratic League’s campaign of non-violent resistance generated solidarity among hard-pressed Kosovar Albanians and attracted international goodwill (though not concrete support at the diplomatic level). If the Albanians had voted in elections, it would either have forced Milošević to discard the pretence of being ready to listen to the popular will and impose an outright dictatorship, or it would have led to a transfer of power to the opposition (perhaps the best chance of this occurring in 1992, when Milan Panic fought a powerful campaign). The international community might have paid more heed to the Albanians if they had been active players in Yugoslav politics, but the population had ceased to recognise a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia, and such a pragmatic course had few persuasive advocates among the beleaguered Albanian population.

In Croatia, Tudjman aided and abetted the Croat secessionists in next-door Bosnia, but he firmly stamped upon any stirrings of regional consciousness. These were inevitable not just because of Croatia’s extended, narrow coastline and it’s interior stretching deep into central Europe. Tudjman’s centralised regime privileged the capital, although it was mainly interest groups located there that saw the benefits. The main regional challenge came from the Istrian peninsula, whose voters backed regional parties who rejected Tudjman’s vision for the region, that of a docile territory whose tourist revenues would flow to the central exchequer. He was alarmed about the enthusiasm in Istria for establishing partnerships with regions across the border in Italy to promote a range of economic initiatives. Speaking in September 1993, on the fiftieth anniversary of Istria’s incorporation into Tito’s Yugoslavia, he said:

The…awareness of belonging to the Croatian being…has been alive and impossible to subjugate for 14 centuries… Preaching about Istria as a trans-national, trans-regional community of the Croatian, Slovenian and Italian parts of Istria is nothing but explicit flirtation with plans for Croatian Istria’s separation from the state of Croatia.3

But most Istrians were unimpressed by such nationalist hyperbole or by bombastic claims from Tudjman that they ‘now have the most stable democracy in the whole ex-communist world’.4 Despite his pretensions to be viewed as a leader who was steering Croatia towards Western Europe, he was in fact viewed as a typical Balkan despot in areas such as Istria which suffered owing to his suspicion of most neighbouring states.
Both these regimes were emphatically personal ones. Mira Marković, Milošević’s wife, had always been his closest confidante and gradually emerged as his co-ruler. She even formed her own party in 1994, the Yugoslav United Left (JUL). It inherited the substantial property of a Marxist party set up by the JNA in 1991, and its objective of creating ‘a wealthy, just and modern socialist state, unlike socialism in the past’ soon became a cover for systematic graft (Djukić 2001:65). Government licences for any significant economic activity could not be obtained without a hefty contribution to JUL’s coffers. Marković tried to make light of a Marxist party dominated by the nouveau riche in a land of mounting poverty by remarking: ‘Friedrich Engels was an industrialist but he was also a communist’ (Doder and Branson 1999:202).

Such cynical posturing revealed the Miloševićs to be people without ideology, neither communists nor nationalists, nor devotees of peace or war in the Balkans, but individuals primarily interested in remaining in power, enjoying its trappings to the full, and using the solidarity of the family, the strongest social institution in the Balkans, to achieve that end.

Inevitably tension was generated with the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), Milošević’s vehicle. Upon being ousted as SPS Vice-President in 1995, Boro Jović complained in these terms:

JUL receives more space on radio and television than our party does! I am also opposed to JUL because that left-wing party is headed by the wife of the Republic’s President, and that is a fact which it is difficult for our people to understand or to bear... Our people find it difficult to understand that two members of the same family should head two parties. And not only two parties—because of their personal power and ambitions we have the makings of a dynasty.

(Thomas 1999:246)

Mira Marković regularly delivered utterances which made her far more hated than her husband, who was careful to adopt a lower profile in public. In her regular newspaper column, she berated the Krajina refugees for their plight in 1995: ‘Why didn’t they stay and defend their hearth? Why did they come here at all?’ (Doder and Branson 1999:220). Neither she nor her husband were interested in the 1,500,000 Serbs who arrived in Serbia or other countries as refugees after the four wars he had launched: ‘They were simply just the material by means of which his regime developed, consolidated and was preserved. Once used for his purposes, they became later just a mere burden and unpleasant witnesses.’

The SPS, though not lacking in opportunists to fall into line as Milošević switched from being a fervent nationalist to a tireless advocate of regional peace, was less easy to control than JUL. Marković’s party was composed of people who had acquired wealth and status in the lawless and sometimes anarchic conditions that had emerged when the productive economy had largely collapsed in the early 1990s. They had amassed fortunes through speculation, bribery and outright theft. They knew that a willingness to serve ‘the power couple’ at every turn was an elementary rule of survival in the economic jungle they had helped to create.
'Milošević knows only servants and enemies. Partners and allies do not exist for him’, was the dry observation of Aleksander Tijanić, one of the many Information Ministers to mastermind the regime’s propaganda (Doder and Branson 1999:142). ‘This is not a state so much as a court’, wrote another well-placed observer, Bratislav Grubatić: ‘we have one ruler, his wife and two kids. The whole system is based on him personally. Milošević symbolises the final attempt of Serbia to escape from modernization’ (Gutman 1999:15).

In Croatia, Tudjman’s proprietorial instincts were also to the fore. 30 May 1990, the day the Sabor chose him to be President, soon became the national statehood holiday. His eldest son Miroslav had two turns at running the very numerous and diversified Croatian intelligence services. Meanwhile, his other son set up in business as a purveyor of supplies to the army. It was not just the fact that his father was supreme commander of the army that made this a lucrative business. In 1999, 18.7 per cent of the state budget was spent on the army, twice the world average, every citizen in effect contributing $313 to it.6

High rank in Tudjman’s army became impossible without membership of the ruling HDZ. Milošević was less certain of the reliability of the VJ (the post-1992 name for the federal army). It had a long pedigree, and successive purges of the officer corps suggested that he feared it might one day be a threat to his survival. Consequently, he built up a police force (heavily recruited from rural Serbs and others from Bosnia and Croatia) to near parity with the army. By 1996, the police were supplied with artillery rockets, tanks and armoured personnel carriers, with officers even being trained to fly helicopter gunships.7

By contrast, conventional opposition forces gave the authoritarian duo in Serbia and Croatia few worries. They were fragmented and usually lacked professionalism. Particularly in Serbia, there was an unwillingness to break ranks with the nationalist values of the regime and occasionally a readiness to outdo it in patriotic zeal if political capital could be accrued that way. Until 1995, the more moderate parties ranged against Milošević frequently emphasised the right of the Serbian nation to self-determination and unification in one state (Guzina 1999:23).

Opposition parties found it difficult to capitalise on the failings of both regimes because they were refused access to state television and radio. In rural and provincial Serbia, the regular evening news on television was the primary source of information for most of the population. Writing in January 1997, when the opposition mounted a rare challenge to the regime, a British journalist described the surreal nature of television news:

> Watch the television evening news and you will learn: the economy is booming; international links are flourishing; the President is a calm and confident hand on the tiller, bringing peace and prosperity to his country… The style of television news is reminiscent of old-style communism: lots of meetings and ceremonies and few glimpses of reality.8

Veran Matić, of the Belgrade independent radio station B92, remarked in the same month that state television ‘will be the last thing Milošević will give up. He’s the first East
European leader who understood the power of TV. He realised he can control society better with TV than with the police’.9

For much of his rule, Milošević allowed an independent press to operate in Belgrade, believing that by doing so he boosted his image abroad while providing an outlet for mainly middle-class readers whom he thought could never threaten him. Tudjman never showed any such latitude. Most press outlets were bought up by the government-controlled privatisation fund which gave the HDZ and its allies control of most supposedly privatised media concerns (Ramet 1999:164). Later, the government’s control of banking credit ensured that any independent owners looking for a loan to start a publication were frozen out. One newspaper which held its own against the regime was the satirical Feral Tribune, which enjoyed a readership beyond Croatia. Tudjman waged a vendetta against this Split-based newspaper because of the popularity of its lampooning of his statements and governing style. In 1996, he sued its journalists for defamation after the paper had ridiculed his proposal to place the graves of Second World War Croatian fascists alongside those of their victims in the Jasenovac concentration camp.10 When Tudjman met Kati Marton, the president of the US Committee to Protect Foreign Journalists (and the wife of Richard Holbrooke), she reminded him of his commitment to protect the independent media when he signed the Dayton Accord. Unimpressed, an angry President showed her a copy of the Feral Tribune and said: ‘It’s me who needs protection from such a newspaper. Not the other way round’ (Hedl 1996:22).

In December 1997, the European Union froze $2.4 million in aid, partly because of the state’s harassment of the newspaper.11 But usually the Atlantic democracies refrained from promoting pluralist safeguards in Serbia and Croatia until well into the second half of the 1990s. Croatia was admitted to the Council of Europe in 1996, when its numerous democratic shortcomings were well known, and its membership of an organisation conferring democratic respectability was not challenged when these irregularities increased.

Both the Croatian and Serbian strongmen occasionally placed independent figures in positions of authority to show that their regime enjoyed broad backing. Andrija Hebrang, son of a well-known communist purged under Tito for supposedly defending Croatian interests, was Defence Minister in 1998. Dobrica Ćosić, the dean of Serbian letters, served as President of Yugoslavia in 1992–3. Both their sponsors appealed to their vanity and got rid of them the moment they displayed any independence.

During 1992, Milošević was unnerved when Milan Panić, the émigré industrialist whom he appointed as Prime Minister, energetically sought to remove him and promote a completely different set of policies, including reconciliation with the Kosovar Albanians. Initially, Milošević thought that Panić was acting with the strong backing of the USA, but at every stage of his confrontation with the Serbian strongman, Panić obtained no support from the USA, which enabled his adversary to recover the initiative after some anxious months (Doder and Branson 1999:147–53). On his frequent visits to Belgrade to confer with Milošević, David Owen (as well as EU Foreign Ministers) rarely had time to meet the Serbian opposition. Owen showed no interest in going to Kosovo or Voivodina, previously autonomous provinces of Serbia whose take-over had set in train confrontations that culminated in the Bosnian conflagration. In 1993, Vesna Pesić, the most liberal of Serbia’s opposition leaders, complained that Western policies rewarding Serbian nationalists in Bosnia were stifling democratic hopes in Serbia itself:
Now the US, Britain and Russia have decided to cut up Bosnia, the opposition in Serbia has no chance and everything we said in favour of human rights and against ‘ethnic cleansing’ looks ridiculous… The West has recognised the use of force to change borders, betraying their own values. Lord Owen is the real war criminal in all this. After he endorsed genocide in Bosnia against Muslims you may as well forget democracy inside Serbia.\textsuperscript{12}

Mihaljo Marković, from another opposition party, also commented at this time:

Europe and the USA have given Milošević the green light, and that will have a big impact on us inside Serbia. Lord Owen has pronounced him a peace-maker and a factor of stability in the Balkans… He has never understood that the man who set Yugoslavia on fire will never put the fire out, that the lifeblood of the Serbian government is war.

(Thomas 1999:159)

Postwar challenges

War conditions provided excuses for both regimes to dispense with political niceties in lashing out against any challenge to their supremacy. The alleged risks to collective survival that the 1991–5 wars posed enabled both leaders to stifle any inquest into the wisdom of their policies (Vejvoda 2000:224). The return of a fitful peace in 1995 made it less easy for them to use the patriotic card to still dissension. In the October 1995 elections, the HDZ actually lost some ground despite the military successes of the previous August and the fact that the electorate had been augmented by pro-Tudjman Croats from Bosnia. Voters were more mindful of the fact that living standards were about one-half of their immediate prewar level, and many did not just ascribe this to the destruction of the war.

While attending the Croatian football cup final in 1993 in Split, Tudjman was barracked by fans who chanted the following rhyme:

\begin{quote}
Comrade Tito, please come back—
You stole, but you gave as well.
This lot now can steal all right,
But they only give us nil!
\end{quote}

(Thompson: 1993)

In 1997 Tudjman made a speech complaining about ‘the lack of will to prevent economic crime and corruption’ as well as ‘the ruthless enrichment’ of a few. It was a completely opportunistic gesture designed to divert attention from the manner in which he had created a power structure that allowed unrepresentative groups such as the Herzegovinian
Enrico Letta and other diplomats tried to mediate, telling the two leaders that their survival depended more on popularity at home than on foreign support. But Serbia’s political leaders were unwilling to talk to one another, and the latter partly blamed his colleagues for failing to support him in his negotiations with the West. Immediately before his departure, Letta told a friend, “I had to ask that man to stand down, but I think that without UNMIK and the Europeans he wouldn’t have done anything anyway.” 

There were signs that Milosevic was trying to engage with the West, and that his oligarchs were ready to sell much of the country’s property to European investors. The U.S. and the EU seemed content to let the Serbs handle their own problems. They were, however, not much better at helping the other countries in the region. In the wake of the April 1999 bombing, Serbia’s authority had collapsed, with the army engaged in sporadic skirmishes but no longer able to impose order. The West decided to let the Serbs themselves handle the consequences of their aggression. The post-Yugoslav countries united in an alliance that aimed to safeguard the peace and shared in generating a new form of identities. 

The Balkans after the Cold War     182

mafia to exert influence even in Zagreb itself. Tudjman refused to detach himself from Croatian extremists in Bosnia even when it became internationally expedient for him to do so. Some of their worst wartime excesses had been committed in the Herzegovinian town of Stolac, where a prosperous community of Muslim viniculturalists had been virtually destroyed, their mosques obliterated, their property seized, and the survivors thrown into concentration camps. Despite the fact that high-level support from Zagreb allowed the para-state in Herzegovina to survive after Dayton, Tudjman told the UN High Representative in Bosnia in 1998 that the ‘legacy of history’, not the behaviour of individuals, was responsible for such events, and that complaints should be directed to the Croats in Bosnia and not to him.13

Milošević was even more adept at seeking alibis and telling brazen lies about events that could be traced directly back to him. But his rule was less secure owing to the lack of any significant successes on the international front and a collapsed economy at home. By August 1993, printing money to finance the war effort had already triggered one of the biggest hyper-inflations recorded in world history, with inflation at an annual rate of 32 million per cent (Uvalić 2001b:178). Total collapse was averted by imaginative policies introduced by a new central bank governor, Dragoslav Avramović. But the pressure of sanctions and the absence of any systemic reform led to further collapse in production and mass unemployment. Some 5 per cent of Serbs, war-profiteers and the mafia, benefited immensely from the economic dislocation; another 20 per cent lived comfortably because they carried out tasks useful for the regime, or else had relations living abroad. But the rest of the population endured differing levels of misery.14

In late 1995, Tudjman had suffered a major setback when the opposition captured Zagreb in municipal elections. But he refused to accept it with good grace. One diplomat was quoted as saying that ‘the ruling party has made a lot of money from the privatisation of state property Tudjman is not about to turn over the city administration, that can monitor these sales, to his opponents.’15 On 1 May 1996, Tudjman dissolved Zagreb city council and appointed a government commission to run the city. Perhaps Milošević thought he could get away with something similar when, on 17 November 1996, the opposition unexpectedly won local elections in fourteen of Serbia’s cities and towns. Normally fractious parties had formed a pact when a new electoral law penalised smaller groups standing alone.16 Pliant judges annulled the results, which gave the opposition a common platform around which it could unite. Formed into the zajedno alliance, the opposition parties staged regular demonstrations in Belgrade, attracting hundreds of thousands of people. It was the only time in the 1990s that it appeared capable of offering people an alternative to Milošević. The scenes in Belgrade over the winter of 1996–7 surpassed in drama the far better-remembered demonstrations in East Berlin and Prague that symbolised the downfall of communism in Central Europe in 1989. The head of the army met the demonstrators and said he would not use force against them. The head of the Orthodox Church identified with their cause. But Milošević had bypassed the army and the church, the traditional pillars of many authoritarian regimes. He relied instead on an 80,000-strong police force, the state media and a network of semi-legal businesses which depended on his family for survival.17

Milošević might have found himself fighting for his life if the workers and peasants of Serbia had joined the mainly young and middle-class protestors, but they largely stood aside. So did the international community France invited the leaders of the zajedno
coalition to Paris, thus recognising their validity, but the USA and Britain sat on their hands. Much to the disgust of the London Times, Douglas Hurd chose this, of all moments, to visit Belgrade on behalf of NatWest markets, to try to persuade Milošević to allow his new employer to organise the privatisation of Serbia’s telecommunications system. In an editorial The Times remarked:

Mr Hurd should surely have learnt by now that Mr Milošević is a man whose dedication to free markets goes no deeper than the calculation that selling off Serbia’s only profitable state enterprise will replenish the cash-flow he needs to pay his riot police.\textsuperscript{18}

Milošević recovered the initiative by reinstating the election results and allowing the opposition to occupy the town halls. Instead of pushing for an interim all-party administration pending free and fair parliamentary elections, rival opposition personalities quarrelled about how to divide up power which was not yet in their grasp. Miodrag Perisić summed up their failure succinctly: ‘we had public opinion on our side, and the international community, and the media, but we made the same old silly mistake. We fragmented.’\textsuperscript{19}

A segment of a thoroughly disillusioned electorate swung to the ultra-nationalist Radical Party (SRS) in the September 1997 elections. It emerged as the largest party on a platform of social demagoguery which appealed to apolitical voters ‘fed up with years of economic deprivation, corruption…and isolation by a hostile West’.\textsuperscript{20} Worse was to come on 5 October, when the party leader, Šešelj, actually won the run-off Serbian presidential election, but the election was declared invalid owing to the fact that just under the required 50 per cent of the electorate had turned out to vote. Reformist chances had been dashed by the huge exodus of young people from Serbia (perhaps as many as 200,000) during the war years. Already by 1992, one-third of voters consisted of pensioners, many of whom were suspicious of the democratic opposition (Gagnon 1994:128–9).

Milošević was ultimately able to contain the extremist SRS, which he had promoted to make himself look good by contrast in the eyes of international opinion. So did Tudjman, who marginalised the Croatian Party of Rights (HSP), which, under Dobroslav Paraga, saw itself as the inheritor of the Ustasa mantle.\textsuperscript{21} Paraga and Šešelj had been hardcore nationalists before the end of communism, both having suffered long jail sentences in the 1980s for their views.\textsuperscript{22} Šešelj found a ready base in wartime Bosnia, where he was able to expand his party. A sign of Milošević’s growing vulnerability was his inability to regain control of political institutions of the Republic of Srpska after the peace plan he backed had been rebuffed in May 1993. Much to his surprise, he also lost control of Montenegro, the junior partner in the Serbian-dominated Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) since 1992.

Its leadership, based in Podgorica, Montenegro’s capital, had acquiesced in Milošević’s bid to establish Serbian hegemony over much of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. But domineering Serbian nationalism brought few benefits and many disadvantages for Montenegro, and a reciprocal Montenegrin nationalism gradually gathered strength.
In 1997, amidst sharply divided loyalties, a transfer of power occurred from Milošević’s close ally in Montenegro, Momir Bulatović, to Milo Djukanović, who was intent on asserting a ‘Montenegro First’ policy. The fact that the partial removal of Montenegro from Belgrade’s orbit was accomplished peacefully came as a surprise. It was also at variance with Montenegro’s image of being a militarised society in which rivalry between powerful clans in rural areas, or between proponents of independence or assimilation with Serbia, was settled with the gun. The build-up of a 20,000-strong force of loyal, motivated and reasonably well-armed police personnel was probably crucial in enabling Djukanović to defy Belgrade (Montenegro 2000:24).

The Bosnian Serbs and Milošević

If Montenegro’s defiance of Milošević’s writ was inconvenient, that of the Republic of Srpska leadership in Bosnia was embarrassing and potentially destabilising. Milošević gradually lost control of the Bosnian Serb leadership after their combined military operations failed to produce a quick and decisive victory. In May 1993, his attempt to persuade the Republic’s assembly in Pale to accept the Vance-Owen peace deal ended in humiliating failure. One delegate bluntly told him: ‘you are no longer what you used to be’ (Doder and Branson 1999:186). Milošević had used nationalism as a means of realising his own king-sized political ambitions. The militants in Pale and Banja Luka would have found it much easier to work with a true nationalist believer such as Tudjman, determined to expand the size of the homeland to the very maximum he could get away with. Milošević found it difficult to discover moderates in the SDS who could be used to oust the die-hards. Many moderate local leaders had been pushed out in 1991 as Radovan Karadžić began to tighten his grip on the party. One of them, Vladimir Srebov, was imprisoned and tortured by Karadžić’s enforcers when he tried to avert a full-scale attack on the Muslims in 1992.23

At least after May 1993 there were grounds for believing that Milošević was no longer orchestrating a war directed mainly against civilians (although the VRS was still paid and supplied from Belgrade). His global reputation slowly recovered, helped by consistently supportive statements from David Owen. But he was unsure of how to bring Karadžić to heel. The VRS could not be relied upon to move against him. Indeed, its commander, General Mladić, had been the one to deliver the coup de grâce to the peace deal in an impassioned speech on 6 May 1993. It was pointless to arrange for the killing of Karadžić, who had become an iconic figure among many Serb nationalists. His deputy, Mrs Biljana Plavšić, with her pitiless statements about the Muslims, showed herself to be even more hardline than Karadžić. Indeed, it was Milošević who showed his anxieties about the Bosnian Serbs by removing them from the unit responsible for his security. Karadžić increasingly adopted a pro-monarchist and fervently Orthodox religious outlook, drawing on the chetnik strand in the Serbian nationalist heritage. The Bosnian Serb media, completely under his control, promoted his personality cult. He became known to the world as a tireless enunciator of folksy rhetoric. But he also delivered intransigent outbursts which made the more realistic of the Western officials he met in no doubt of his intentions. Thus, on 14 May 1992, sitting in the office of the US ambassador to Yugoslavia, he declared:
You have to understand Serbs Mr Zimmermann. They’ve been betrayed for centuries. Today they can’t live with other nations. They must have their own separate existence. They are a warrior force and they can trust only themselves to take by force what is their due.

(Zimmermann 1999:203)

When the Republic of Srpska stepped up its provocations in 1995, while its military machine started to decay, it suffered major setbacks. Milošević was able to regain the initiative and represent the Bosnian Serbs at Dayton. Perhaps if the Americans had shown the political will to implement the civilian clauses of the treaty, Milošević could have supplanted Karadžić and found pragmatic successors to do his bidding. Instead it was Mrs Plavšić who replaced Karadžić as President of the Republic in the summer of 1996. She was no friend of Milošević and she tried to crack down on corruption which was even more prevalent in her territory than across the border in Serbia. Karadžić and his ally, Momčilo Krajišnik, the first Serbian representative on the collective Bosnian presidency, controlled much of the sale and distribution of vital commodities such as petrol, food, cigarettes and building materials. But the treasury was empty, as Karadžić and Krajišnik refrained from paying state taxes.24

Plavšić appeared to turn over a new leaf, retreating from ultra-nationalism and expressing a readiness to normalise relations with her previously sworn ethnic rivals in Bosnia. She publicly supported the main demands of the mass protestors of 1996–7 in Belgrade. But tactical errors and the failure of the international guarantors of the fragile Bosnian peace to dismantle nationalist power structures undermined Plavšić; in 1998 she lost the election for the Bosnian Serb presidency to Nikola Poplasen, a member of Šešelj’s SRS.

Radical spirits advance in Muslim Bosnia

The failure of the moderates to advance in the postwar Republic of Srpska was accompanied by a perceptible increase in the influence of radicals in the Muslim-controlled parts of Bosnia. It was probably inevitable that a new Muslim awareness emerged in wartime Bosnia, where, previously, to be Muslim was an identity tag which carried little in the way of religious significance. Dr Mustafa Cerić, the imam of Sarajevo from 1993, who had been based in the USA for five years and was an advocate of multi-cultural dialogue, excoriated the West for abandoning its liberal principles in Bosnia. In a 1993 interview, he declared:

we are being killed because we want to live together. You see, we Bosnians are defending your principles—your principles in Europe. We are defending the principles of the United Nations and its Secretary-General—and he is the one who is breaking these principles. I ask you, is there anything left of humanity in the hearts of these people in the West? Is there anything left of justice or humanism? Because humanism is buried here in Bosnia… I don’t know who is going to resurrect it.25
In December 1993, a gathering of 350 Muslim intellectuals, politicians, clerics and army leaders revived the old Ottoman word Bosniak as the name for the Bosnian Muslims. It was a step towards creating a new Bosnian identity based around a term from which non-Muslims would find themselves shut out.26

But the rise of a confessional identity in Bosnia was opposed not just by Serbs and Croats who remained loyal to the Sarajevo authorities but also by Muslims still committed to a multi-cultural and secular state. Their leading spokesman was Haris Silajdžić, the best-known Bosnian Muslim figure on the world stage who was Prime Minister from 1993 to 1996. His ‘ability to find common ground between the Western and Islamic worlds made him the perfect person to lobby globally for financial and military aid during the war’.27

In August 1995, Silajdžić tendered his resignation when the Constitution was amended to ensure that only a Muslim could be head of state in war conditions. Already, the imam of Sarajevo was second only to the President in terms of protocol. The previously secular education system was also being altered (with financial backing from conservative Muslim states, giving it a more Islamic flavour).28

Silajdžić withdrew his resignation, being persuaded that the appearance of unity was necessary during wartime. But he resigned again on 21 January 1996, openly stating that powerful elements in the ruling SDA rejected a multi-ethnic Bosnia and were ready to promote an Islamic ideology in order to justify an authoritarian style of politics. He also complained that he was unable to give a satisfactory account to foreign donors of some money that he raised because it was controlled by the ruling party not the government.29

In response, his rivals said he was an egotist, but evidence for his claims began to mount up. Tarik Kurpasić, the liberal mayor of Sarajevo, resigned in March. Non-Muslim officers in the regular army were dismissed or, if they had become popular in the war, marginalised. Senior officers were now being inducted into the SDA and serving in its higher counsels. It brought back uncomfortable memories for some, of the time when membership of the single party had been mandatory for officers in the JNA (Cabaravdić 1996:30).

Some time would have to elapse before it was apparent if large numbers of Muslims really were beginning to acquire some of the extremist traits that had been unfairly assigned to them in the past.

The 1996 Bosnian election fiasco

Inevitably, the elections scheduled for 16 September 1996 were bound to raise passions in each of the ethnic groupings. It had been agreed at Dayton to hold nation-wide elections in Bosnia between the start of IFOR’s deployment and the autumn of 1996.

Elections were being held in a country where two-thirds of the population were uprooted refugees or dead; where there were hundreds of thousands of unexploded landmines whose location was not known; where three de facto governments had put away their guns but were still engaged in a deadly power struggle; where economic life had virtually ceased to exist with many towns and cities bombed to rubble; and where the annual per capita income was $250.
Even in stable countries which have enjoyed generations of peace, elections can be traumatic affairs that generate passion and ill-feeling. A US politician, Henry Adams, once defined elections as ‘the systematic organization of hatreds’. Instead of the quick fix that would announce to the world and especially to an American electorate shortly to pronounce on Clinton’s first term that Dayton was delivering peace, this is what the 1996 Bosnian election proved to be.

The supervision of the elections had been entrusted to the OSCE. In May 1996, the head of its mission, William Steubner, a US army major with considerable experience of Bosnia, resigned. He failed to believe that the conditions necessary for a free and fair poll could be met, and he was convinced that the beneficiaries of a hurried election would be ethnic hardliners. Weekly reports reaching his office in May revealed open hostility to the electoral process from well-placed officials in all three ethnic camps. Some OSCE staff members were harassed by Serb and Croat officials when they tried to ensure that conditions for a free poll would be in place. Serbs told them point blank that they would refuse to cooperate with the OSCE in ensuring a transparent poll.

Robert Frowick, a US career diplomat and head of the Bosnian mission of the OSCE, tried to salvage the situation. He said: ‘This is the most complex electoral process probably in history. It certainly seems to be so for any country in the world this century. It is going to be a classic example of politics being the art of the possible.’ The Commission’s rules allowed voters the option of voting in places where they had their residence in 1991 or in other communities. This enabled the nationalist parties to manipulate the 50 per cent of voters who were refugees. They were instructed to vote in areas claimed by them.

It was up to the acting chairman of the OSCE, Swiss Foreign Minister Flavio Cotti, to decide whether the elections should go ahead. He warned of the danger that they would degenerate into ‘a pseudo-democratic legitimation of extreme nationalist power structures and ethnic cleansing’. At a time when the OSCE was being dubbed the ‘Office to Secure Clinton’s Election’, Cotti tried to maintain independence from Washington. In early June he rebuffed attempts by Secretary of State Christopher to make him say publicly that the elections would go ahead, ‘crossing his arms and glaring silently at the Americans in a tense meeting’.

Cotti was eventually worn down by diplomatic pressure and the elections were allowed to proceed. Increasingly, US diplomats took over the monitoring process, one OSCE officer saying in June:

We were told basically to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative. I think a lot of us were wondering...whether the OSCE should have had a human rights arm at all... The effect will be to downplay all human rights violations and play up everything that can be used to promote the holding of elections. It is a cynical move, aiming solely at justifying what probably will be a farce.

IFOR’s weakness meant that moderates were afraid to stand up to Serb and Croatian nationalists because they had no guarantee of protection against men for whom violence had become second nature. The nationalist parties did not compete against each other, but against smaller parties within their own ethnic community preaching tolerance and
reconciliation. They had tight control over the police, police officers usually doing nothing when dissidents were heckled or beaten, or else joining in. Silajdžić, who had formed the Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina in April 1996, was attacked by a policeman wielding an iron bar, while campaigning in Bihac in May. By August he was in no doubt that the elections were ‘neither fair nor democratic and will only serve to legitimise ethnic cleansing’.

The results were as expected, with the main nationalist parties gathering most of the votes and their moderate rivals being badly squeezed. More attention was given to the voting total. When the votes were counted, it emerged that 104 per cent of the electorate had voted; but the OSCE said a few days later that technical errors and computer mistakes were responsible. The OSCE, an organisation created at the end of the Cold War to set and monitor standards of democracy in Europe as a whole, badly discredited itself in Bosnia. In Sarajevo it was dubbed by the growing international community as the ‘Organization for Scandals and Corruption in Elections’ (Bennett 1996:5).

A Financial Times editorial declared on 27 September 1996:

the truth is that the elections were not valid. No one who has been in Bosnia in the past 3 months could honestly say that the 5 basic conditions laid down by the Dayton peace agreement—a politically neutral environment, the right to vote in secret without fear or intimidation, freedom of expression and the press, freedom of association, and freedom of movement—have been met.

The 1996 elections were self-defeating for the international guarantors of Bosnia. They ratified the consequences of war and enabled three nationalist movements to consolidate their hold in separate territories. Those obstructing the peace process were elevated to powerful positions which made a continuous international presence essential if fresh hostilities were not to resume.

Conclusion

The regimes of Milošević and Tudjman were far from being exact duplicates, but they used very similar methods to entrench themselves in power and prevent opposition expressing itself in the normal democratic way. These were hybrid political systems that fell short of being outright dictatorships, but ones in which authoritarian practices made a mockery of any pretensions about being democratic. Despite growing unpopularity at home, elections were not a source of danger to the ruling groups, and outright defeats could be evaded by fraud or simply by annulling the results.

The war conditions of the first half of the 1990s helped silence opposition and ruled out any critical appraisal of the record of the Croatian and Serbian regimes. But peace brought no political dividends. Accumulating frustrations about policy failures, the theft of state resources and the collapse in living standards made opposition better organised and more vocal. Forthright international backing for those opposing electoral fraud and malpractice in both countries during 1996–7 might have destabilised authoritarian rule, but, especially in Serbia, the mainstream opposition was largely cold-shouldered abroad.
There was a reluctance on the part of the West to confront Tudjman and Milošević because they were guarantors of the peace at Dayton. For two aggressors who had wrought untold misery in Bosnia to be placed in such a position showed how flawed the 1995 settlement was. It enabled hardliners in all three national communities to consolidate their power. Numerous abuses occurred during the September 1996 elections in Bosnia which brought permanent discredit to the OSCE and undeserved legitimacy to nationalist elites most of whom had no intention of making the Dayton Agreement work. Dayton gave a massive boost to authoritarian politics in the region despite the army of international observers and consultants despatched to Bosnia to introduce democratic forms of governance. Holding these elections in a demolished society, where the wounds of war were still fresh, revealed the poverty of vision and incoherence of the architects of Dayton and would store up endless trouble for the future.
Conclusion

In his *Prison Notebooks*, the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci wrote: ‘The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum, a great deal of morbid symptoms appear.’

These words apply particularly well to Europe at the end of the Cold War. After a blood-stained century, the prospect of an enduring peace appeared real. Totalitarian communism had collapsed as a ruling project, not just in the satellite states of Eastern Europe but also in the Russian heartland of the Soviet Union, which was on the verge of dissolution. The thirteen states of the European Community (EC) were mainly preoccupied with plans for a union which would merge the destinies of member states in the most basic aspects of economic and financial decision-making. The most immediate beneficial outcome of the ending of the Cold War appeared to be the unification of Germany, conceded with good grace by Russia, and received with less enthusiasm by West Germany’s allies of forty-year standing, Britain and France.

British and French leaders now feared that Germany would dominate the EC thanks to its numerical and economic strength. Prominent leaders were even heard to speak about the danger of an ambitious and intolerant Germany taking shape. There was surprisingly little appreciation that the dynamism of a newly unified country might help to energise the failing economies not just of old East Germany but also of other former communist countries and perhaps nearby parts of the Soviet Union.

The sullen reaction to German unification revealed the absence of a spirit of generosity in the rest of Western Europe towards the stirring events in Central and Eastern Europe. This was even more true in relation to the increasingly disturbing pattern of events in Yugoslavia from the late 1980s onwards. Under Slobodan Milošević, Serbia, the largest of the six republics, was adopting an increasingly belligerent stance towards other territories in a federation which had enjoyed stability and high international standing by repudiating the politics of ethnic antagonism. The Albanians of Kosovo, the Slovenes and the Croats were, in turn, dubbed ‘the enemy within’ by a leader intent on recentralising Yugoslavia around its Serbian core, if necessary by altering borders and the ethnic composition of mixed regions in the process. Nationalist counter-mobilisations of differing kinds occurred in each of these territories. Meanwhile, Bosnia and Macedonia, republics with ethnically mixed populations, fearfully looked on, as did millions of citizens who had little stomach for taking part in nationalist power struggles.

Yugoslavia faced daunting economic problems, due to the mismanagement of authoritarian rulers reluctant to break away from Marxian forms of economics which had led to a waste of resources, corruption and growing indebtedness. But Yugoslavia was in
a far stronger position to join the EC than any other state which had been part of the communist bloc.

Western countries could perhaps be forgiven for ignoring the danger signals emanating from Yugoslavia in the second half of the 1980s. With its elaborate federal system, the politics of a country with six republics and two self-governing provinces was complex. Besides, the Cold War was still not over and the rival power blocs had always treated Yugoslavia with caution because of its frontline position in a divided Europe. But even so, it is hard to imagine that a Soviet leader such as Mikhail Gorbachev would have completely spurned Western proposals for joint initiatives to prevent Milošević from wrecking the federation, and unleashing a wave of conflict in order to preserve or expand his power base.

By 1991, with Russia confronting huge internal challenges, the Atlantic democracies were the only powerful state actors capable of responding to a major crisis in the Balkans. They had a military alliance, NATO, and an economic instrument, the EC, capable of promoting a democratic and peaceful agenda for change. However much these may have been breached during episodes of great power confrontation during the Cold War, mainly in the third world, the West derived its cohesion, in no small degree, from seeking to uphold democratic values. Western countries possessed authority and appeal for millions of citizens in the communist bloc because their governments and economic systems appeared much better than those existing in communist countries. Millions of citizens in communist countries wished to migrate to the West, while there was little or no traffic in the opposite direction.

The West had both credibility and strong instruments at its disposal if it wished to forestall the conflict in Yugoslavias which looked increasingly imminent at the start of the 1990s. A logical starting-point to prevent conflict would have been strong and unambiguous backing for those forces committed to preserving common ground, and dealing with disputes in a non-violent and pragmatic way. This could have been followed by unambiguous warnings that EC countries, which had painstakingly striven for nearly forty years to prevent divisive nationalism from wrecking their own neighbourhood, were not going to stand by and allow a descent into nationalist hatred to occur in a large and adjacent country, against whose fall-out it would be difficult to be shielded.

Of course, energetic measures of conflict prevention would have been seen as a violation of the national sovereignty of a major European state. But it is during periods of rapid change, such as those experienced in Europe from the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall onwards, that the rules of international relations are modified to meet new challenges. Besides, the defence of national sovereignty as an absolute right in international law was becoming increasingly frayed, as rulers hid behind it to commit massive human rights violations, or as states simply unravelled due to the severity of internal wrong-doing.

But the West was increasingly in disarray as Milošević tested a fragile federation to near-destruction with a series of increasingly provocative acts. Western leaders failed to recognise the gravity of the crisis, or even the primary responsibility of the leaders, starting with Milošević, who used hate-filled propaganda to license violence on a grandiose scale. Milošević was the product of a communist bureaucracy during a period of decline who was less concerned about ideology, whether it was of the nationalist or Marxist-Leninist variety, or an amalgam of both, than with perpetuating his own hold on power. He had emulators in other Balkan communist states and indeed further afield in
the communist world, part-communist and part-capitalist in outlook, who were prepared to experiment with democracy as long as it didn’t threaten their hold on power.

Value-free politicians operating in the one-party context who were adept at acquiring and conserving power needed to make tactical adjustments as the pressures to make accommodations with liberal democracy grew increasingly strong. The temptation to ditch communism and opportunistically to appeal to nationalism, especially in multi-ethnic states such as Yugoslavia or ones with an awkwardly-placed minority, was too good to be missed (though many communist politicians across the region did manage to repudiate this survival strategy).

Some post-communist leaders shelved appeals to divisive nationalism if they were seen to get in the way of efforts to mend their fences with Western countries and seek the external support needed in nearly all cases to refloat their moribund economies. This was true of all the Balkan states that remained at peace, as well as former Yugoslav ones such as Macedonia (at least during the period covered by this volume). But a few others, Serbia and Croatia (and their political surrogates in the war zones in Bosnia and Croatia occupied by their irregular forces) were prepared to pursue radical nationalist strategies even at the risk of antagonising the West. Reprisals, or threats of retaliation, mainly in the form of economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation, could not be ignored. But the rogue states that emerged from the Yugoslav wars obtained the wherewithal for survival by clandestine actions such as money-laundering, and the smuggling of drugs, arms and people. It is perhaps more accurate to talk about state trafficking of goods and persons rather than smuggling, which is primarily a private affair. The consequences for Western societies of large parts of the Western Balkans becoming transit zones for hard drugs and illegal immigrants have been far more serious than any faced during the Cold War.

Milošević knew the West much better than the heads of other post-communist states in the Balkans. He knew the limited knowledge and, even more, the limited attention span policy-makers had regarding the region. Perhaps this is why he assumed that his controversial plans for Yugoslavia were unlikely to be understood for what they were in Western capitals, a national grab for power by stirring up group enmities and giving them an intensity they had rarely, if ever, enjoyed before.

Bold Western initiatives or imaginative thinking were absent in the run-up to the outbreak of conflict, first in Slovenia, and then, on a far bigger scale, in Croatia after the summer of 1991. Threats could have been made to those contemplating or preparing violence mainly against civilians, as in nearly all stages of the conflict, which NATO states would have been well able to act upon. Constructive appeals could have been made over the heads of entrepreneurs of ethnic conflict to the peoples of Yugoslavia, offering reconstruction programmes and the prospect of integration into a wider Euro-Atlantic community of states. There is no doubt they would have been spurned by many, but many more, opposed to violence, might have been inspired to mobilise in the crisis knowing they enjoyed such high-powered backing.

But, tragically, the West had no clear idea about the future shape of its own collective institutions, and uninspiring politicians, who were beginning to lose touch with their electorates, were in charge in many countries. So it requires a leap of the imagination to envisage them reaching out in an eloquent and sympathetically engaged way either to empower forces already committed to non-ethnic politics, or to encourage others to follow that path.
Many people, no doubt even including some of the perpetrators, were shocked by the scale of violence in Croatia during the second half of 1991; Milošević’s own plans to amalgamate large parts of Croatia with Serbia faced unexpected resistance. It would perhaps have been asking too much of peace-time European politicians to envisage the scale of the carnage that unfolded within a day’s drive from Munich. But, up to the end of 1991, a pre-emptive Western presence in Bosnia stood a good chance of preserving peace and rallying moderate forces, while naval and air actions to stop the shelling of Dubrovnik would, many analysts are convinced, have stopped Milošević in his tracks. At every stage in his confrontations, he backed down, after a period of militancy, in the face of a firm and coherent response from the West. Such a démarche could well have splintered his regime, in particular detaching sizeable sections of the JNA’s middle- and lower-level officers and rank and file, who knew they would pay much of the cost for carrying out his orders at a time when their commanders were incapable of reaching a clear analysis of events. The degree of anti-war sentiment in Serbia and Montenegro in 1991 only serves to strengthen such a view.

The West was reactive in the summer of 1991. It promoted a single Yugoslavia based on democratic and decentralist precepts without offering strong incentives for Slovenia or Croatia to step back from outright secession, or mixing diplomacy with a coercive threat to induce Milošević to halt his armed aggression. A major new departure occurred in the last months of 1991, when Germany broke ranks with most of its EC partners to advocate early recognition of Slovenia and Croatia. The Western penchant for viewing the conflict in historical terms, rather than in terms of the interests and goals of a contemporary set of political actors, was clearly exhibited, with Germany accused of reviving long-dormant imperialist ambitions in the Balkans. However, the weight of evidence suggests that Germany was the first country properly to take the measure of Milošević and appreciate what his strategy was. If an expansionary Serbia, driving hundreds of thousands of refugees in its path, had prevailed, it would have negatively affected the security of Germany, then the most eastern member of the EC. But Germany appeared less concerned with such introspective matters than with the aggression visited on Slovenia and Croatia, countries known well to millions of German citizens. Germany was excoriated by politicians, and opinion formers in allied countries (for whom Second World War analogies loomed large), for accelerating the break-up of Yugoslavia and forcing Bosnia to take the path of independence, an untenable one because of its internal divisions. But it is likely that the EC would have swung around from trying to shore up a broken-backed Yugoslav entity to endorsing independence once it had become clear that a state with Milošević and the JNA in full control of its largest component had little future. Knowing the slow-moving and reactive nature of EC deliberations, this turning-point might well only have been reached after Milošević had conquered much of Croatia and imposed a Serbian order on other republics where Serbian interests were felt to be at stake.

Where Germany was undoubtedly at fault was in not insisting, that first, the process of negotiated independence be arrived at in a transparent manner, and second that where independence might result in further violence mainly directed against civilians, measures be adopted by the international community to prevent such conflict. But Bonn’s attention span in the Balkans proved limited after Slovenia and Croatia obtained international recognition. The Badinter Commission was symptomatic of the shear poverty of ideas the
EC brought to the Yugoslav conflict. By locking the republics into a narrow timetable for independence, it increased the likelihood of a major conflict in Bosnia. With the leaders of one well-armed ethnic group flatly opposed to such an outcome, neither the EC nor the USA was prepared to put in place measures to forestall conflict. Despite no shortage of warnings, there was scant realisation in the upper echelons of member states or the EC bureaucracy how tarnished the European integration process would be if the weapons and soldiers Milošević had placed in Bosnia became the focus for a massive killing spree. Bosnia was in many ways a metaphor for the post-nationalist Europe EC visionaries often struggled to articulate: ‘an extraordinary amalgam of ethnicities, religions, cultures, customs, architectures, and alphabets…developed in the five centuries of Bosnia’s existence’ (Pajić 1992b).

The Sarajevo law professor who wrote these words also argued in vain for European states to impose a UN trusteeship on Bosnia during the first weeks of the so-called ethnic cleansing of mainly Muslim inhabitants from the east and north-west of the republic (Pajić 1992a). But the West in general was not interested in performing the role of guardian in a Central European territory which, by the middle of 1992, was the scene of barbarism approaching the level of some of the worst forms of violence directed against civilians during the Second World War. Instead, it threw its weight behind a lightly armed force, UNPROFOR, with a UN mandate to provide humanitarian relief. Critics argued that, when an aggressor was adopting extreme tactics amounting to genocide to alter human geography, a different response was required, primarily a well-equipped international force with a peace-enforcement mandate.

Britain, usually supported by France, largely undeterred by Germany, and only spasmodically opposed by the USA, insisted on UN neutrality between warring parties when, during much of the war, the vast bulk of violations of UN Security Council resolutions was emanating from Serbs armed and provisioned by Milošević, and, in 1993–4, Croats similarly assisted by Tudjman. If impartiality was the only game in town, it would have been far better to base it on the degree to which a warring party respected the mandates decided by the Security Council, or at least the internationally recognised rules of war.

But for over three years the West never produced a hurting strategy designed to inconvenience the forces pursuing a war mainly directed against civilians. It eschewed coercive diplomacy and mainly reacted to events on the ground dictated by the warring parties. But it influenced the respective strength of these warring forces by imposing an arms embargo that prevented the Bosnian government side from effectively defending itself, and by insisting on peace negotiations that, if successful, would result in armed aggressors holding large swathes of territory purged of their original inhabitants.

Western leaders—Bush, Clinton, Major, Hurd and Mitterand—searched assiduously for historical metaphors to justify their hands-off approach to the Bosnian conflict. If they had been more mindful of the long-term security of their own societies (never mind the need to pursue a just course in former Yugoslavia), they would have used the crisis to upgrade their own security institutions (fast being rendered obsolete by the end of the Cold War). Instead, they responded in a shallow and ad hoc way to the crisis by increasingly relying on the leader primarily responsible for it, Milošević, to call off his forces in Bosnia; but their timing was bad, since he started to lose overall control of politicians and armed bands whom he had encouraged and armed from 1991 onwards.
It was the world-view of nationalism that was accepted by the EC, and later the UN and the USA, as they sought to broker various peace agreements. Leaders who had sanctioned high crimes were treated as respectable negotiating partners by emissaries selected by the EC and UN to promote peace. Negotiators pretended that political leaders with whom they were in contact, and whom they sometimes even praised in public, had no real connection with those enforcing violent acts on the ground, a feat of incredible myopia often performed in the full glare of the world’s television cameras. The preference for dealing with one Yugoslavia had given way to the preference for engaging with, indeed privileging, the advocates of ethnically pure states.

The Bosnian war was also a media war which gave public opinion in Western countries (and to a much lesser extent in Islamic ones), a role that could be quite important at brief moments. Vocal advocates of peace enforcement from both the Left and the Right joined forces, as did conservatives and radicals who would have been foes in Cold War times, united now by a desire to uphold national sovereignty or ‘anti-imperialism’, and many of whose standard-bearers eagerly embraced increasingly fashionable positions of ‘moral relativism’. In post-modern times, left- or right-wing allegiances were no guide to a person’s position relative to the way forward in the Bosnia conflict:


(Borden 1998:6)

But there is plenty of evidence from polling surveys that public opinion in Western Europe was less ambiguous than the opinion of those who carried a lot of political baggage about the need for prosperous and secure adjacent states to intervene and stop the bloodletting in Bosnia. The doubts of public opinion in Western Europe about the viability of the European integration project were greatly reinforced by the EC’s pusillanimous response to the Bosnian conflict. By 1993, the year in which the EC altered its name to the European Union, it was abundantly clear that the EU was incapable of handling a major security challenge in its own neighbourhood without active American assistance.

The UN also came out of the Bosnian conflict badly discredited. Its inability to organise effective international action in time to forestall tragedy was laid bare, due not just to conflicting national interests but also to manifest shortcomings within its own sprawling organisational ranks.

Western infighting over how to break out of the Bosnian morass culminated in Britain encouraging Russia to abandon its disinterest in the conflict and become one of the international brokers searching for a short-term solution that would undo little of the ethnic ‘cleansing’. This was done despite the fact that an increasingly nationally-minded elite in Moscow was recalling past phases in Russian history when allegedly there had been much common ground between Russians and Serbs. Russia certainly had a previous track-record of intervention in the Balkans that had a strongly anti-Muslim character, and also tended to favour authoritarian regimes in the region.
Such a move by Britain revealed how unmindful many of its foreign policy experts were of the history of the region, and how they preferred to take refuge in comforting myths designed to justify minimal action, many of them conjured up by local nationalist elites seeking to influence the great powers in their favour.

From 1994, the USA became increasingly involved in seeking to bring the conflict to an end. It was no doubt concerned about the way in which a conflict, that enabled men who were little more than bandits to humiliate and intimidate Western forces was tarnishing the image of the power bloc that had supposedly emerged victorious at the end of the Cold War. Public opinion was also better able to make its views felt in the decentralised US polity than in centralised states such as Britain.

The uncertain re-election prospects of President Clinton also prompted the US administration to adopt a strategy of coercive diplomacy to force the militant Bosnian Serbs to the negotiating table. The relative ease with which they fell into line after roaring defiance at any external force which stood in their way showed how comprehensively the West had misread the balance of forces in the region. No blood-stained last stand or Vietnam-style guerrilla operations ensued. In the autumn of 1995, as Bosnian Serb forces were in headlong retreat, the Atlantic democracies suddenly enjoyed the opportunity to make up for their craven performance in the previous four years by uprooting the Bosnian Serb power structures responsible for most of the bloodletting of those years. There is no doubt that if the initiative had swung so completely to Milošević or other post-communist bosses in the region, they would not have hesitated for a second before ruthlessly pressing home their advantage.

Delivering a knock-out blow to Bosnian Serb ‘ethnic cleansers’ and serving notice to their Croatian counterparts, or any Muslims prepared to use the same methods, that they would face similar treatment from a Western alliance intent on applying the same standards of behaviour in the Balkans as elsewhere in Europe, would have saved the USA and the states of the EU from endless trouble in the years ahead. Instead, with the USA now clearly taking the lead, a peace agreement was hastily arranged at Dayton in the USA, which was surprisingly little altered from the ones on the table during the era of diplomatic appeasement presided over by Owen, Vance and Stoltenberg.

Milošević, and also Tudjman, responsible for the planning of much of the conflict down to essential details, became guarantors of the Bosnian peace. The republic was effectively partitioned under a bogus federal arrangement devised by US State Department lawyers. The Republic of Srpska preserved its state structure and even its armed forces. Forces committed to reconciliation were frozen out, with ethnic rights taking precedence over individual human rights in the Dayton documents. The senior US military officers responsible for over-seeing the agreement refused to intervene to prevent fresh involuntary population movements. Radovan Karadžić, despite being an indicted war crimes suspect, was able to operate freely and to wield enormous political influence in a Bosnia he had despoiled. With nationalist power structures intact, if not reinforced, quick elections strengthened the legitimacy of ethnic entrepreneurs and their capacity to derail any Western policies which threatened their interests.

Dayton brought an end to warfare directed mainly against civilians, and some were given the chance to rebuild their lives. But there was as much continuity as change in Western policy towards Bosnia, both when the USA was at the controls and when Britain and France were directing strategy US-led policy ratified the effects of warfare directed
mainly against civilians. During the second Clinton presidency, the USA would, in a fumbling way, seek to undo some of the mistakes of Dayton, and it would finally confront Milošević when he tried to carry out the massive human deportation in Kosovo that he so nearly achieved in Bosnia.

But from the Badinter Commission to Dayton, the West-led international community showed itself disinclined to pursue effective strategies to prevent conflict in the Balkans or build a sound peace in the aftermath of conflict. Despite the resources at its disposal, its efforts to handle a particular crisis or to enhance wider regional security were decidedly amateurish, short-term in focus, and undermined by the inability of different states’ international agencies to work together effectively. There was scant realisation that the long-term security of parts of Europe which had enjoyed peace and prosperity in previous generations was being placed in danger by such a pusillanimous approach. Ironically, events in the Balkans posed a much greater threat to West European societies in the absence of communist bosses practising totalitarian methods. At least the latter had pursued rigorous isolation, whereas in the tyrannies and shaky, incomplete democracies which sprang up in the 1990s power was dispersed among a range of interests seeking to acquire wealth by speculative activities. National and even regional crime syndicates became important players in the region, leaving open the possibility that future rulers of Balkan states would spring from their ranks; Western leaders would then have to parley with them. Their repertoire centred around the trafficking of illicit goods and people in a westward direction, but also extended to money-laundering and cyber-crime; sometimes this was trafficking with official collusion, sometimes it was a largely private affair. The Balkans were not by any means the sole source of the drugs, illegal immigrants and prostitutes coerced into slavery that were proving an evergrowing headache for Western governments. But lawless regions like the Republic of Srpska, and ‘soft’ states such as Albania and Serbia, offered important freedom of movement in the journey westwards. Thus communism in its death throes and the inadequate response of the West to the legacies it left in its wake created enormous problems, not just for the luckless peoples of the region, but also for the adjacent neighbourhood which had hitherto rigidly held aloof from the Balkans.

The true extent of the unwelcome consequences flowing from the West’s decision in the early 1990s to ring-fence the Balkans and trust that its problems would not contaminate the wider European neighbourhood cannot yet be fully comprehended. This book has explored the collective mindset which allowed the West to fritter away much of the benefits of success in the Cold War by adopting such a wrongheaded approach to the Balkans. The narrative ends in 1997, which marked the beginnings of a more engaged policy, as the consequences of a blinkered and short-term approach to the Balkans at last began to hit home. But, as will be shown in the concluding volume of this series, the learning curve which Western states and international institutions would have to climb in the Balkans would be a long and steep one before different approaches to the region’s problems would gain acceptance.
Notes

1 Challenges and crises after the communist era

3 Ibid., p. 1.
4 Ibid., p. 4.
5 Ibid., p. 5.
6 The Independent, 21 June 1990.
7 Monitorul, 14 June 2000.
10 Nine O’Clock, 10 April 2000.
11 Ibid
12 Kevin Done, ‘Pace Quickens on the Long, Hard Road’, Financial Times, 8 May 1998 (supplement in ‘Investment in Central and Eastern Europe’).
15 Adevărul, 23 February 1999.
19 PHARE stands for Poland and Hungary: Aid for Economic Reconstruction. It is interesting that the name of the programme was not changed until 2000, despite its scope having extended beyond Central Europe in subsequent years.

2 The international dimension of the escalating crisis in Yugoslavia

3 It is illustrative of the official complacency about Yugoslavia that the only department of Yugoslav studies in a British university, located at Bradford University since the 1960s, was closed down in the early 1980s in face of central government pressure to reduce university costs.


8 Tony Barber, a journalist covering the Balkans for The Independent in the first half of the 1990s, said of Major’s comment: ‘As interpretations of the Bosnian conflict go, one would probably get a more profound analysis from a Papua New Guinean tribesman… The Soviet Union had ceased to exert “discipline” over the former Yugoslavia as long ago as 1948’. See The Independent, 14 March 1994 and Barber’s review of Noel Malcolm’s book, Bosnia: A Short History (1994a).


10 Mark Thompon has described how the state media promoted a nationalist mindset in Serbia and among isolated Serb communities outside Serbia proper by whipping up fears of Ustasa hordes in Croatia and Muslim fanatics in Bosnia. See Thompson (1999: chap. 1).


17 The HDZ said it was necessary to redress the imbalance in a police force it claimed was 60 per cent Serb, but one authoritative force claims the Croatian police was no more than 20 per cent Serb. See Silber and Little (1996:105).

18 Peter Galbraith interviewed by Dani (Sarajevo), reproduced in Bosnia Report (new series), nos 23–5, June–October 2000, p. 15.


23 On 23 December 1990, 86 per cent of voters in Slovenia had voted in favour of a declaration on sovereignty and independence on a 93.2 per cent turnout.


The war in Croatia and the countdown to the Bosnian conflict, July 1991–May 1992

2 In 1994 an HDZ official, Ante Gudelj, was convicted in absentia for the killing. He was extradited from Germany in 1996 but released under a newly adopted amnesty law pardoning most criminal activities during the war. The amnesty in Gudelj’s case was overturned by the Supreme Court in 2001, and Interpol has issued an inter national arrest warrant for him. See RFE/RL, Newsline, Southeastern Europe, 3 October 2001.
3 In September 1997, Miro Bajramović publicly confessed to having led a special police unit, codenamed ‘Autumn Rains’, which executed at least 400 Serbian civilians in south-west and central Croatia in the autumn of 1991. He declared to The Feral Tribune that: ‘I am directly responsible for the deaths of 86 people… This is the fact I go to bed with and wake up with every morning, if I can sleep at all. I personally killed 72 people including 9 women.’ Bajramović claimed that his unit had been answerable to the then Interior Minister, Ivan Vekic, and to Tomislav Mercep, in 1991 a leading light in the ruling HDZ. Mercep declared on Croatian TV, after the allegations were made in The Feral Tribune, that ‘if they keep attacking me, we might have to do something illegal’. Many of the 1991 killings were centred on the town of Gospic, Tudjman insisting not long afterwards that they may have been a foreign plot to discredit Croatia. See Ian Traynor, ‘Torturer’s Confessions Rock Croatia’, The Guardian, 8 September 1997.
12 A report compiled by the EC monitoring mission in Zagreb for the Dutch EC presidency and dated 26 November 1991 accused the JNA of consistently pursuing tactics of long-range, indiscriminate shelling of towns and villages in order to terrrifies civilians into abandoning territory coveted by the army. Croatian villagers were ‘killed or forced to leave after which their villages are bulldozed out of existence. No attempt is made to occupy or otherwise exploit captured places; they are simply and wantonly destroyed.’

According to the monitors, the army did not hesitate to shoot ‘either indiscriminately at purely civilian targets with random fire, or, in certain cases to deliberately select civilian targets of important symbolic value including schools, museums, churches and hospitals’. According to one source, the report accused the army of cowardice, lack of leadership, inability or unwillingness to enforce discipline and

13 On 2 October 2001, the International War Crimes Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia indicted Milan Zec, the former head of the Yugoslav navy, for civilian deaths in the 1991 shelling of Dubrovnik, but then dropped the charges.


15 Quoting *Death of Yugoslavia*, produced by Brian Lapping Associates.


21 The way that the various republican leaderships, with Serbia to the fore, combined to sabotage Yutel is described in Thompson (1999:34–43).

22 The claim has been made that in pre-war Sarajevo, only 3 per cent of Muslims bothered to attend the mosque. See Di Giovanni (1994:2).

23 The quotation was translated by the author from *Le Monde*, 6 January 1994.


26 Bougarel relates that

> the name ‘Bosniac’ was first proposed by the Austro-Hungarian authorities at the end of the 19th century as a common national name for all inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina… It was rediscovered at the end of the 1930s by some Muslim intellectuals trying to promote it as the national name solely for the Bosnian Muslims…

(Bougarel 1999:5–6)


28 He writes (p. 3) of the Bosnian Croats to be found mainly in central Bosnia that, by contrast, they ‘tended to support cooperation with Muslims, to live in scattered and highly ethnically-mixed communities and to favour a common identity among all the peoples of Bosnia’.

29 This argument was taken up by a British MP who was one of their main overseas sympathisers, Bob Wareing.


31 Ian Traynor, ‘Wrong Man in the Wrong Place’ [Profile of Alija Izetbegović], *The Guardian*, 2 August 1993.

32 Simms (2001:66), quoting interviews with Lord Carrington conducted by himself and Alan Mendoza. In an article published by the *New York Times* on 29 August 1993, Warren Zimmermann, the US ambassador to Belgrade, was alleged to have encouraged Izetbegović to repudiate the Lisbon agreement by indicating that the Bosnian question would be internationalised if Serb might threatened its independence. Zimmermann denied this claim in a letter published by the same newspaper on 30 September 1993, saying that he urged Izetbegović not to go back on the agreement brokered by the EC. See Burg and Shoup (1999:113–14).
Genocide and dispossession in Bosnia and the international response

1 See also The Death of Yugoslavia, Programme 4, first broadcast in 1995.
3 Arkan’s criminal record in Western Europe, his close links with the Yugoslav secret police from the late 1970s, and the manner in which the police facilitated his take-over of the Red Star supporters club in Belgrade are well described in Sudetic (1998:97–8).
4 When relations between the two were at a low ebb, Šešelj said on 23 January 1996 that he could prove Milošević had been responsible for war crimes throughout Bosnia; and that key members of the wartime Bosnian Serb military command, were still on Belgrade’s payroll. See Bosnet, 24 January 1996, http://www.hri.org/news/agencies/bosnet/96.0124_bos.html.
6 In the various Yugoslav wars, one commentator asserts that ‘there was an unbelievable ratio of civilian to military death: 10 to 1’, and he can identify only one major battle involving contending military forces: that around Vukovar in 1991. See Denitch (2002).
7 I prefer this term over ‘ethnic cleansing’, the usage of which suggests that the victims were unclean, and which may have contributed to the popularity of the viewpoint in Western academic circles and elsewhere that only the creation of monolithic ethnic territories could promote lasting peace in the Balkans.
8 At the UN Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (hereafter UNTFY) in the Hague, on 22 February 2001, three Bosnian Serbs became the first men to be convicted of using mass rape and enslavement as weapons of terror. Dragoljub Kunarec, commander of a special reconnaissance unit of the VRS got 28 years, while Radomir Kovac, one of the sub-commanders of the paramilitary police, was given twenty years, and the third defendant, Zoran Vuković, a former waiter who was also a sub-commander of the paramilitary police, got twelve years. See Stephen Castle, ‘Serbs Jailed for Using Rape as “Weapon of Terror”’, The Independent, 23 February 2001.
10 Similar obsessions with population sizes and the biological role of women in ethnic terms would be found on the Croatian radical nationalist side during their 1992–4 land-grab in Bosnia. In mid-1993, after the local Muslim population of Capljina was expelled at the behest of the town’s Croatian mayor, Pero Markević, a UNHCR official working in the district, described the lengths he went to in order to prevent Muslim women having children. He quoted Markević as calling the Muslim refugees created in his area by his actions as ‘a Bohemian group breeding anti-social, anti-authoritarian individuals’. See Ed Vulliamy, ‘Croats New Ethnic Purge Leaves a Ghost Town’, The Guardian, 19 July 1993.
14 Jergović, ‘Banja Luka Marlboro’.
16 Jergović, ‘Banja Luka Marlboro’.

18 With relatively little bitterness, a young Bosnian Muslim has described how among those who ill-treated him and other family members in Omarska and Manjaca camps, where he was held for seven months in 1992–3, were local Serbs with whom he had previously been on good terms. See Pervanić (1999).


21 One of the most impressive and effective field officers for the UNHCR during the Bosnian war was Larry Hollingworth. See Hollingworth (1996).

22 Quoted by Almond (who inserted the emphasis) (1994:255).


24 José Cutileiro, ‘It’s Their Balkan Quarrel’, The International Herald Tribune, 2 June 1993. It is interesting to reflect that eighteen years earlier, Portugal had been in the grip of a tumultuous revolution which threatened to place the country under a left-wing dictatorship within months of getting rid of the right-wing dictatorship that had ruled for nearly fifty years. Often it appeared that West European countries seemed to be getting nowhere in months of quiet diplomacy to ensure that human rights were not extinguished. If they had abandoned the country to its fate and delivered Cutileiro’s benediction on the Bosnians of ‘a plague on all your houses’, it is hard to see how Portugal could have avoided years of instability and perhaps even full-scale civil war.


38 Interview with Lord Carrington, quoted in Simms (2001:140).


40 Interview with Lord Garrington conducted by Alan Mendoza, quoted in Simms (2001:20).


46 Rupert Cornwell, ‘Croatia Sparks Bitter Row at Holocaust Event’, The Independent, 23 April 1993.

47 Ibid.
51 Paul Harris, Scotland on Sunday, 16 August 1992.
57 Cushman and Mestrovic (1996:3).
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 See editorial entitled ‘The Other Serbs’, The Guardian, 26 May 1994; also the press release issued on 4 October 1995 by the Right Livelihood Award Foundation announcing that the Serb Civic Council was one of the four recipients of the ‘Alternative Nobel Prize’ for 1995 on account of its ‘exemplary struggles for human rights, ethnic non-discrimination, and democracy’.
74 The Vance-Owen Peace Plan.
77 Marcus Tanner, ‘Foreign Office to Welcome Serbian “Nazi”’, The Independent on Sunday, 29 June 1997. After this declaration, Mira Marković, Slobodan’s wife who liked to emphasise her Marxist as opposed to nationalist beliefs, described Mrs Plavšić, in the weekly magazine Duga, as ‘a Nazi’, comparing her to Dr Mengele.
78 Malcolm, ‘David Owen and his Balkan Bungling’, p. 6
79 Perhaps to strengthen this argument, he ignored the Bosnian referendum, making no reference to it in his memoirs.
80 The HVO was the Croatian Defence Council (Hrvatsko Vijeće Odbrane).
81 It was welcomed by Tudjman because it enabled his crude land-grab in Bosnia to be dressed up as an inevitable clash between Islam and Christianity, and the desire for its partition ‘to be justified on a pseudo-scientific basis. See Mahmutčehaji, ‘The Road to War’, (2001a:145, n. 9). Samuel Huntington first produced his hypothesis in ‘The Clash of
Civilizations’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no 3, Summer 1993, which was developed into Huntington (1996).

82 Serialised in the Croatian newspaper *Globus*, these excerpts were carried in *Bosnia Report* (new series), nos 8 and 9, 1999.


89 Marcus Tanner, Angel of Mostar is Under Attack From All Sides’, *Independent on Sunday*, 17 November 1998.


5 The Bosnian endgame

1 Warren Christopher on 27 April 1993, quoted in Owen (1996:146).


9 ibid.


Traynor relates that the Austrian authorities were about to press charges against Abdić for an alleged scheme to swindle Bosnian refugees of $8 million.


18 Traynor, ‘Muslims Pummelled to Make Them Sign’.


23 The Belgrade press had reported that Karadžić had lost 30,000 DM in a single night’s gambling in one of the city’s casinos. See Almond (1994:279).


27 The reference is to Colonel Jovan Divjak.


32 UNPROFOR was mandated to protect the UN’s own relief operations. See Mark Brannock, ‘People Like Us at War’, *The Irish Times*, 23 September 1995.


34 Emma Daly, ‘Grave Reuniting Lovers Killed in Bosnia’s Tribal Passions’, *The Independent*, 11 April 1996.


40 Bosnian Serb Army (VRS).


42 The more enmeshed with the previous communist system someone had been, the more likely he could be to serve the SDA in a doctrinaire fashion. Fuad Džidić, a senior official in the town of Zenica, tried to gain leverage over the UNHCR relief effort by demanding that Larry Hollingsworth divulge the nationality of his local staff. Hollingsworth rebuffed him, being amused to note that Džidić had a doctorate in Marxism. See Hollingsworth (1996:340–1).

43 This view is argued by Simms (2001:176).

44 In 2002, Sir Richard Eyre, the theatre director and BBC governor, recounted a conversation he had had about Northern Ireland with a senior army press officer in 1979, in which the latter declared, ‘Well if I had my way, we’d line all the Catholics up against a wall and shoot the fucking lot of them.’ See *The Independent*, 20 August 2002, p. 13.


48 The statement was made at the start of 1994 and is quoted in Sells (1996:115).

54 It was actions like these which caused dissenting voices within UNPROFOR to complain of ‘a policy of endless appeasement’. See United Nations (1998:40).
57 Traynor, ‘Conflict Paved with Blood and Broken Promises’.
60 Tony Barber, ‘Serbs Success, Nato’s Failure, Bosnia’s Misery’, *The Independent*, 26 December 1994.
63 Traynor, ‘Conflict Paved with Blood and Broken Promises’.
69 NATO announced that it had launched the largest air raid in Europe since the Second World War. Richard Holbrooke, one of the US government officials pressing for stronger action, identified with press critics who described the strikes as ‘pinpricks’ on an airfield which was repaired within two days. See Holbrooke (1998:61).
75 Cornwell, ‘Dole Deepens Rift over Bosnia’.
88 Ken Livingstone, ‘Why We Are Not Wrong to Compare Milošević with Hitler’, *The Independent*, 21 April 1999.
90 Vulliamy, ‘For Whom Does the Bell Toll Now?’
91 *The Times*, 20 April 1993.
93 Vulliamy, ‘For Whom does the Bell Toll Now?’
94 Vulliamy, ‘For Whom does the Bell Toll Now?’
95 Paddy Ashdown, ‘We are Making Europe’s Palestinians’, *The Independent*, 13 August 1992.
96 Andrew Marr, ‘We All Share the Shame of Bosnia’s Betrayal’, *The Independent*, 25 May 1993.
102 Since 1997 the merged body has been known as the Bosnia Institute. It has its own website at http://www.bosnia.org.uk/.
103 Margaret Thatcher had warned in 1992: ‘There is increasing alarm in the Muslim world. More massacres of Muslims in Bosnia, terrible in themselves, would also risk the conflict spreading’ See Margaret Thatcher, ‘We Must Act Now Before it is Too Late’, *The Guardian*, 7 August 1992.
111 Porter, ‘France’s Role in a Bosnian Massacre’.
112 The UN Report on Srebrenica (p. 105) tends to support the Dutch position on this point.
113 Porter, ‘Days of Shame’.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
International intervention in the Balkans, 1995–7

1 This was the impression he gave to Tuđman’s envoy, Hrvoje Šarinić. See Bosnia Report (new series), nos 9–10, April–June 1999, pp. 34–9.

2 Statement of Croatian Helsinki Committee, 26 April 1999, quoted by Radio Free Europe, South-East-Europe Newsline, 27 April 1999. It also described how, later in 1995, the Croatian army would destroy or mine 22,000 homes in the Krajina region to discourage returnees.


5 Zagreb declared Bildt persona non grata which complicated his mediating role. See Sharp (1996:57).


7 Williams and Cigar (n.d.: iii) wrote that ‘there is a compelling legal and factual case that Slobodan Milošević, through forces and agencies under his control, is responsible for directing and aiding and abetting war crimes on an extensive scale’.


13 By now ‘Bosniak’ was the term used by the Sarajevo authorities to define the inhabitants of their state. It became recognised by the UN and other international bodies represented in Bosnia.

14 Book 1 of Holbrooke’s memoir (1996) shows plenty of frustration with a Western policy contributing to a mounting toll of civilian casualties in Bosnia.


18 OMRI Daily Digest, no. 119, 19 June 1996.

19 The new name for the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe since 1993.

20 Displaced Persons.


23 Emma Daly, ‘Serbs Threaten to Quit Sarajevo’, The Independent, 30 November 1995.


25 OMRI Special Report, no. 27, 9 July 1996.

26 Reuters profile of General Leighton Smith, 18 May 1996.


32 Emma Daly, ‘Time for Justice to be Done’, The Independent, 6 July 1997.


34 Ibid.
35 *Unfinished Peace* (1996) shows how the US-led Bosnian peace initiative increased the importance of states adjacent to ex-Yugoslavia in the eyes of Washington policy-makers.

36 *Adevărul*, 26 February 1996.


42 Traynor, ‘EU’s Man in Mostar Quits’.

43 ‘Chronology’, *Transition*, vol. 2, no. 8, 19 April 1996.


54 Andrew Gumbel, ‘Why has Europe Turned a Blind Eye to the Corruption that has Poisoned a Nation?’, *The Independent*, 14 February 1997.


56 Gumbel, ‘Why has Europe Turned a Blind Eye…’.


59 See a letter from one of them, Paul Keetch, a British Liberal Democrat MP, in *The Independent*, 6 March 1997.


61 Edi Rama, ‘To Find my Country’.


66 Ibid.


73 In 1993 Italians fighting for the Krajina Serbs formed themselves into a ‘Garibaldi Unit’ and fought in the Velebit mountains north of the Croatian port of Zadar, which had been in Italian hands from 1919 to 1943. See Tony Barber, ‘Croatian Serbs “Recruit Italian Fighters”’, *The Independent*, 21 October 1993.


75 William Pfaff, ‘Europe’s Irresolution is a Problem without a Real Solution’, *International Herald Tribune*, 22 February 1996.

76 The view, expressed in 1996, of Stuart Eizenstat, the USA’s ambassador to the EU. See Palmer and Walker, ‘EU Reacts to Charges of Disarray’.

7 Authorityn rule in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia


28 Ibid.
30 *OMRI Daily Digest*, no. 94, 15 May 1996.
34 Hedges, ‘Bosnia Observers Told to Focus on Positive Events’.
Bibliography

Official documents


Books and articles


Finkelkraut, Alain (1999) Dispatches from the Balkan Wars and Other Writings (Introduction by Richard Golson), Lincoln: University of Nebraska.


Bibliography 219


Television programmes

Index

Abdić, F 79–80, 109, 129–30
Adam, H. quoted 206
Adžić, B. 65
Afghanistan, 78
Agriculture:
  Albania 22, 31;
  Bulgaria 31;
  in crisis after 1989 31–2;
  privatisation 31–2;
  return to the land 31–2;
  Romania 16, 31–2;
  under communism 16
Akashi, H.. 68, 137–8, 140–2, 146, 156–7, 165, 228 n. 105
Albania:
  agriculture 22, 31–2;
  Albanian Party of Labour 22;
  authoritarianism persists 23, 31, 185–8;
  birth-rate 18, 32;
  Britain and 185–6;
  communist legacy 1–2, 11;
  corruption 186–7;
  Democratic Party, 23, 31, 185–6, 189;
  elections 22–3, 186, 189;
  end of communism 22–3;
  Greek minority, 185;
  international assistance 22–3, 34;
  isolation 18;
  Italy and 189;
  mafia 185;
  migration 22, 32;
  natural resources 12;
  OSCE and 186, 189;
  pyramid schemes 30–1, 187;
  regional importance of 185;
  rigidity of pre-1991 regime 17;
  sanctions broken 186;
  rise of Berisha 23;
  Socialist Party 23, 31, 189;
soft state 217;
unrest in early 1990s 22–3;
uprising of 1997 30–1, 187–9;
USA and 1996 elections 186;
weakness of nationalism 15
Albanians:
in Kosovo 185, 195;
in Macedonia 15
Albright, M. 106, 121, 125
Alia, R. 22
Alliance to Defend Bosnia-Herzegovina 153
American Jewish Congress 106
Amery, J. 186
Ancient ethnic hatreds 106
Anderson, D. 106
Andreotti, G. 43
Andrić, R. 65
Annan, K. 16, 228 n. 105
Apple, J. 115
Arkan (Ražnjatović, Željko) 88–90, 222 n. 3
Armies:
ARBiH:
Army of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, 132, 134, 145, 166, 167–8, 205, 226 n. 39
British:
anti-Catholicism in 226 n. 44;
outlook on Bosnian conflict 110, 113, 135–6, 218 n. 44
Croatian 69–70, 120–1, 164–5, 167–8, 197, 229, n. 2
JNA:
Yugoslav Federal Army, 47, 52, 54, 55, 58, 60, 64–5, 67–8, 69–70, 85, 89, 220 n. 12
SVK:
Serb Army of Krajina, 75, 155
United States: 127, 140, 161, 175–6, 191
VI (Post-1992 Yugoslav Army) 75, 89, 110–1, 120, 197
VRS:
the Army of the Republic of Srpska, 75, 88, 90, 110–1, 130, 140, 145–7, 154–5, 165, 203, 222 n. 8
Ashdown P. 109, 110–1, 133, 151, 152
Aspin, L. 125, 126
Attali, J. 40
Austria 45, 49, 99, 111
Avramović, D. 200
Babić, M. 51–2
Badinter Commission 73–4, 78–9, 87, 216–7
Baker, J.:
Bosnia crisis and 83;
nation-building and USA 42;
pessimism about Balkans 42;
retires 100;
visits Yugoslavia 58
Balkans:
Index

communism and 1, 193;
corruption 15, 25–6, 28, 29–31, 36;
excluded from EC plans 33–5, 36;
effects of conflict on 211, 218
fall of communism 19–23;
family role 196;
impact of Yugoslav wars 34, 35–6;
inter-state tensions 14, 36;
lack of mutual trade 13–14, 35–6;
leadership problem 189;
non-Yugoslav states in 1990s 19–36, 180–2;
patron-client relations 34;
political developments (1989-) 19–36, 193–208;
Post-communist challenges 11–13, 15, 35–6;
public administration defects 27–8;
pyramid schemes 30–1, 187;
secret police 24, 26–7;
suspected by EU 36;
western mood towards (1991-) 33–4, 40–6, 209–17;
urban-rural divide 193–4
See also individual countries
Banja Luka 92, 95, 105, 173
Barber, T. 219 n. 8
Bassiouni, C. 103
Becker, S. 119
Belgrade 201
Bell, M. 148, 151
Benn, T 49, 71, 150, 152
Berisha, S.:
  insists on loyalty 27;
  intolerance of 23, 31, 185–7;
  pampered by W.Europeans 191, 195–6;
  rise of 23;
  swept from power 30–1, 186–7
Berlusconi, S. 190
Bildt, C. 160, 165, 176, 177
Black Sea Co-operation Agreement 35
Blaskić, T. 169
Boban, M. 118–20, 131
Bosnia:
atrocities in 89, 90–3, 121, 131, 156–8;
Badinter Commission and 75–6, 87, 216–7;
Croat-Muslim relations 77, 82, 118–21, 136, 168;
escalation of pre-war crisis 83–6;
ethnic distribution 75–6;
ethnic tolerance 77–8, 135;
inter-ethnic relations, pre-war, 77–83, 85, 92, 119;
inter-ethnic relations in war 105, 133–5;
inter-ethnic relations post-war 175–7, 204–5;
Iran and 146–7;
land ownership 83;
Major’s view on 43–4, 214;
media and war 148–52;
microcosm for Yugoslavia 77;
mixed marriages 79, 92;
partition promoted 84–5, 88, 97, 129–31, 143–4;
peace efforts (pre-war) 84–5;
post-war conditions & mood 173, 174, 204–6;
rape 222 n. 8;
reconstruction 173–4;
referendum (1992) 85;
refugees from 98–100;
resources distribution 173;
scale of violence 90–3, 121, 131–3;
Second World War and 77;
size & population 77;
UN role 86, 93, 94–5, 125, 132–3, 135–42, 213–4;
urban-rural contrasts 77, 79, 131;
war cf Spanish civil war 148
Bosniaks 134–5, 170–1, 205, 221 n. 26, 229 n. 13

Bosnian Croats:
  attitudes to Muslims 77, 82, 135, 221 n. 28;
  222 n. 10;
  Croatian Defence Council (HVO) 117, 118, 119–21, 183–4;
  Herzegovinians 82;
  numbers 76;
  rise of extremists 77, 82, 118–9;
  sacrificed to Tudjman’s ambition 120–1;
  under Vance-Owen and later plans 113, 17, 130

Bosnian Muslims:
  backing from Islamic world 146–7;
  Dayton and 170–2, 176, 204–5, 207;
  ethnic purging by 134;
  Iran and 146–7, 154;
  Islamic outlook 80–1, 131–3, 134–5, 204–5;
  Jewish sympathies for 105–6;
  loyal to Yugoslavia 78, 87;
  Mostar plight 119–20, 183–5;
  Muslim identity 78–9, 134–5, 204–5;
  Muslim political divisions 79–80, 134, 204–5;
  partition envisaged 84–5, 88, 97, 129–31;
  political traditions 80–1;
  radicalisation 134–5, 205–6;
  role under communism 76, 78;
  ‘shelling own side’ 105–6;
  solidarity from Islamic world 153–4;
  Turkey and 153;
  Vance-Owen plan and 113–5;
  Young Muslims 80
See also Party of Democratic Action (SDA)

Bosnian Serbs:
  attitudes to Muslims 77;
breakaway moves (pre-war) 82–3;
concentration camps 95–6;
Dayton and 166, 169–71, 176–9, 203–4;
extremists hang on 178–80, 203–4;
in Banja Luka 105;
international emissaries and 100–1, 129–31;
loyal to Sarajevo 113;
Milošević and 82, 116–7, 129, 165, 171, 202, 203–4;
moderates 92–3, 177–8, 203, 222–3 n. 17;
224 n. 70;
mutiny 130;
numbers 76;
post-war conditions 179, 203–4;
rise of extremists 77, 82, 92–3;
territorial gains 100;
UN hostages taken 140, 145;
Vance-Owen plan and 113–4, 116–7, 129;
war turns against 154–5, 204
See also Karadžić, R., Mladić, R., Plavšić, B, Serbian Democratic Party (SDS)
Boucher, R. 95–6
Boutros-Ghali, B. advised to spurn Bosnia;
background 93;
egotism 94;
hampers peace efforts 4–5, 94–5;
Holbrooke’s verdict on 226 n. 33;
minimalist approach 94–5, 125, 138–9, 145;
no second term 139;
numb to Bosnia 93, 132–3, 145;
reluctant to strengthen UNPROFOR 125, 138–9;
Sarajevo visit 132–3;
Srebrenica massacre and 156–7
Braine, Sir B. 49
Bregović, G. 86
Bringa, T. 78
Britain:
Albania and political fringe 187–8;
arms embargo 98, 144–5;
BBC & Bosnia 107–9;
bias in conflict 3;
Bosnia and 96–101, 214–5;
Bosnia transcends party lines 150–1;
civil society & Balkan wars 152–3;
‘civil-war’ assertion 66, 108–9;
diplomats’ Serb bias 46, 55;
equivalence of guilt 103–4, 107;
Germany suspected 48–9, 71–2, 86–7, 212–3;
genocide and 144;
hampers War Crimes tribunal 102–3;
hostile briefing about Clinton 146;
involves Russia 142–3, 215;
left nostalgia for Yugoslavia 54;
London conference (August 1992) 100–1;
minimalist agenda 96–8;
neglect of Yugoslav studies 219 n. 3;
N.Ireland analogies 63–4;
opposes intervention in Croatian war 63–4;
pessimism over Bosnia 111;
public attitudes to crisis 49, 148, 152;
quarrel with USA 126, 146–7;
refugees from Bosnia and 98–100, 122;
reliance on Milošević 109–10;
respect for Serbs 110–1;
role in UNPROFOR 97;
shapes response to war 96–8, 122;
susceptible to Serbian viewpoint 46–7, 149–50;
Vietnam analogy and 111–2

See also Ashdown, P, Carrington, Lord, Hurd, D, Major, J, Owen, Lord, Rifkind, M.

British Labour Party 150–1
Brkic, B. 133
Broek, Hans van den. 61, 65–6, 130
Bulatović, M. 202

Bulgaria:

- communist legacy 1–2, 10–1, 12;
- crisis of 1996–7 29–30;
- debt 35;
- dissent before 1989 17;
- economic conditions (1990s) 25, 26, 28, 29–30;
- elections (1990), 20–1;
- events of 1989 19;
- IMF and 30;
- military 181;
- mistakes on lesser scale 181–2;
- Muslims 11, 13, 17;
- NATO expansion and 181–2;
- peaceful transition 19–21;
- Russian links 17, 181;
- sanctions impact 35;
- secret police in 16, 26–7;
- Turkish minority 11, 13, 17, 181;
- weakness of nationalism

See also Bulgarian Socialist Party;
Movement for Rights and Freedoms;
Union of Democratic Forces


Calić, M-J. quoted 71
Campbell-Savours, D. 150
Carrington, Lord:
- American interference 85;
- background 66;
- Boutros-Ghali and 94;
- hardliners delight at efforts 119;
- on Owen 103–4;
on Izetbegović 104;  
peace plan (1991) 66;  
mentioned 171

Carter, J. 147

Catholic Church:  
and Bosnian war 120

Ceauşescu, E. 11, 16, 19

Ceauşescu, N. dogmatism 15–6;  
durability 10;  
economic mistakes 18;  
executed 19;  
fate of loot 28;  
legacy survives 20;  
megalomania 11–2, 15–6

Cehajić, M. 95

Central Europe:  
cf Balkans 10, 12, 14, 33–4, 35–6

Central European Initiative 14, 34

Central Intelligence Agency 56

Cerić, M. 204

Chalker, L. 98, 137, 152

Chamberlain, Sir N. 56, 106, 112

Chandler, D. 188

Chevenement, J-P 54, 55

Cheysson, C. 46

Chirac, J. 106, 155–6, 160

Christopher, W. 104, 110, 125–6, 167, 171, 206

Churchill, Sir W. 56

Churkin, V. 141, 143

Claes, W. 165–6

Clarke, D. 151

Clinton, William (Bill):  
Balkan stereotypes influence;  
British officer slams 136;  
caution over Bosnia 123, 191, 214;  
criticises Bush over Bosnia 124, 191;  
elections shape agenda 164, 175–6, 206;  
enters office 103;  
extends US role in Bosnia 179;  
fears antagonising Russia 127;  
Holbrooke warns 105;  
hostile briefings from London 146;  
inconsistencies over Bosnia 125, 214;  
eglects foreign policy 125;  
pawn of military 175–6;  
phones Tudjman 184;  
resignations over his policy 126;  
rhetoric of 124, 125, 160;  
warning to Bosnian Serbs 144;  
watchful of public opinion 127

Cohen, R. quoted 96

Coles, Sir J. 46
Cold War 38–9, 209

Communism:
- Balkan features 10–13;
- damaging legacy 10–1, 17–8;
- elites survive regime change 24–8;
- influence persists 15, 211;
- national communism 1–2, 13, 41, 211;
- neo-communism 36;
- personal rule 11, 12–3;
- type of politicians under 1–3, 211

Conference for Security and corporation in Europe (CSCE):
- Bosnia and 86;
- origins 44;
- preventative action ruled out (1990) 57;
- role in 1991 crisis 61, 62–3

See also Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe OSGE

Constantinescu, E. 30

Conservative Party, British, 47

Contact Group 143–4, 161

Corruption:
- Albania 30–1, 186–7;
- banking sector 29–31;
- Bulgaria 25–6;
- Croatia 193–4, 200;
- intelligence world and 28;
- privatisation and 28–9;
- pyramid schemes 30–1, 187;
- reasons for 27–8, 193–4;
- Republic of Srpska 130, 204;
- Romania 28, 29–30;
- Serbia 30, 193–4, 196, 197

Čosić, D. 149, 199

Cot, General J. 68, 109, 139

Cotti, F. 206

Council of Europe 181–2, 186, 198

Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CNMEA) 32

Cowan, Colonel E. 65

Cradock, Sir P. 66–7

Croatia:
- army (1991) 69–70;
- army retrained 164;
- Austria and 45;
- ceasefire fails (1991) 62;
- authoritarianism cf Serbia 193–203, 207–8;
- ceasefire succeeds (1992) 74;
- conflict (1991) 66–8, 69–70, 212–3;
- corruption 193–4, 200;
- criminality 193–4;
- Dayton and 168, 169, 183–5;
- elections 194, 202, 208;
- émigrés role in crisis 51, 195;
- fascist heritage recalled 49–50;
France and 53;
Germany and 70–2, 75, 86;
Herzegovinian mafia 118–20, 183–4, 200;
Krajina recaptured 164–5;
media 198–9;
mistreatment of Serbs 61, 165;
nationalism in 50–1, 52, 59, 117–21;
one separation of powers 194;
opposition 197–8;
peace treaty with Bosnia 124;
personal despotism 195, 197;
rebellion by Serbs 51–2;
recaptures territory 155;
regionalism 195–6;
Serb minority in 13, 47, 50–2, 60–1, 165, 219 n. 17, 220 n. 3;
Slovenia ignored 60;
social structure transformed 193–4;
state intolerance 2–3, 13, 75, 220 n. 2;
Tudjman damages image of 50, 121;
Ustasa 50, 52;
viewed negatively in the West;
war in Bosnia and 118–21, 200
See also Tudjman

Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), 50–1, 61, 118–9, 131 200
Croatian Party of Rights (HSP) 202, 219 n. 17
Cruise O’Brien, C. 104
Cutileiro, J. 84–5, 97
Czechoslovakia 10, 14, 33, 82
Czech Republic 71

Daladier, E. 56, 106
Dalyell, T. 110
Danube, river 13, 18
Dayton Peace Agreement:
Breko 171;
civil society overlooked 172;
contradictory features 172–3;
elections (1976) 205–6, 208;
events leading to 163–8;
flaws 3–4, 172–3, 190–2;
High Representative 176, 177, 179;
like predecessor plans 3–4, 166, 216;
location 168;
military clauses 168, 171–2;
missed opportunities 216;
mistakes 172, 216–7;
Muslims unprepared for 170–1;
outcome 168–72, 190–2;
police role 160–70;
political aspects 169;
reinforces nationalism 3–4, 172, 196;
summarised 3–4, 190–2, 216;
weak implementation 173–8, 179–80, 183–5, 190–2
See also Holbrooke
de Gaulle, G. 56;
de Mauny, E. quoted 105
de Michaelis, G. 47–8, 61
Delors, J. 57, 129
Democratic Party (Albania), 23, 31, 185–6, 189
Denmark 94
Dewar, Colonel M. quoted 112–3
Dick, G. 110
Divja, J. 132
Djilas, M. 78
Djukanović, M. 202–3
Dole, R. 86, 127, 146, 164, 179
Dragojević, D. 66
Drasković, V 65, 195
Drieu la Rochelle, P. 44
Dubrovnik:
corruption menaces 194;
siege of 54, 67–9, 83, 212
Dumas, R. 49

Eagleburger, L. 101–3
EC, see European Union
Economy:
banking scandals 29–31;
command economy 10;
cosmetic reforms 23–6;
ex-communists retain influence 23–6;
foreign investment weak 28–9;
heavy industry prevails 17–8;
hi-tech neglected 18;
oligarchy dominates (1989-) 23–4, 25–6, 139–40;
privatisation 24, 193–4, 198;
regulation weak 27–8;
sanctions 33, 70, 116, 200–1;
small businesses suffer 27–8;
steel industry 17–8;
thief of state resources 24, 193–4, 200
Eizenstat, S. 231 n. 76
Ellemann-Jensen, U. 94
El Salvador 12
Engels, F. 44, 196
England, See Britain
Ethnic purging 90–3, 95–6, 119–20, 176–7, 222 n. 7;
223 n. 18.
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) 40
European Economic Community, see EEC
European Nuclear Disarmament (END) 57
European Parliament 57, 160
European Union:
aloof from NATO 191;
Badinter Commission 73–4, 75–6, 87, 216;
benefits from Soviet threat 38;
Bosnia conflict and 94, 97, 98–100, 214–5;
Bosnia refugees and 98–100, 122;
Bulgaria and 33–4;
bureaucracy damages Balkans 183;
Carrington plan 66;
Cold War and 38–9;
contributed to war’s outbreak 87;
damaged by Yugoslav events 62, 86, 122, 148–9, 183–5, 217;
disunity over Yugoslav crisis 2, 63, 70–3, 86–7, 211–3;
EC peace conference 66, 73;
emissaries, role of 3, 214;
expansion plans 33–4, 121;
failure of 1991 peace bid 62;
flaws hamper Balkan role 183, 191, 210–1;
Maastricht Treaty, 70, 73, 87;
mediocrities dominate 4, 39, 94, 209–13;
mishandling Macedonia 14, 76;
mistakes in pre-war Bosnia 75–6;
Mostar debacle 182–5, 191;
overlooks early crisis 56–7;
Owen represents 100–1;
Phare programme 22, 34, 218 n. 19;
pre-war Yugoslav ties 12;
Romania and 22, 33–4;
sanctions on Yugoslavia 70;
troika mission July 1991) 61–2;
wars’s impact on 121–3, 217

Farrar-Hockley, A. 112
Feral Tribune 198
Fini, G. 190
Finkelkraut, A. 44, 45–6, 53–4, 99, 149
Foot, M. 67
Forza Italia 190
Fox, J. 102
France:
Bulgaria and 34;
Bosnian conflict and 4–5, 94, 97, 99, 155–6, 158, 160, 214;
European intervention urged (1991) 63;
favouritism in conflict 3;
intellectuals and crisis 44, 45–6, 54, 149;
lack of generosity towards ex-satellites 40;
Left sympathies for united Yugoslavia 54;
Morillon influences views 125–6;
opposes speedy EC expansion 33–4;
patron-client relations in Balkans 34;
public attitudes to crisis and war 49, 125–6, 148–9;
peace role (1993) 130;  
Romania and 33–4;  
row with the Netherlands 158, 161;  
Serbia attracts support 54–5;  
spurns refugees 99;  
Srebrenica and 155–6, 158, 160;  
UNPROFOR and 97, 137

Frasure, R. 167, 175
Freeman Harris, M. 126
Frowick, R. 206
Fukuyama, F. 41
FYROM, see Macedonia

Galbraith, P. 52, 93, 121, 160, 164, 165, 167–8
Galvin, General J. 68
Ganić, E. 135
Garrod, Sir M. 114
Garton-Ash, T. 72
Gelb, L. quoted 160
Gelbard, R. 177
Genscher, H-D. 33, 34, 70, 72–3, 75
Gentile, L. 138

Germany:

Allies suspicious of 48–9, 70–1, 73, 209;
Belgrade attacks 48–9;
bia in Yugoslav conflict 3;
breaks ranks with rest of EU (1991) 70–4, 86–7;
Christian Democrats 71, 72;
condemned for 1991 stance 70–3, 86–7, 213;
Croatia ad 70–2, 213;
defence of 1991 position 72–4;
fails to restrain Croats (1992–4) 120;
Free Democrats 72;
Kinkel 120, 179, 184;
low profile after 1991 97;
media views 72;
Nazi parallel with Milošević 72;
Nazi role in Yugoslavia recalled 48–50;
preoccupied by own unity 34;
pro-Yugoslav unity 48–9;
public opinion and the war 71–2, 213;
refugee policy 98–99;
Romania and 34;
Saxons return to 34;
scapegoat 86;
supports West European intervention (1991) 63;
weak pressure on Croatia 75

Glenny, M. 107, 110,
quoted 156
Gligorov, K. 14–5, 58, 87
Glucksmann, A. 67
Goldgeier, J. quoted 180
Goldstone, R. 179
Gomperz, D. 42, 100
Gorazde (‘safe area’), 125, 140, 141
Gorbachev, M. 17
Gore, A. 124–5, 163, 177
Goulding, M. 86, 93
Gow, J. quoted 82
Grachev, P. 63
Grbin, M. quoted 159
Great Britain, See Britain
Greece:
  disrupts EC/EU 76, 87;
  intransigence over Macedonia 14, 76, 87;
  NATO and 182;
  Serbian sympathies 143;
  Yugoslav conflict and 192
Greer, I. 47
Grubatić, B. 197
Gulf War (1990–1) 41
Gutman, R. 95, 102

Hafilović, S. 89
Hall, Sir P. 45
Harris, P. quoted 107–8
Hastings, A. 101, 153
Havel, V. 149
Hayes, Major V. 136
Heath, E. 44, 130
Hebrang, A. 199
Helsinki Citizens Assembly 57, 152
Helsinki Final Act (1975) 44
Henlein, K. 82
Herceg-Bosna 118, 169, 184
Herzegovina:
  Croats in 118–9, 193–4, 195, 200
Hibbert, Sir R. 46, 186
Hitler, A. 82
Hodge, C. quoted 159
Hoey, K. 141
Hoffmann, S. 68–9, 73, 74
Hogg, D. 111, 131, 133, 144
Holbrooke, R.:
  criticises NATO 227 n. 69;
  doubts over Dayton 167–8;
  flaws of his plan 171–3;
  frustrations with US military 175;
  guarantees to Muslims 171;
  influence of Jewish roots 106;
  Karadzic’s detention crucial 178;
  Milošević and 166–7, 171;
Muslims and 171;
nationalism and 180;
negotiating style 168, 171;
returns to Balkans (1996) 178;
role summed up 191;
slams Europeans 188–9, 191

Hollingworth, L. 223 n. 21
Hoxha, E. 10, 22, 186, 187
Hungary 1, 10, 14, 34, 99, 111
Hunter, R. 139
Huntington, S. 117, 224 n. 81

Hurd, D.:
arms embargo and 144–5;
Bosnians to blame 97;
business ties with Serbia 110, 201;
complains about media 152;
downsgrades Izetbegovic 109, 130;
EC monitors deaths and 74;
European security weakened by 142;
fears European war 73;
fears refugees 98;
involves Russia 142–3;
‘Little Irma’ and 133;
Milošević and 110;
non-intervention advocated 63–4, 140;
Owen’s plan 116;
pessimistic view 63–4;
pressurises USA 98, 140;
quits 160;
slams media 104;
spectre of N.Ireland invoked 63–4;
Times condemns 201–2;
‘warring factions’ 109

Hussein, Amin el-. 80
Hussein, Saddam 41–2, 59

Iliescu, Ion:
anti-reform 26;
disdains compromise 19, 20–1;
exploits nationalism 20;
legacy 30;
rise of 19;
secret police and 27;
turns to West 181

India 39
IFOR (Implementation Force) 169, 173–8, 204–6
International Monetary Fund (IMF) 30, 35
Ionescu, E. 67
Iran 146–7, 154
Iraq 33, 41–2, 59, 153
Iron Gates 13
Ismica, A. 133
Istria 190, 195–6
Italy:
   Contact Group and 190;
   harassment of Slovenia 190;
   mission to Albania 189;
   neo-fascists’ Balkan ambitions 189–90
Italians:
   fight with Serbs 231 n. 73
Izetbegović, A. at Dayton 171;
   background 80;
   Carrington despises 104;
   handicapped by image 81–2;
   lack of options 84, 87;
   Lisbon agreement and 85–6, 221 n. 32;
   out-of-his-depth 84, 130;
   Owen pressurises 130;
   passivity 83–4;
   peace bids (1991) 58;
   post-war Sarajevo and 177;
   pre-war talks and 85–6, 87;
   religious outlook 80, 81–2

Jackovitch, V. 100–1, 146
Jacobsen, M. 43
Janatti, Ayatollah 154
Janowski, K. 176
Janvier, General B. 155, 157–8, 166
Jenkins, S. 151
Jordan 12
Jović, B. 55, 83

Kadijević, General V. 52, 55, 63, 74
Kaldor, M. 57
Kaplan, R. 126
Karadžić, R. BBC depiction of 108;
   Boban and 119;
   British visitors and 141, 151;
   concessions from West (1993) 130–1;
   confession to US ambassador 203–4;
   corruption and 130, 204;
   evades capture 177–9;
   exploits peace talks 101;
   free to roam 177–9, 216;
   gambler 225 n. 23;
   Izetbegović and 81;
   linked to war crimes 102;
   media star 108–9;
   Milošević and 82;
   moderate posture 81;
   NATO capable of stopping Serbs 68;
post-war survival 176–9;
praised by Akashi 157–8;
peace plan and (1993) 116;
pre-war activities 82–3;
psychiatrist 80;
pursues moderate Serbs 203;
receives Jimmy Carter 147;
right-wing views 203;
threatens war (1991) 83;
undermines Dayton 176–7;
war crimes indictment 166;
warning to west 111
Karremans, Collonel T. 158–9
Keegan, Sir J. 106–7
Kenney, G. 126
Kertes, M. 90
Kinkel, K.:
   spinelessness 120, 179, 184
Kirkhope, Sir T. 99
Kissinger, H. 38, 44
Klujić, S. 118
Kocović, B. 52–3
Kohl, H. 49
Kosagić, R. 177, 178
Koschnick, H. 183–4
Kosovo:
   alienation of majority 78, 195;
   election boycott crucial 195;
   Milošević refuses concessions 66;
   Owen complains about Albanians 44;
   victimisation of Albanians 13;
   West pessimistic about 42
Kosovo Democratic League, 195
Kouchner, B. 148
Kosyrev, A. 142–3
Krajina:
   Mrs Milošević disdains 196–7;
   name adopted by rebel Serbs 52;
   rebellion in 51–2, 82;
   recaptured and Serbian exodus 164–5, 229 n. 2
Krajišnik, M. 179, 204
Kučan, M. 58, 60
Kurds 153

Lake, A. 124, 167
Lazarević, P. 105
Lasch, C. 80
Laughland, J. 187–8
Le Pen, J-M. 150
Lennox-Boyd, M. 47
Levy, B-H. 54, 149
Lewis, A. quoted 143
Libya 154
Lieven, A. quoted 143
Lilić, Z. 154
Lithuania 43
Little, A. quoted 96, 116, 133
Living Marxism 149
Livingstone, K. quoted 150
Loyd, A. quoted 117
Luger, R. 180
Luhanov, A. 16, 21, 24, 25, 28

Maastricht Treaty, 70, 73, 87
Macdonald, G. 141
Macedonia:
  Albanians in 15;
  *cf* Bosnia 87;
  dispute with Greece 14, 76;
  EU neglect of 14, 76;
  Gligorov role 14–15;
  lack of reform 27;
  recognition delayed 76;
  Serbian restraint over 15;
  UN deployment (1994) 15
Mackenzie, L. 104
McPeak, General M. 127
Magris, C. 54
Magureanu, V. 27
Major, J. bafflement 46;
  diplomatic advice 45;
  for Yugoslav unity 47;
  London conference (1992) 100–1;
  media criticism of 148, 151–2;
  theory about war origins 43–4, 218 n. 8;
  Vietnam analogy 111;
  mentioned 34
Marković, Ante 34, 77
Marković, Mihailo 65, 84
Marković, Mihaljo 199
Marković, Mira (wife of Milošević) 116, 195–6, 224 n. 77
Marr, A. 128, 151
Martel, F. 149
Martić, M. 149
Marton, K. 198
Matic, V. 198
Marshall, R 95, 149–50
Mazowiecki, T. 102, 113–4, 149, 159, 172
Meciar, V. 190
Media:
  BBC & Bosnia 105, 107–9, 151;
  Belgrade 143;
Bosnian moderates 85–6;
Britain 98–9, 107–9, 128, 142, 148–9, 151–2;
Croatia 198–9;
far-left views 149–50;
France 149;
Karadžić and 108–9;
Owen attacks 104;
presence in wartime Bosnia vital 131, 161;
Sarajevo presence 131;
Serbia and 198;
Serbian ‘hate speech’ 77, 219. n. 10;
USA 126–7, 148, 160, 162–3;
Yutel 77–8

Mendiluce, J-M. 91, 138
Mesić, S. 56, 83, 195
Mestrović, S. 40
Michnik, A. 55
Middle East 153–4
Milošević, S.: 
abandons Krajina 164–5;
able to trick West 3, 41, 100, 211–2;
Americans and 166–7;
behind Serb unrest in Croatia 52, 209–10;
behind violence 82–3, 87–8, 90;
Chirac phones 155–6;
Christopher tribute 114;
communist mindset 68–9, 211;
crisis of 1996–7 201;
David Owen and 109–10, 116, 199;
Dayton presence 171;
despises Bosnian Serbs 165, 171;
drags feet over Dayton 177;
exploits anti-German feeling 48;
Hurd and 201;
image shift 100, 122, 167;
implicated by Šešelj, 222 n. 4;
Kissinger on 45;
Kosovo and 65, 195, 209;
leading secessionist 48, 209–10;
linked to war crimes 102, 229 n. 7;
lobbies in West 47;
loots central bank 193–4;
manipulates Bosnian Serbs 82, 83, 87–8;
media and 198;
mendacity 200;
nationalism and 213, 116–7, 166–7, 209–11;
no ideology 196;
opposition to 197–8, 199;
‘power couple’ 196–7;
promotes dregs 194, 197;
rejects Carrington plan 66;
rigs elections 194;
shifting priorities 164–5, 167;
subverts democracy 194;
support for Russian coup-bid 143;
targets ‘internal enemies’ 13;
Tudjman and 90, 109, 118–9;
Western attitudes assist 44, 58, 59, 69, 122, 199, 210–2, 216;
Western image of 55, 59, 166–7, 208;
Western tributes to 110, 203;
wife 116, 196;
wrong about sanctions 116;
See also Marković, Mira

Mine, A. 183
Mitsotakis, C. 116
Mitterand, F. ambiguous about Russian putsch 43;
flies to Sarajevo 94;
pro-Serb views 53;
tight-fisted towards East 40;
visits Romania 34
Mladenov, P. 16
Mladić, R. bigotry of 120;
defeats peace plan (1993) 116;
evades capture 178;
General Rose and 136, 140–1;
Gorazde attack of 140;
in Srebrenica massacre 157, 159;
linked to war crimes 102;
promoted by Milošević 90;
pulls back 166;
takes UN hostages 140;
threatens West 111;
war crimes indictment 166
Mock, A. 45
Montenegro:
breaks with Belgrade 202–3;
Carrington plan and 66;
coerced by Milošević 65, 86;
nationalism 202;
sanctions 4, 66;
unenthusiastic about war 64, 65, 155, 202
Morillon, General P. 125, 138
Morocco 12
Mortimer, E. 39–40, 104
Mostar 119–20, 182–5
Muslims, see Bosnian Muslims, Bulgaria

Nanos, F. 23
Nationalism:
communist promotion of 1–2;
examples of intolerance 118–20;
Milošević underestimates;
resilience of 15, 202;
screen for corruption 15, 193–4;
tool of manipulators 1–2;
West European examples 38;
worldview accepted by West 214.

See also individual countries

National Salvation Front (FSN) 19–22

NATO:
  air campaign (1995) 166;
  airstrikes (1994) 140, 227, n. 69;
  Bulgaria and 181–2;
criticism of its caution 128–9, 227 n. 69;
  expansion 180–2;
  French role 125–6;
  helpless over Bosnia 126, 128–9, 142;
  keeps out of 1991 war 61–2, 63, 68;
  Madrid summit (1997) 182;
  new doctrine (1991) 68;
  Partnership for Peace 180–1;
  plane shot down (1994) 141;
  preventative action ruled out (1990) 57;
  Romania and 180–2;
  Russia and 142–3 180–1;
supplants UNPROFOR 160. 165–6;
  US approves expansion 180–1;
  weakened by Anglo-American clashes 161

Neitzke, R. 96, 104
Netherlands 44, 158–9, 161–2
Niles, T. 96
Northern Ireland 38, 63–4, 136, 226 n. 44
North Korea 12
Nott, Sir J. 146

Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) 81, 153
O’Kane, M. quoted 95, 133
Okun, H. 166

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE):
  Albanian crisis 189;
  Bosnian elections (1996) and 204–6, 207;
  double-standards 3;
  retreat in Mostar 184

See also Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)

Owen, Lord D.:
  antagonises US leaders 115;
  background 113;
  changes mind on Bosnia 103–4, 111–2, 113;
  ‘clinical’ judgment 101;
do-gooders blamed 104;
divide-and-rule 109;
EU hostility to 160;
exasperated by Albanians 44;
finally quits 160;
Izetbegovic and 82;
Kosovo views 113;
London Conference (1992) 100–1;
Milošević salutes 116;
peace plan (1993) 113–6, 224 n. 79;
praise for Milošević 109–10, 203;
sceptical about Sarajevo shelling 104–5;
Serbian opposition despairs of 160;
slams media 104;
mentioned 81, 90, 166, 171

Panić, M. 100, 194, 195, 199
Paraga, D. 202
Parsons, Sir A. 128
Pashko, G. 23
Party of Democratic Action (SDA) 79–82, 83, 87, 131–2, 134–5, 174, 226 n. 42
Paunescu, A. 20
Pavelić, A. 50, 52, 57, 118
Peace plans:
Brioni 61–2;
Carrington 66;
Contact Group 143–4, 145;
Cutileiro 84–5, 88;
European Action Plan (1993) 131;
London Conference (1992) 100–1, 122;
Owen-Stoltenberg plans 129–31;
See also Dayton Peace Agreement
 Pejić, N. 85
Pentagon 127, 140, 161, 175–6, 191
Perez de Cuellar, J. 67
Perez Cadado, R. 184
Perisić, M. 202
Perle, R. 58, 126
Perry, W. 140, 182
Pesić, V. 199
Peterle, L. 75
Pfaff, W. quoted 55
Philipps, J. 149–50
Plavsić, B. 116, 203–4, 224 n. 77
Poland 10, 14, 33, 45–6, 71
Poos, J. 61, 62
Poplasen, N. 204
Porter, H. quoted 167
Portugal 193, 233 n. 24
post-modernism 40–1, 215–6
Powell, General C. 127
privatisation 24–5, 28–9, 110, 194, 201;
Pushkov, A. quoted 142
Ražnjatović, Zeljko, See Arkan
Rasković, J. 51, 80
Reagan, R. 38
Redman, C. 121
Reid, J. 151
Reihl-Kir, J. 61, 212 n. 2
Republic of Srpska:
  Banja Luka 92, 95;
  corruption 130, 179, 204, 217;
  crime and 217;
  Dayton and 166, 169–71;
  176–9;
  203–4;
  216;
  ethnic-purging 90–3;
  intransigence 111, 116, 165–6, 203–4;
  Muslim heritage targeted 92;
  post-war developments 176–9, 203–4;
  rape 91–2;
  repression 90–3;
  survives 176–9, 203–4, 216;
  triumph of hardliners 77, 82, 93
See also Bosnian Serbs
Ridley, Sir N. 48
Rifkind, Sir M. 103, 110, 111, 112, 129
Roberts, Ivor 144
Robertson, G. 151
Rocard, M. 54, 149
Roman, P. 24, 26
Romania:
  agriculture 31–2;
  change blocked (1989–) 19–22;
  communist legacy 1–2, 11–2, 12–3, 20, 181;
  corruption 28, 29–30;
  economic conditions (1990s) 24–6, 28–9, 30, 31–2, 33, 35;
  elections (1990) 20–1, (1996) 30;
  Hungarians in 13, 181–2;
  ignores sanctions 181;
  IMF and 26, 35;
  inter-ethnic relations 20, 181–2;
  miners rampage 21;
  nationalism endures 20;
  NATO and 181–2;
  Partnership for Peace and 181;
  pyramid schemes 30;
  reform blocked 24–5, 26;
  Saxons 11;
  secret police 16–7, 24, 27, 28;
  violent transition 19–21;
  weakness of democracy 19–22, 26, 30
Rose, General Sir M.:
frustrates airstrikes 139;
hostile to peace enforcement 137, 139–41;
influence in London 139;
learns from Misha Glenny 107;
military career 146;
Mladic and 136, 140–1, 161;
Muslims and 135–6;
narrow view of mission 136–7;
NATO chiefs unhappy with 147;
on US Jewish lobby 106;
poor relations with US officials 146–7;
quits army 147;
siege of Gorazde and 140–1

Royaumont Declaration 182
Rugova, Ibrahim 60, 195
Russia:
anti-Muslim record;
Britain sponsors in the Balkans 142–3;
Bulgaria and 32–3, 181;
Cold war outcome and 38, 210;
CMEA 32–3;
Contact Group and 143–4, 161;
coup attempt of 1991 and West 43;
Gorbachev’s example 17;
Major’s theory 43–4, 219 n. 8;
NATO expansion and 180–2;
nature of Serbian ties 141, 142–3;
preoccupied at home 210;
relaxed about German unity 48;
retreats from satellites 32–3;
stability imperative for west 43–4;
trade with Balkans slumps 32;
West fears break-up 43–4;
Yeltsin on crisis 142–3

Sacirbey, M. 126–7, 170

Salisbury Review 150

Sandjak 134

Sarajevo, under siege:
begins 89;
casualty figures 131;
distancing by West 93, 132–3;
drug crisis 132;
humanitarian relief 94, 132–3;
Mitterand flies into 94;
Muslims shell themselves, claim 68;
‘no siege’ 136;
Osobodenje 132;
post-war ethnic shifts 176–7;
resistance 89;
tolerance endures 131–2;
wartime conditions 131–3
Sartre, Major P. 138
Scalfaro, E. 189
Schlesinger, J. 57
Schopflin, G. 39, 53
Schluter, P. 94
Schulz, G. 58
Second World War:
  analogies to Bosnian war, 112–3
Selimovski, J. 134
Sells, D. 151
Semprun, J. 54
Serbia:
  anti-war sentiment 64–5, 165;
  authoritarianism cf Croatia 193–203, 207–8;
  avoids war 109;
  brain drain 194;
  Cetniks 203;
  corruption 193–4;
  criminality 193–4;
  economy fails 200–1;
  fellow Serbs shunned 197media 198;
  Montenegro and 202–3;
  nationalism in 22, 202;
  no separation of powers 194;
  opposition 197–8, 199, 201–2;
  personal despotism 195–7;
  prowess exaggerated 110–3;
  sanctions 4, 33, 200–1;
  social structure transformed 193–4, 197, 201;
  ties with Russia 142–3;
  urban-rural contrasts 194;
  weakness of pan-Serb feeling 165;
  Western praise for Serbs 110
See also Milošević
Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) 80, 82, 203
Serbian Socialist Party (SPS) 21, 196–7
Serbian Radical Party (SRS) 202, 204
Šešelj, V. 64, 90, 91, 111, 202, 294, 222 n. f
Sharp, J. quoted 155–6
Sheridan, M. quoted 109
Sherman, Sir A. 150
Siegman, H. 106
Silajdžić, H. 131–2, 135, 171, 205, 207
Silber, L. quoted 96
Simitović, F. 90
Simms, B. 136
Simpson, J. quoted 155–6
Sljivancanin, V. 69
Slovenia:
  Austria and 45;
  Croatia refuses to help (1991) 60;
Index 247

economy 190;
emigration from 190;
fighting (1991) 60;
in World War 2 190;
Italy threatens 190;
liberal spirit 50;
referendum (1990) 219 n. 23;
urges UN to act in Bosnia 75

Smailović, V. 131
Smith, Admiral L. (Snuffy) 142, 166, 176–7
Smith, General R. 155–6, 157
Smiley, D. 186
Socialist Party (Albania) 23, 31, 189
Sonnenfeldt, H. 38, 39
Soros, G. 159
Soviet Union, see Russia
Spain 38
Spanish troops 184
Špegelj, M. 120
Springsteen, B. 86
Srebov, V. 93
Srebrenica:
causes of massacre 155–8;
cf fate of Krajina Serbs 165;
CIA warning 157;
declared ‘safe area’ 125;
Dutch peacekeepers role 158–9, 162;
French role 155–6, 157–8, 161;
impact in West 163–4;
magnitude 156, 159;
Paris enquiry stifled 158;
reaction to 124–5;
UN report on 156
Stability Pact for the Balkans (1999) 14
Steiner, M. 176
Steubner, W. 206
Stojicić, R. 90
Stolac 200
Stoltenberg, T. 129, 131
Stone, N. 112
Šušak, G. 60–1, 117, 120–1, 164
Sweden 99
Switzerland 99

Tapsell, Sir P. 110
Tharoor, S. 138
Thatcher, M. 34, 38, 129, 150, 228 n. 103
Thompson, Sir J. 128
Tijanić, A. 197
Tito, J.B.:
architect of Yugoslavia 1;
fondly remembered 200;
nature of rule 10;
relies on Bosnia 78
Traynor, I. Quoted 69, 119
Tremaglia, M. 189–90
Trieste 190
Tudjman F.:
anti-Muslim 118–21, 168, 184;
background 50;
Dayton and 169, 184–5;
designs on Bosnia 109, 117–8, 169, 183–5, 195;
émigrés and 117;
Herzegovina lobby under 118–9, 183–5;
Huntington and 117, 224 n. 81;
inexpertise in 1991 59–60, 69–70;
media and 198;
mendacity 200;
Milošević and 50, 109, 118;
minority crackdown 51;
Mostar and 183–4;
naivety of 50–1, 121;
obessed with the past 50, 52, 200;
powers of 195;
promotes fellow extremists 117, 195;
regional challenge 195;
Second World War and 49–50, 52;
subverts democracy 194–5, 201;
war on Bosnia 118–21;
West and 3, 49–50, 55, 59, 183–5, 208;
whitewashes murders 220 n. 3;
xenophobia 195–6
Turaljić, H. 137
Turkey 36, 53, 182
Tus, General A. 69–70
Tuzla, 135, 172

United Kingdom, see Britain
United Kingdom Citizens Committee for Bosnia-Herzegovina 153
UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for refugees) 91, 133, 138
United Nations (UN):
arms embargo 67, 68;
Bihac crisis and 145–7;
Bosnia damages reputation 138–9;
conduct denounced from within 138;
discredited by Bosnia 215;
emissaries, role of 67, 68, 69 137–8, 100, 129, 140–2, 146, 156–7, 165, 228 n. 105;
failure to strengthen UNPROFOR 125;
m mandate for Bosnia 136–7, 213–4;
mission in Macedonia 15;
narrow impartiality 137–8, 214;
officials and Serbs 136, 137–8, 140–2;
preventive force in Bosnia opposed 75, 86;
realism prevails 4;
report on Srebrenica 96–7, 140–1, 145, 156–7;
sanctions 4;
Srebrenica massacre 154–60, 161–2;
UN Protected Area (E.Slavonia), 74;
UN trusteeship urged 213
See also Boutros-Ghali

United States of America (USA):
break-up of Yugoslavia opposed 48;
Bush (Senior) presidency and 42, 85, 93–4, 96, 98, 124;
Clinton presidency’s caution 4, 123, 125–7;
CIA predicts war 56;
concessions to Bosnian Serbs 166–7;
Congress on Bosnia 146, 175–6;
continuity in policy (1991–7) 123, 191, 214;
dissent over Bosnia 4, 123, 126–7;
elections shape outlook 97, 164;
imposes Dayton 3–4, 166–7, 215–6;
indifference to Croatian crisis 56, 58;
intervention in Bosnia 163–4, 215–6;
Iran and 146–7, 153;
‘lift-and-strike’ policy 125–7, 146;
NATO expansion and 180–2;
Pentagon opposes intervention 127, 140, 161, 175–6, 191;
pessimism about Balkans 42;
reaction to concentration camps 95–6;
realists view in 1995 163–4, 216;
rejects Vance-Owen 115, 166;
restrains Tudjman 121, 123;
split with Europeans 95, 98, 126;
tensions with Britain 98, 146–7;
war crimes tribunal advocated 102–3;
Yugoslav war foreseen 42

UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force):
aid’s limited reach 122, 159–60;
Akashi and 139–42, 146, 156–7, 160;
British contingent 97;
corruption 132;
dissidents 226 n. 54;
French role 97, 132, 137;
hostages 155;
mission ends 169;
Mostar role 119;
‘No fly zone’ 138, 161;
no protection 131–2, 161, 213–4;
Rapid reaction Force 155, 157;
Rose’s tenure 135–6, 139–41, 161;
Rupert Smith’s tenure 155–6, 157;
‘safe areas’ 125, 138;
self-protection the chief priority 122, 136, 159;
Serbs exploit weakness 97, 137–8, 141–2;
Srebrenica role 125, 156–60;
switch to Bosnia 93;
Ukrainian contingent 132;
UN resolution 770 and 136–7, 161;
UN verdict on 96–7;
weaknesses persist 184–5

UNTFY (United Nations Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia) 4, 101–3, 122, 188, 222 n. 8

Vâcâroiu, N. 28, 29
Vadim Tudor, C. 20
Vance, C. 67, 69, 100, 129
Vance-Owen Plan, 113–6, 122–3, 129, 203
Vasić, M. 68, 89, 116–7, 144
Vatican 49
Velayati, A. 154
Videnov, Z. 29–30, 181
Vietnam:
    analogies to Bosnia 111–2
Vincent, General R. 128, 147
Voivodina 50, 51, 195
Vranitzky, F 50–1, 195
Vukovar, siege of, 54, 68, 69–70
Vulliamy, E. 101, 154
Vuono, C. 164

Walker, General M. 175–6
Wall, S. 113
West, The:
    ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’ view 59, 212;
baffled by crisis 58–9, 85, 86–8, 212;
Balkan miscalculations 163, 211, 212, 217;
institutions paralysed 3, 93, 211, 217;
Izetbegović defends 81–2;
left sympathies for Milošević 59;
mishandling of crisis damages security 214, 217;
nationalism seen as normal 214;
Milošević a reassuring figure 211–2;
neglects opposition in Serbia 65;
reacts to events 212–3, 214;
spheres of influence abandoned 3;
underestimates own strength 210, 212;
unprepared for crisis 2, 58–9, 163;
Vietnam syndrome 127, 216
West European Union (WEU) 63
Wicks, M. 141, 151, 152
Wiebes, C. 154
Wiesel, E. 105
Williams, I. 149–50
Williams, M. 136
Wohlstetter, A. 172–3
Woodward, S. 67–8, 70–1
Woollacott, M. quoted 114–5, 151
Worner, M. 126, 128–9, 142
World Bank 24, 187

Yeltsin, B. 127, 142–3, 180, 182
Young, H. 151

Yugoslavia (pre-July 1991):
  advantages discarded 210;
  bank looted 193–4;
  cf EU 4;
  central secessionism 2–3, 58, 209–10;
  collapse of 50–3, 56–8;
  command economy 10;
  economic advantages 12;
  federalism’s weaknesses 13;
  human rights trampled 11;
  hybrid system 11;
  internal origins of crisis 2;
  Milošević undermines 1–2, 211;
  new Yugoslavia proclaimed 8–9;
  police state 11;
  republican rivalries 13;
  weaknesses 2

Yugoslavia (Post-1991):
  Cetniks 61;
  civilians and war 222 n. 6;
  involvement in war 66;
  Muslim role 76–8;
  peace bids fail 58;
  Praxis movement 54;
  sanctions 4, 33, 70, 116;
  Second World War 52–3, 77, 78;
  ties with Arab world 154;
  West neglects study of
  See also Milošević, Serbia, Montenegro

Zagreb 201
Zametica, J. 136
Zenica 153
Zepa (‘safe area’) 125
Zhelev, Z. 16, 19, 21, 26, 33
Zhivkov, T.:
  anti-minority policies 11, 17;
  durability 10;
  flexibility 16;
  Iraq and 33;
  ousted 19;
  personal rule 13
Zimmermann, W. 57–8, 203–4, 221 n. 32
Zulfikarpasić, A. 180