C. Ifantis - G. Kazamias

**European Security and Balkan Challenges:
National Policies and Institutional Failures**

Introduction

This article discusses the issues and dilemmas that Western states and institutions faced in South-eastern Europe as a result of the "reactivation of history" (in contrast to the view that anticipated its end) in the region as well as the policies pursued as a response to the risks generated by the Yugoslav imbroglio. The discussion poses a difficult conceptual challenge. It deals simultaneously with three asymmetrically interrelated levels of analysis: global, European and Atlantic security, and Southern, or more precisely South-eastern Europe. The task is to assess the impact of the revolutionary changes in the international system as they affect (and are affected by) an evolving security community in the Atlantic arena and, in turn, to isolate the Balkan sub-regional security challenges and dilemmas in this fluid and rapidly shifting environment.

In this context the discussion examines the subregional dynamics related to the Yugoslav crisis/war with emphasis on the interrelationship between the goals and policies of different actors in the region as well as (most importantly) those of relevant external actors. The overall argument is that the Balkan conflict is strictly linked to the post-Cold War power dislocation in the international system, which is manifestly demonstrated by the involvement of the leading powers and institutions in the dynamics of crisis and by the real danger that the disorder will spill over to regions previously regarded as stable areas of the European subsystem. The analysis considers in turn: a) the response of the European Union and the USA; and b) the prospects of constructing a new, badly needed security regime in the area.

South-eastern Europe is a region where continent meets continent

and sea meets sea. It has been the cross-roads of civilisations, religions and political systems. Moreover, it has been a traditional area of disorder and political instability. The nationalist explosion that the whole peninsula experienced during the nineteenth century and the Great Power intervention lent the region its characterisation as the "powderkeg of Europe", a characterisation which has been fully justified by two great regional conflicts and one world war. The 1990s witnessed the re-emergence of the same nationalist "ignitions" accompanied by a never forgotten mistrust that can give birth to national confrontation, with the on-going crisis in former Yugoslavia as an excellent but bitter example. The resurgence of nationalism and ethnic strife in the Balkans resembles the state of affairs that prevailed in Europe after the end of the First World War. As Veremis[1] has noted,

> once the Pandora's box of statehood based on ethnic pre-ponderance was tampered with, misfortunes followed in rapid succession. New states with substantial ethnic minorities began to view them as potential threats to the new-found unity of the preponderant national culture.

This phenomenon can be explained by reference to the fact that south-eastern Europe did not follow the development of Western Europe, where states reached today's democratic maturity through long term evolution. In contrast, large sections of the Balkans experienced as much as five centuries of Ottoman rule (followed in some cases by a further period of Austro-Hungarian dominance) which led to a modern formation deprived of democratic traditions and institutions. In the largest part of the peninsula, this was followed by forty five years of Communist regimes, which, far from making things better, further hampered or even prevented the free and democratic expression of national identities.

The historical and religious roots of the nations in the area complicate the picture even further: three religions co-exist (though by

---

1. Thanos Veremis, "A Greek View of Balkan Development", in Kevin Featherstone & Kostas Ifantis (eds.), *Greece in a Changing Europe: between European Integration and Balkan Disintegration?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, forthcoming 1995).

no means always peacefully); most of the states occupying it are not ethnically homogeneous; furthermore, they have both allied and fought each other during most of their existence as independent states. Last but not least, it is a region which includes states with a highly varied degree of political, economic and social development. Against this background, "progress towards the emergence of a modern civil society and the stabilisation of the democratic institutions was hampered by the lack of legitimacy and by what Charles Gati calls an 'environment contaminated with guilt and suspicion'"[2].

In an international/European security framework, the geostrategic position of the region should also be emphasised. The Balkan states are located in the Eastern Mediterranean, at the heart of the vital sea routes to the Middle East, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean as well as to and from the Black Sea through the Aegean Archipelago. These elements have established the region's importance not solely for European states, but for the US as well. As a result, the management of the security issues of such an important European sub-region is linked directly to the definition of the new post-Cold War European and global security asset. That is why the power and security vacuum which resulted from the demise of bipolarity and the Yugoslav crisis were viewed with great anxiety and led to the political and diplomatic involvement of outside actors. For all these reasons, the Yugoslav war created a critical situation in South-eastern Europe and must be interpreted as an extreme expression of a global *transition crisis*. The internationalisation of the Yugoslav crisis was the result of a process that saw the demise of the former two-way division of the European continent into East and West. While the Western part appears to have retained its coherence, in the former Eastern Bloc gradually three new subdivisions —Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe— were taking shape. The Yugoslav war and wider Balkan instability were both affecting and affected by the changing European and global security agenda and European and American post-Cold War geopolitical interests.

2. Cited in A. Georgiev & E. Tzenkov, "The Troubled Balkans", in Hugh Miall (ed.), *Redefining Europe: New Patterns of Conflict and Co-operation* (London: Pinter/RIIA, 1994), pp. 49-50.

The Balkan crisis in the European security setting

The future of former Yugoslavia has been a European security problem whose solution depends on the stabilisation of the new international interrelationships and roles in the wider region. The formation of new political and strategic realities is subject to the policies and interests pursued by all actors involved (internal, regional, European and beyond). Therefore, if international uncertainty "promotes" the "Lebanisation" of the former Yugoslavia, the need to diffuse potentially uncontrolled crises could lead to international co-ordinated action that could promote stability and a peaceful settlement. However, co-ordinated action requires, *inter alia*, that the attitude of the international actors involved is shaped by *shared security agendas* and *clear cut, converging geopolitical interests*. This was not the case in the former Yugoslavia: the external response to the crisis was one of ambiguity and inconsistency that eventually aggravated the whole situation.

The Yugoslav crisis caught the EU in a delicate moment of attempting to formulate a new integration agenda at Maastricht with significant emphasis on foreign and security policy. Moreover, when the threat of break-up first became apparent during 1990, the crisis in Yugoslavia had to compete for attention with the dramatic developments not only in Eastern Europe but also in the Gulf[3]. The perceived threat to western interests greatly overshadowed the developing regional crisis. Even under these circumstances, Yugoslavia became the first major test for the EU's multilateral framework of foreign policy. Its failure was conspicuous, more so if one considers the fact that the crisis was the most foretold war in Europe since the Second World War[4]. In addition, the CIA had predicted the war since November 1990[5]. Therefore, initial expectations that the EU would be able to quickly solve the Yugoslav problem by political means and thus assert itself as the

3. M. Smith & S. Woolckock, *The United States and the European Community in a Transformed World* (London: Pinter/RIIA, 1993), p. 79.
4. The most common NATO scenario for the outbreak of a (third) world conflict in Europe had identified Yugoslavia as the initial destabilising crisis. See J. Zametica, *The Yugoslav Conflict*, Adelfi Paper 270 (London: IISS/Brasey's, 1992), p. 3.
5. *International Herald Tribune*, 29.11.1990, cited in H. Papasotiriou, *The Balkans After the Cold War* (Athens: Papazisis, 1994), p. 119, in Greek.

dominant actor in post-Cold War Europe were not realised. There were several reasons for this failure: the EU had never before attempted (or even engaged in) solving a complex international security problem; there was an almost total lack of ideas for dealing with the rise of ethnic hatred in the former communist world; the unravelling of the geopolitical solutions imposed early in the century by the Treaty of Versailles was not immediately apparent; at the outbreak of the crisis, the EU had not developed foreign and security policy instruments; and at times it appeared that the central aim of most of the EU member-states was some form of common policy (or even a consensus on the lowest and widest accepted common denominator) rather than a realistic and effective policy. Furthermore, individual member states within the EU often proceeded to form and apply individual policies with their own national agendas first and foremost in mind, and hinting at limited respect for the attempted common foreign policy[6]. The shared security agenda was limited and this clearly reflected on the policy. Furthermore, for the EU states, satisfying their national constituencies was much more important than either the issues in the (limited) shared security agenda or the formulation of a common foreign policy. A half-way house was found in the tacit understanding between the actors that an immediate aim was to keep the war from spreading, either to other former Yugoslav states or to the wider region[7].

The EU wielded significant influence from the outset of the Yugoslav crisis by upholding the principles of the Helsinki Final Act that codified Europe's post-war borders: a fact which affected the policy of states with historically disputed territories. When in 1991, the EU delegation, led by Jacques Delors, met with the Slovene President, it was made clear to him that the fragments of an exploded Yugoslavia would not be considered for any kind of association with the EU. The unity of Yugoslavia was a precondition and any economic assistance would depend on the

6. See further in the article for examples of Italy and Germany.

7. This aim was clearly reflected in statements such as that made by John Major, the British PM, in the House of Commons debate held on 31 May 1995. In a Downing Street press conference on the day he said that "preventing a full scale Balkan war [is] very much a strategic interest for those of us in the West and warned that a UN withdrawal would have grave consequences for the whole Balkan region". See *Financial Times*, 31 May 1995. On the House of Commons emergency debate see *Financial Times*, 1 June 1995.

peaceful solution of the crisis. However, EU pressure had come too little and too late: armed conflict in Croatia had already begun. Furthermore, when the EU envoys took a three-point plan for a cease-fire to the embattled state, the plan included the freezing of the implementation of independence thus implying a recognition of independence. The absence of consistency was the characteristic of institutions and states wavering between the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia and the self-determination of its constituent parts.

A good example of the EU role is furnished by the proposed *Alpe-Adria* association for regional economic co-operation, between Slovenia, Croatia, Austria, Hungary and parts of Italy (as opposed to the *Hexagonale* which included the entire Yugoslavia), which established the separate identities of the two republics. Italy, the moving force behind *Alpe-Adria* and the *Hexagonale*, gave conflicting messages of its position vis-à-vis Yugoslavia's future. Although a the then Italian Foreign Minister, Gianni De Michelis, stated his government's determination to conform to the EU line, on various occasions he intimated his own preference for the disintegration of the federal structure[8]. When the result of the Slovenian plebiscite of 1990 was declared —88 per cent in favour of independence— the writing on the wall was clear. It was equally clear that, with substantial Serb communities in Croatia and Bosnia, Belgrade would not allow the federal structure to disintegrate without a fight. At that moment, the EU should have engaged in vigorous diplomacy either to stem the tide of independence or to ensure that it took place peacefully. But it did nothing beyond issuing statements supporting Yugoslav integrity. This was the first and perhaps the most crucial failure.

Already at the meeting of EU foreign ministers in Dresden in 4 June 1991, doubts had been voiced about the possibility of preserving Yugoslavia and the opinion was expressed that its disintegration should be accepted as inevitable[9]. At the time of the conflict in Slovenia (June-July), the EU offered its "good offices" to the warring parties (which both parties accepted); EU ministerial "troikas" helped in reaching the Brioni Agreement; while EU monitoring missions were sent to Yugoslavia.

8. Veremis, "A Greek View of Balkan Development".
9. *The Guardian*, 4.6.1991.

However, in August the conflict in Croatia escalated, while the unsuccessful coup in Moscow essentially changed the political situation in Europe, thus marking the beginning of yet another stage of EU involvement in the Yugoslav crisis.

In the management of the Slovenian crisis, the EU lost credibility by supporting the integrity of Yugoslavia and —almost simultaneously— adopting and using a "policy of recognition" as its main means of pressure. This undermined its role as a neutral mediator: the question of recognition obviously classified it as siding with the "new", successor states in Yugoslavia. By lacking sufficient politico-military means for exercising influence, this policy came to be seen as legitimising the outcome of unilateral actions by the break-away republics. What the EU ignored was that Slovenia, with very few Serbs, was of little interest to Serbia. The brief war in Slovenia in June 1991 was the last gasp of the federation and its army. But the situations in Croatia and Bosnia were fundamentally different. In Croatia and Bosnia the policy of recognition did not help greatly the cause of self-determination while it provoked the sharp reaction of the Serbs. In essence, the EU policy of offering recognition undermined the policy of controlling the instability created by the overall crisis, and exposed the weakness of the German arguments.

Germany's forceful entry into the Yugoslav debate was initiated by foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, representing the sentiments of the Catholics of the German South as well as the vociferous demands of the large Croat community in the country. His move was backed by an aggressive right-wing German press campaign that only deepened Serb paranoia about a revival of Germany's Second World War aggressive intentions and its historical sympathy with "fascist" Croatia. Germany's case for early recognition sprang not so much from any historical sympathies with Croatia or from any hankering after influence in post-Cold War Balkans, but rested mainly on the acceptance that Yugoslavia was a thing of the past and recognition of this could lead to an easier settlement[10]. Genscher managed to convince his reluctant colleagues in the Brussels meeting of 16-17 December 1991 to recognise the independence of Slovenia and Croatia by threatening to do so unilaterally and

---

10. J. F. Brown, *Hopes and Shadows: Eastern Europe after Communism* (London: Longman, 1994), p. 266.

therefore undermine the cohesion of the EU. Germany's action, although it dispelled the previous ambiguity of the EU's policy, was a serious political error which proved detrimental for the EU's subsequent Balkan position: it ignored the ethnic minorities within the seceding entities. The German insistence on Croatian recognition subsequently appeared obstinate and premature and the consequences proved far-reaching. As Veremis has noted,

> If the dissolution of Yugoslavia occurred because Croats, Slo-
> venes and Muslims refused to live in a state with a pre-
> ponderant Serb element, the five resulting states have repro-
> duced the very same problem within their own realms -
> exchanging one dominant ethnic group for another in each
> instance. What the European Community has succeeded in
> doing by recognising the new states on the basis of ethnic
> preponderance, is to legitimise the ethnic basis of unitary
> states replacing a federal state[11].

The EU's policy in Croatia was a bureaucratic one: whether it was long negotiations about a cease-fire, or whether it was the idea that recognition on its own was a policy. Recognition of a state can never be a policy on its own; it is the end of a process by which a state is granted a form of external legitimacy that may make easier its incorporation in a local security framework. Yet, recognition for recognition's sake was essentially what the EU offered in Croatia, and most importantly, in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Instead of withholding recognition of the republic until it had a constitution agreed between the elected leaders of all three communities, Bosnia was told to hold a referendum which took place at the end of February 1992. It was boycotted by the Serb community (32 per cent of the total), but even so, the resulting constitution was considered adequate to merit recognition. Retro-spectively, the fact that the referendum could not possibly be conceived as a justification for giving Bosnia recognition was accepted as received wisdom in almost every Western capital. At the time, however, this decision compounded the bungle over Croatia —that is the failure to

11. Veremis, "A Greek View of Balkan Development".

extract binding commitments on behalf of the 600,000-strong Serb community, an issue which had contributed to the outbreak of war[12]. It must have been clear to the Bosnian Muslims that it was madness to proceed to independence under a constitution rejected by the most powerfully armed third of the country's population. But the EU (and the US) took the frivolous decision to recognise. Hence the net effect of EU and US policy was to secure UN membership for the break-away states while rejecting the parent unit.

For the US the Yugoslav conflict represented the first serious challenge to the American attempt to come to terms with the post-Cold War security threats and to proceed with the identification of US security interests in Europe. The Yugoslav crisis and the overall tension in the region required adjustment in security concepts and policies as well as a rapid reaction to events on the ground. In sharp contrast to either Middle East oil or the former Soviet nuclear arsenal, where American interests are clear cut and more or less easy to deem vital, the Balkan conflict was an issue that posed questions concerning the very roots of US policy: what are the purposes and power of the US in the emerging system of world politics? Neither the Bush nor the Clinton administrations had a ready answer and there was the need to evolve a new conceptual apparatus appropriate to the new situation[13]; for the Yugoslav crisis was not the "optimal model" for testing US determination in the new era. The question of American policy in Bosnia had to be addressed in the context of the overall debate on the role of the US after the Cold War and the answer had to come *ab intra*. Those who called for intervention argued that unquelled instability in the Balkans would eventually imperil US interests which can be defined only in terms of maintaining world order. The quest for world order is the missing link that purports to connect disorder in the Balkans to US national interests. Events in the region were regarded as dangerous because they could set in motion a chain of events inimical to American national interests and to the international economic order by infecting other

12. The result was the virtual destruction of the Serbs in Krajna after the Croat offensive of the summer of 1995; this fact was accepted as part of the price for ending the war, even though in effect it legitimised of the principle of "ethnically clean" states.

13. S. Brown, *The Faces of Power: Constancy and Change in United States Foreign Policy from Truman to Clinton* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 591.

areas regarded as essential to global economic interdependence. Thus, US security commitments were viewed as the indispensable precondition for the nation's economic prosperity.

There is no doubt that some American officials saw the crisis as a European responsibility and considered the EU capable of dealing with the situation[14]. Furthermore, the end of the Cold War had removed the Balkans as a source of superpower rivalry: there was less concern that regional instability would be exploited by one power or the other. In other words, for the US the Balkans in the initial stages of the crisis were not a pawn in the superpower game because there was basically only one superpower[15]. In such circumstances, in 1991 the Bush admini- stration determined its Yugoslav policy which was based "on support for the interrelated objectives of democracy, dialogue, human rights, market reform, and unity". By unity the US meant "the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia within its present borders... and that the US will not encourage or reward secession... We believe that Yugoslavia's external or internal borders should not be changed unless by peaceful means"[16]. In January 1992, however, EU recognition of Slovenia and Croatia and Russia's peaceful dissociation from the former Soviet republics began to change Washington's view of what its Yugoslav policy ought to be. Although the US at that time seemed to disagree with EU moves, asking for the postponement of recognition at least until democratic changes in secessionist republics were confirmed, events took a different course. After being recognised by the EU, Slovenia and Croatia were soon acknowledged (even if not directly recognised) by a large number of other countries, a fact which presented Washington with quite a different situation on the ground. In such circumstances it was only a matter of time before the US would accept the new reality and finally abandon its earlier policy of support for the preservation of Yugoslavia's territorial integrity. Moreover, the American diplomatic effort in Bosnia emerged within the framework of the European "policy of recognition". Con-

14. Smith & Woolckock, *The United State and the European Community*, p. 83.

15. S. Larrabee, "Recent Developments in the Balkans: External and Security Aspects", *The Southeast European Yearbook 1992*, ELIAMEP, pp. 83-92.

16. *"US Policy Towards Yugoslavia"*, Statement Released by Department of State Spokesman Margaret Tutweller, May 24, US Department of State Dispatch, Vol. 2, No. 22, June 3, 1991, pp. 395-396.

vinced that recognition would safeguard Bosnia from attack (the main threat at the time perceived as coming from Serbia), the US agreed with the EU to recognise Slovenia and Croatia if the European Union extended recognition to Bosnia[17]. In March 1992 Washington officially identified Serbia as the main culprit in the war in the former Yugoslavia and fell in line with the EU member-states.

As with the EU, Washington's intervention was condemned to failure, since it was rejected in the one place that it needed to be ratified: on the ground in the former Yugoslavia. Having criticised the Bush administration during the election campaign for not doing enough to arrest the Serbian "ethnic cleansing" campaign in Bosnia and to compel the warring ethnic groups to peacefully settle their disputes over the structure of the Bosnian state, President Clinton began his term in office under considerable pressure to formulate and implement an activist policy to end the civil war. However, the Bosnian Serbs had already succeeded in achieving their military goals: by February 1993, they had captured about 70 per cent of Bosnia. In addition, they had achieved the strategically important territorial connection between Krajna and Serbia. So the Clinton administration inherited a set of interlinked dilemmas at least as painful as those which had undermined the effectiveness of President Bush. On the political and diplomatic level, should the US insist that the Bosnian Serbs relinquish the bulk of the territory they had captured as a condition of a settlement? The Serbs were bound to reject this, presenting Congress with fertile ground to insist on lifting the arms embargo. President Clinton was advised that such an equalisation of fighting capability would likely prolong and intensify the civil war. On the military level, President Clinton's military advisers and NATO allies attempted to disabuse him of the notion (expressed during the President's election campaign) that limited and selected air-strikes against Bosnian Serb artillery or the enforcement of "no-fly" zones against Serbian aircraft would be sufficient to break the Serbian siege of Bosnian Muslim enclaves. The administration's frustration over its inability to find firm answers to either the political-diplomatic or the military questions had a dual effect: first, it contributed to an intensifi-

17. The EU recognised Bosnia on 6.4.1992. See e.g. *The Times*, 7.4.1992 "EC recognises Bosnia as gun battle rages".

cation of the fighting; secondly, it resulted in a situation in which the US found itself at odds with its allies over the crisis. From firm association with the EU process, the US faced an open clash with its European allies, particularly France and Britain by mid-1993[18]. Suggestions that the US would not commit ground troops without a firm and functioning peace settlement and congressional approval, would not endorse any peace plan that did not emerge from the participants themselves and that they would not exert pressure on the aggrieved party, the Bosnian Muslims, produced disarray between the US and its European allies. For the Europeans, this US policy stand had the unintended effect of delaying Muslim acceptance of a negotiated compromise, which in turn allowed the Serbs to intensify military efforts to consolidate their gains before the imposition of a firm cease-fire. Also, the very fact of French and British but not American engagement on the ground accentuated the policy differences. France and Britain forcefully opposed the American approach, fearful that lifting the arms embargo or proceeding with air-strikes would only prolong the fighting by encouraging the Bosnian Muslims not to negotiate[19].

The root of the problem has been that Washington and the European capitals had opposing views on what was going on in Bosnia. To use some badly devalued historical metaphors, the US saw the question of Bosnia as a repetition of Munich, the betrayal of a small state by Great Powers bent on maintaining the *status quo*. The Europeans, on the contrary saw it as another Vietnam, a quagmire that could suck in their troops and destroy them. In turn, the fact that these competing perceptions could not be squared, meant that international institutions could not perform a stabilising and conflict-resolving role effectively. The Clinton administration failed to articulate foreign policy objectives clearly or to employ various foreign policy instruments effectively in order to attain these goals. US leaders vacillated, producing a policy of operational contradictions, often declaring that the Yugoslav crisis was a European problem to be resolved under the aegis of the European Union, and then, reluctantly, endorsing Nato's first strikes against Serb targets when public opinion condemned the Sarajevo market massacre.

18. *The Guardian*, 28.1.1994.
19. *International Herald Tribune*, 20.4.1993 & 22.4.1993.

From outrage against the Serbs to the denunciation of the Vance-Owen partition plan, the US reacted spasmodically, especially when trying to promote the once preferred option of lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnian government. Moreover, the importance of the internal power struggle in the US political system further undermined the prospects of policy co-ordination. Like the President and his advisers, Congress was struggling to comprehend the emerging foreign policy agenda, if not to control it. The issue of the arms embargo in Bosnia was a glaring example. After intense denunciation of the President's dithering on Bosnia, Congress passed on a single day an amendment that would force the US to lift the embargo unilaterally. The decision of the Administration to stop enforcing the embargo came only days after the November 1994 mid-term elections which produced hostile Republican majorities in Congress.

As 1994 began there were signs that the international actors in the Yugoslav conflict were beginning to harmonise their policies. This did not mean that a solution had been found. Rather it meant that the transatlantic links took precedence over the fate of Bosnia. By the end of 1994 the White House had started using the British and French formulation that the Yugoslav conflict was "a civil war"[20]. However, rhetoric alone "will not do the trick". In May 1995, the hostage-taking crisis in Bosnia shook the will of the international community to act together at a time when a spirit of co-operation was urgently needed to avert a disaster; a disaster which could be interpreted as a result of a disgraceful, "macho" policy, egged on by western opinion makers from across the ideological spectrum, all of whom assumed that punitive action in the Balkans can be just and effective. But it is not. Moreover, this grave mistake could lead to further re-nationalisation of Bosnian policy and to further poisoning of the transatlantic relations. For example, Alain Juppe, the French prime minister was quick to distance France from any responsibility for the air strikes against the Serbs (in May 1995) which had actually triggered the hostage crisis. With anger, he described the air strikes as a poorly prepared operation which had "exposed the peace-keepers to thoughtless risks. We must not again

20. *The Guardian*, 30.11.1994.

carry out this type of operation"[21]. This is another instance of Europeans criticising the Clinton administration's foreign policy. But their complaints about US inconstancy, which at one time were blamed on the inexperience of the president, have become much more severe as a result of disagreements over Bosnia. This is the first war in Europe in 50 years in which Washington has been regularly (but not, alas, predictably) in conflict with its European allies. As a result the friction between Europe and the US could be reaching such a pitch, that there is reason to fear a structural deterioration in transatlantic relations. Such fragmentation of collective efforts to deal with Bosnia reflects a broader collapse of faith in the will of the international community to restore order in the Balkans. This lack of faith and trust which was the result of national policies that undermined the credibility and effectiveness of institutional actors can be perfectly illustrated by the escalation of the conflict, a concrete reality in mid-1995, without any immediate prospects of averting the pitch-dark storm that was brewing[22].

In short, Western policy in the former Yugoslavia turned out to be disastrous. With inaction caused by uncertain aims, division and confusion over the Balkans, it is a classic example of policy formulated in a historical vacuum. Administrative borders imposed by Tito were overnight declared international. But Tito, in his pursuit of the age-old maxim "divide and rule", created a solution of considerable complexity for Yugoslavia. By breaking up communities and mixing Bosnian Muslims with Serbs and vice-versa, he created a minefield. The West was walking in this minefield without a map. Western policy in the Balkans seemed to reflect the post-perestroika thinking that nations and the survival of democracy can be assured if major powers fine-tune economic assistance and supply political know-how[23]. When this premise was recognised as fallacious, the aim of the West in handling the Yugoslav conflict was not actually to solve it but to close the dossier. According to Eyal[24],

21. *The Guardian*, 29.5.1995; see also *Financial Times*, 30.5.1995.

22. *The Times*, 30.5.1995.

23. N. Stavrou, "The Dismantling of the Balkan Security System: Consequences for Greece, Europe and NATO", *Mediterranean Quarterly* 6/1 (Winter 1995), pp. 27-48.

24. J. Eyal, "A Western View of Greece's Balkan Policy", in Featherstone & Ifantis (eds.), *Greece in a Changing Europe: between European Integration and Balkan Disintegration?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, forthcoming 1995).

Western policy-makers

> will accept almost any settlement going, fifteen Bosnias if necessary in a confederation —anything— as long as the file is closed and it can move to another issue. The basic message is quite simple, everyone talks about an indivisible security: nobody believes in it. The reason that not one Western government ever believed that stopping the war in Yugoslavia was worth the bones of one Western soldier was precisely because everyone assumed that security is divisible.

Unravelling the crisis?

What has become obvious is that the West has followed courses of action that have in essence encouraged the "balkanisation" of former Yugoslavia. The reversal of this policy that took place in the second half of 1995 is not difficult to understand. A series of internal political events worked to push leaders and governments towards a more active policy.

The Republican majorities in the US Congress after November 1994 were one of these political events. Republican congressmen decided on a war of attrition on the President, with policy on the former Yugoslavia chosen as one of the battlegrounds. Frequent Congressional denunciations of the President's policy coupled with the need to seek a prominent foreign affairs success (as an electoral "buoyancy aid") directed President Clinton towards action in the former Yugoslavia. After the summit meeting in Moscow on 8 May (when he apparently sought and probably secured the tacit approval of Russia for his policy), the President is reported to have instructed Tony Lake, his national security advisor, to "start rounding up the allies for a more robust posture"[25].

Among EU members, France and Britain played a prominent role in the same period, with the formation and deployment in Bosnia of the Rapid Reaction Force[26]. The reasons for its creation appear obscure, as

25. *The Guardian*, 31.5.1995.
26. Dutch troops also participate in the rapid reaction force. See *The Observer*, 4.6.1995 for a description of the rapid reaction force; *The Guardian*, 8.6.1995 for talks between the UN and representatives from Britain, France and Holland and UN officials for the

is the precise role this force is to play. It can be speculated that internal pressures in Britain (where the hard-pressed Conservative government was fighting a prolonged election period) and the change of guard in France (where the new President, Jacques Chirac, sought a redefinition of France's world role) were behind the formation of the rapid reaction force[27]. In any event, it provided yet another incentive for the US to assume a leadership role.

The tougher anti-Serb stance that followed, coupled with the series of air-strikes that devastated Bosnian-Serb communications, decisively altered the course of the war. The re-armed and re-organised Bosnian-Moslem army rode alongside the (mainly: US) air strikes and recovered considerable chunks of territory. When the Bosnian territory was in effect almost equally split between the Bosnian Serbs and the Muslim-Croat alliance, operations stopped and an armistice came into effect[28]. A series of diplomatic initiatives followed when Richard Holbrooke, special envoy of President Clinton shuttled between capitals, succes-sfully persuading the belligerents to accept negotiations[29]. The first round of talks in New York were followed by a second round of negotiations, uniquely hosted in a US Air Force base in Ohio. US leader-ship and pressure, even at this late stage, appears to have decisively influenced the outcome of the war and probably hastened its end.

Of course, it is by no means clear that more coherent or unified western policies could have had a decisive effect. It may well be that the crisis would have developed along similar lines regardless of what the West did or failed to do. But decisive and common policies would have been better than the compromises, half-measures, contradictions, and misleading promises that resulted from Western divisions. Furthermore, inaction was "reinforced" by the need to address the problematic ramifi-

command of the force; *The Guardian*, 16.6.1995 which mentions lifting of objections of US Congress leaders for the creation of a UN rapid reaction force.

27. The reasons behind Holland's (limited) participation are more obscure. Some credit may be given to pressures generated by the helplessness of Dutch peacekeepers in Bosnia and the allegations against them that these gave grounds to.

28. *Financial Times*, 20.9.1995.

29. The active US role is made clear also from newspaper headlines: e.g. "US hopes to contain Bosnian fighting", *Financial Times*, 20.9.1995; "US averts a talks boycott by Bo-snians", *Financial Times*, 26.9.1995; "US urges more progress on Balkan peace", *Financial Times*, 27.9.1995.

cations that the crisis was seen to have for developments elsewhere. The conflict had a wider geopolitical scope: it was at the centre of the post-Cold War issue concerning the extent to which the West should identify itself on the one hand with the national self-determination fever sweeping across Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the demise of the Soviet Union, and on the other hand with federalist principles and structures for achieving regional and global public order in an increasingly interdependent world.

Conclusions: Peace and Stability in the Balkans

Against this wider background of conflicting and confusing responses to both the Yugoslav crisis and the wider systemic and structural changes in the Balkan sub-system, the central question is how can the "security vacuum" —the result of the systemic shift to a polycentric world— be filled, in order to, in the short run, enrol the regional actors in a framework of non-confrontational interaction and in the long run establish those structures that can lead to harmonious and co-operative patterns of behaviour by advancing the level of interdependence and solidifying a security complex based on some mutuality of interests? Any answer to this complex but crucial question should take account of the variety of historical, cultural, domestic, regional, and systemic parameters that the discussion has identified as functional elements in the Balkan quandary. Various possible solutions arise to the problem of stability in the area.

The first option is based on the establishment of a balance of power system among all the actors —regional and external. The inner balance of power cannot operate because of both internal and external factors. If one considers the behaviour of the actors in a balance of power system, it appears to be characterised by an inclination to negotiation and alliance building and to the maintenance, or re-integration of defeated actors. Moreover, limited war is often a means to redress the distribution of power within this type of system. Considering Balkan history in the 19th century, and present conflicts in former Yugoslavia, such rules of restraint cannot be met. The historical experience and the disintegration process of the 1990s show that the sub-regional balance of power cannot be isolated from the overall one. During the period of formation of Balkan states, shifting sub-regional alliances were not

enduring enough to guarantee stable relations among the actors in the area. This favoured external intervention. In the 1990s not only has the feasibility of compatible and stable balances at all levels been very dubious, but the possibility to redress the inner balance by means of limited external support of one of the parties to the conflict was strongly disputed and led to policy divergence among the external actors instead. For example, the US policy aimed to redress the military balance by strengthening the Bosnian Muslims (as put forward and applied by the Clinton administration) did help create and —apparently— stabilise the military balance. Nevertheless, such a measure could not make the political balance stable in the sub-region in the long run[30]. The evident lack of willingness of those actors to play an active balancing role in the sub-region has undermined their credibility in exercising such a function. In this respect, Russian diplomatic and political involvement in the aftermath of the 1994 Sarajevo massacre could be interpreted less as an attempt to help the peace-keeping process and more as a balancing act against NATO involvement. According to Tsakonas,

> given the fact that the effects of change in the dominant system upon the sub-system are greater, it can be concluded that the "susceptibility" of the Balkan sub-system to external influences (which are not at all predictable and constant) will only lead to the creation of anti-axes and anti-coalitions, constantly reproducing a state of instability and insecurity[31].

Last, but not least, balance of power is made easier when a degree of common cultural values exists and there is a shared set of objectives. These conditions have hardly ever been met in the Balkan peninsula. Ultimately, the state of relations between countries is a product of the direction of ruling elites and pressure from general publics. Balance-of-power systems should be dismissed as long-term objectives in a region where history has been written by manifestations of atavistic tempta-

30. L. Bozzo & R. Ragioneri, "Regional Security in the Balkans and the Role of Turkey: An Italian Perspective", *The Southeast European Yearbook 1992*, ELIAMEP, pp. 11-42.

31. P. J. Tsakonas, "The Issue of Security in the Balkan Sub-System: New Trends and Options", *Research Institute for European Studies*, Research Paper No. 6, October 1994.

tions and conflicting visions of national greatness. As Couloumbis and Yannas[32] have noted, the collective challenge is to contain these territorially overlapping and potentially irredentist visions which add up to a highly explosive formula which cannot be neutralised by any power politics prescription.

What is needed therefore is an approach that can lead to strengthening regional co-operation by making the actors involved understand that more is at stake than narrowly defined national interests. This kind of understanding can be promoted only by structural sets of norms which prescribe rules of conduct to international actors, limit their action, and define their expectations. In that respect, the role of the organised international community, and more precisely the role of international institutions, should be emphasised. Such an approach does not neglect the manifest negative consequences —in terms of stability— of the new distribution of power in the world system. However, it stresses the importance of institutions in reducing uncertainty in the global arena by stabilising actors' expectations and thus fostering co-operation among them. International institutions are important for states' actions in part because they affect the incentives facing states, even if those states' fundamental interests are defined autonomously[33], as is the case in south-eastern Europe. They also affect the costs associated with alternatives that might have existed independently. Certainly, the region has suffered more than its fair share of violence. Much of it, though, was engineered in the past by competing alliances hatched in the West, rather than local animosities. And the region (former Yugoslavia always excepted) displayed a genuine desire to forget its turbulent history: Bulgaria and Romania for example, refused to engage in any regional disputes and embarked on friendly relations with Greece and Turkey. In that sense, "Balkanisation" could be perceived as a Western nightmare, not an Eastern reality. Nevertheless, regional co-operation has its limits because of the highly uneven political and economic development among the region's actors; that is why institutionalised patterns of co-operative behaviour may be the answer for the future stability of the

32. T. Couloumbis & P. Yannas, "Greek Foreign Policy Priorities for the 1990s", in Featherstone & Ifantis, *Greece in a Changing Europe.*

33. R. O. Keohane, *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory* (Boulder: Westview, 1989), p. 5.

region.

It should be emphasised that the "institutional" argument as deve-loped here, does not contradict the failure of "institutional diplomacy" to effectively intervene and resolve the conflict. In the case of the for-mer Yugoslavia, the institutional assumption has been severely under-mined by the claimed failure of international institutions in successfully dealing with post Cold War regional and sub-regional security issues. However, this failure is not without explanation. Amidst the celebra-tions for the end of the Cold War the international community ignored several features of the international context, all too obvious with res-pect to matters of war and peace: world politics lacks authoritative governmental institutions and is characterised by pervasive uncertainty, especially during periods of systemic change; states are forever impin-ging on one another's interests; military power was and still is a major arbiter of events in regions undergoing fundamental transformation in terms of location of power. In the case of Bosnia, what ended the war was a redistribution of military power (and more concretely: military hardware and advice) and the assumption of leadership of external actors by the US. Finally, the failure of international institutions cannot be understood without reference to two inter-related facts: first, their structure was the product of an entirely different global configuration (Cold War); and second, they had to cope with the Yugoslav war during a period dominated by their own "identity crisis debate".

These features notwithstanding, international institutions can be used effectively. Collective problem solving among states of widely different cultural commitments and with divergent historical memories can be successful if "institutionalisation" aims at transcending cultural and historical boundaries, "to establish transcultural and transideological shared meanings"[34]. Of course, the most important and effective provi-der of security remains the sovereign state. However, international institutions can reinforce the continuous process of the sharing of mean-ings. This depends on the ability of interstate entities to change the way they attempt to solve problems as their members debate effectiveness. Change depends on learning and adaptation. Learning, adaptation and

---

34. E. Haas, *When Knowledge is Power: Three Models of Change in International Organisations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 17.

innovation, in turn, depend on the correct evaluation of substance and circumstances. The Balkan disorder resulted in a deep dissatisfaction with the performance of the international institutions. Member-states and general publics became disillusioned with the inability of the UN, EU, NATO and OCSE to solve the problem. The challenge for the states that form international institutions is to use this dissatisfaction in a positive way: advance the level of learning by making the consequences of action or inaction, as experienced by policy-makers, part of the institutional debate.

In the Balkans, the international institutions were used to cope with problems beyond their "creation rationale", never before experienced since the Second World War. Moreover, policies were formulated without a *common* understanding of what caused the conflict. The international bodies had both great opportunities and severe limits to perform their role in stabilising the actors' mutual expectations, thus enhancing co-operation. However, the absence of any institutional action could only worsen a situation which, as already shown, could not be stabilised my means of other mechanisms. International organisations and their member-states should value very highly their experiences in former Yugoslavia, and they should use "learning" to question earlier beliefs about the appropriateness of ends of action and to think about the selection of new ones; as Haas[35] put it, the should use the opportunity to "revalue" themselves.

In that context, the first long-term priority of the international community is to reinforce the process of "Europeanisation" both by safeguarding and strengthening the *acquis communautaire* in the EU, and by making clear that it will not remain merely an amorphous aggregate of the separate *acquis nationeaux* of the member states, but rather an inclusive pan-European one. In most of Europe the Balkans have been regarded as a zone of perpetual instability, a region best left outside the continent's co-operation structures. Poland, the Czech and Slovak republics and Hungary have been identified as serious candidates for membership of both the EU and NATO. When, however, it comes to other Balkan countries (such as Bulgaria and Romania) the West has been ominously silent. Thus, there appears to be a *prima facie* case for

35. Haas, *When Knowledge is Power*, p. 24.

suggesting that those who believe that the best tactic is to isolate the
Balkans from the rest of Europe will most probable prove to be wrong:
the region's problems should be handled collectively with Western
support, or the looming crises in the Balkans will ultimately affect the
rest of Europe. In an increasingly interdependent world, isolation does
not solve the problems in hand.

The belief that seems to dominate the EU and NATO is that it is up
to them to decide just how far they should become involved in the
region. That assumption is wrong, as is the West's insistence throughout
the crisis that Balkan states solve their problems before, not after
joining Europe-wide institutions. The EU and NATO always proceeded
from the assumption that their member's problems were tackled
collectively. Even so, neither NATO nor the EU has "solved" a single
ethnic dispute in the West. What they did, was to reduce the significance
of these conflicts for Europe's wider security concerns.

The same effort is required in the Balkans. To be effective, such an
effort requires the active involvement of NATO and the EU based on a
different *problematique*: they must offer carrots as well as sticks. Until
now the carrots were conspicuously lacking. Now, the EU Commission
in its Communication on the Reconstruction of Former Yugoslavia sets
a number of objectives which aim at strengthening the internal demo-
cratic structures of the countries in the area and reinforcing civil society
and even attaches conditions on the provision of assistance[36]. With the
actual end of the war in sight and (hopefully) imminent, it is encouraging
to see some steps in this direction.

The lesson of Yugoslavia has been that, despite all their differences,
the Balkan states cannot be separated from Europe's wider security
concerns. Ignoring the need to integrate the region into continent-wide
structures could mean that fears of future violence will become self-
fulfilling prophecies. If the process of "learning" does not lead to institu-
tional adaptation and policy innovation, Western policy-makers will
soon experience how disturbing could be the potential complications in
metacommunist societies, where the process of democratic transition

36. See *Europe Documents* No 1953, 11 October 1995, "European Commission Gui-
delines for the Reconstruction of the Countries of Former Yugoslavia", esp. p. 2 under
headings "Objectives of International Support for reconstruction" and "Conditionality".

could be interrupted by political and economic convulsions leading to authoritarian "solutions" with the rise to power of populist, fundamentalist, xenophobic and ultra-nationalist regimes that would inevitably target Western liberal democracies as "the enemy" in a true "clash of civilisations" fashion.

University of Portsmouth, UK
University of Bradford, UK