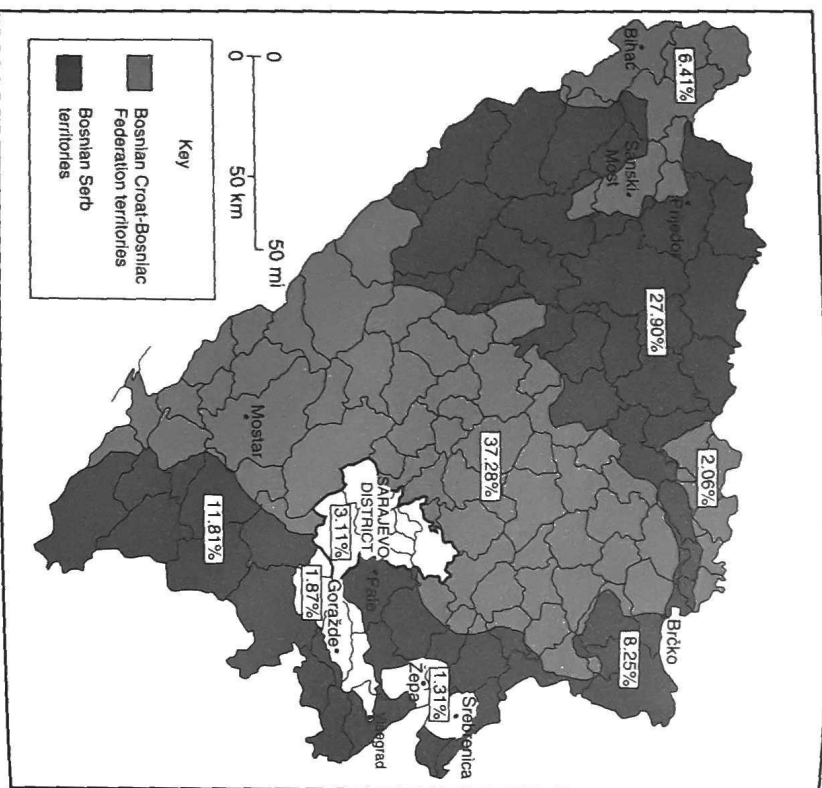


FIGURE 9-4. The "Contact Group" Plan



1992, the cochairmen proposed to set up a negotiating group of the major powers—a Contact Group composed of representatives from the United States, Britain, France, Germany, and Russia—to work out the missing ingredient to a general peace, of an agreement between the new Bosnia-Croat federation and the Bosnian Serbs. The UNPROFOR-ICFY momentum of February–March then went on hold until July, while yet another peace proposal was constructed (see figure 9-4).

Conclusion

This chapter began by identifying two sets of problems that emerged from the international approach to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (and

the conflicts throughout the former Yugoslavia) and that, in their interaction particularly, help to explain its inadequacy. Those were: a choice of methods to solve the conflict based on a distinction between places that major powers considered of vital national interest or of significance to global security, on the one hand, and those which only justified humanitarian assistance, on the other; and the lack of understanding of the pursuit of national self-determination and its implications for international intervention, which resulted in a constant tension between the view that the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was a *civil* war among *ethnic* groups and the view that this was a war of aggression by its neighboring republics of Serbia and Montenegro (neither view being correct). These problems reflect above all the application of instruments designed for a different set of problems and a different era—the cold war, in brief—that were not appropriate to this conflict. The paucity of ideas about how to approach the problem and the inadequacy of those first applied out of habit or availability were demonstrated in the increasingly ad hoc character of the international response—trying out elements lifted from other engagements that were considered successful and repeating in one part of the country approaches that were used in another, regardless of the difference or similarity between them and of the success or failure of the first instance.

The experience of attempts to stop the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in its first two years, from April 1992 to April 1994, suggests three conclusions in particular. One is that the current distinction between humanitarian concerns and security interests and the form of intervention appropriate to each is unsustainable in such wars. At a minimum, such conflicts require an understanding of threats to international security that is different from that which dominated thinking during the cold war. The second is that political negotiations over conflicts of national sovereignty can only produce a complex Cyprusization, when the major powers behind those negotiations are unwilling to define and agree on a policy concerning the right to a state and perceive no vital interest to do anything more than to contain the conflict. The third is the fallacy of containment. Let us examine each briefly.

The Mislplaced Distinction between Humanitarian and Security Interests

The one consistency in international action toward the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina was that the interests at stake did not justify military action except in support of humanitarian goals; this included the refusal of the United States to send any soldiers to the ground at all. The overriding objective was to do as much as possible to aid the war's victims and to assist the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in imple-

menting its global mandate, but without becoming engaged in the war itself. This suited the majority conviction in Europe that this was a civil war in which Europeans should not mix, and it suited the United States, which remained guided throughout its policy shifts by the priority of upholding prevailing norms of European and global security that Yugoslavs should obey (primarily those embodied in the Helsinki Accords concerning borders and human rights) rather than address their problem. But even the interventionists used moral arguments, demanding military action to defend a system of values and a class of "victims." No more than their governments, they never argued the more compelling motives of economic or national interest because that would have required substantial rethinking on all sides to recognize the fundamental security interests for nations, Europe, and the international order in the type of conflict represented by the Bosnian war.

The humanitarian mission undertaken by the thousands of brave peacekeeping forces and staff workers of UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and nongovernmental charities clearly saved lives and assisted in innumerable ways the right to asylum, safe transit, and food and shelter necessary to winter survival of the populations at risk. The question remains, however, whether there was an alternative. Would there have been such a need for this assistance and could even more deaths have been prevented if the political and security issues had been confronted more directly? The course of the war itself was influenced by the presence of a humanitarian mission and this international approach, which makes the counterfactual question even more difficult to answer. But was this the most effective way to approach this conflict?

Whereas the UN peacekeeping forces did not enter Croatia until a cease-fire had been signed and had held for nearly three months, the humanitarian organizations and peacekeeping forces sent to protect them entered Bosnia-Herzegovina in the midst of a war. The very organization that had opposed action during 1991 as interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state was introduced into the conflict when that state had ceased to exist. The organization most constrained by the norms of sovereignty and neutrality was chosen to deal most immediately with warring parties who were fighting to achieve separate recognition of their own sovereignty and its rights of non-interference within their claimed borders. Peacekeeping principles require neutrality, consent of the parties, and rules of engagement that allow the use of force only in self-defense. These principles were irresistible resources for nationalist leaders aiming to create a state and to gain international recognition. In implementing these principles, the UN organizations on the ground became vehicles of their state-making, in effect not observers but integral parts of the political struggles

that included war. This in turn constantly interfered in the ability to implement the UN mandate.

Any humanitarian operation is based on the distinction between civilians and warriors, but civilians in this war were not inadvertently trapped by fighting; they were its intended subject. The humanitarian agencies and the UN force providing them essential protection and assistance were inadvertently trapped into a Hobson's choice between protest to attract international attention and acting the accomplice. Because they were obliged to ensure refugees' right of asylum, for example, they were accused of facilitating the combatants' policies of population transfer or expulsion to create national states that excluded from their territory all those of the wrong ethnicity or those who opposed the policy of ethnically pure areas. The obligation (and prudence) to request consent of a warring party for passage of relief convoys through the territory it controlled left the relief forces little choice but to accept the terms of passage, such as what they could and could not transport and when. Seen as concessions to their opponent, however, this then risked compromising their appearance of neutrality to the other side. Government forces criticized them harshly for assisting the aggressors and war criminals. Others accused them of covertly delivering arms and ammunition to Government forces. In a war to define the populations as well as the territories of new states, any aid to those populations was perceived by the other sides as aiding their enemy.

The rule of consent was at the same time a golden opportunity for each warring party to have its authority over a territory recognized as legitimate. Bosnian Serbs, in part because they had the fewest alternative sources of recognition from an international community that labeled them the aggressors, were particularly inclined to subject UNHCR and UNPROFOR convoys to endless inspections and restrictions on their freedom of movement. More than half of all humanitarian aid went to support the war effort by feeding and supplying soldiers. Control over the distribution of aid was a primary basis of local power; rivals deprived of this source of patronage (not only across ethnolocal lines but especially within one camp) could not survive for long. Because supply routes (roads, railroads, and rivers) were among the most important strategic objectives of military offensives, there was a necessary conflict between warring parties and the UN organizations over the control of routes, a conflict between the war and the humanitarian goals.

Performing the tasks of peace in the midst of a war for competing rights to self-determination thus made this UN mission vulnerable to two kinds of criticism for ineffectiveness. On the one hand, the war and the principle of consent limited the freedom of movement without which it could not function—to deliver aid and to report on violations of international conventions, signed cease-fire agreements, and mandated weapons-

exclusion zones. Major powers were not willing to create a peace-enforcement mission, so the mandate could be implemented only to the extent that the parties gave their consent. On the other hand, the Bosnian government and its SDA leadership expected, because Bosnia was a recognized member state, that the UN should protect its sovereignty against the Bosnian Serbs. Many Bosnians and Bosnian supporters believed that the principle of neutrality was totally inappropriate because it assumed a legal, military, and moral equality between them and the heavily armed Bosnian Serbs that they did not accept. Simple logic told them that the UN's neutrality meant it was in fact siding with the Serbs. Explaining the distinction between a humanitarian mission and one aimed at the defense of a nation's borders and sovereignty only brought out the incongruity of such a mission under the circumstances and a cynical response about fattening lambs for the slaughter.

In response, through the Security Council, to the real and the perceived ineffectiveness of the UN mission, the major powers in effect admitted that part of the problem was their own unwillingness to commit sufficient military force to implement the principles they proclaimed, for they added more and more peacekeeping troops and more and more military assets. But this ratcheting up of the meaning of "all necessary means" applied to the humanitarian goals. It did not alter the other source of the problem—the major powers' unwillingness to state an objective other than containment with charity. Their response did nothing to remove the contradictions in the mandate or between the mandate and the nature of the conflict. Instead, they expressed dissatisfaction by adding more and more tasks to the original mandate and making it ever more difficult to fulfill.

The most blatant case of the contradiction embedded in most Security Council resolutions on the conflict was the concept of safe areas. This was the quintessential humanitarian task in motivation: to protect civilians in six Muslim-majority towns that were largely within Serbian-held territory and encircled by Serbian artillery by declaring them demilitarized and threatening the use of air strikes against those heavy weapons if they fired into the town. In two cities, Sarajevo and Goražde, this protection was extended to the creation of weapons-exclusion zones, activating the principle of demilitarization with commitments of NATO air power and operating procedures that delegated to the UNPROFOR commander and civilian head the authority to call in close air support to defend UN personnel or air strikes on weapons in violation.

An additional tactic of warfare was thus encouraged. The Bosnian government turned the safe areas into bases for rest, recuperation, and resupply of troops within "enemy" territory that it hoped to regain and for bases from which to fire out of their enclave into Serbian-claimed territory. The aim of the latter was to provoke Serbian artillery fire to

invoke the use of air power against the Serbs and to use the media attention and rest of UN and NATO credibility that safe areas would attract (unlike other cities and towns similarly at risk from shelling by all sides, such as Mostar) to reinforce their propaganda strategy of being the victims of Serb aggression and deserving military assistance. To Bosnian Serbs, the purpose of these enclaves was not humanitarian but strategic, a tactic of the Bosnian Muslim government to gain international protection for pockets of land that would break up into an indefensible patchwork the contiguous territory Serbs claimed in order to deprive them of a viable state. In targeting the safe areas, however, they found an excuse within the humanitarian concept—that if a safe area was not in fact demilitarized but rather an active Bosnian government military installation, they could attack it to provoke international attention. Even if they risked being bombed, they could thereby exert pressure on the UN to create an exclusion zone that would be more likely to demilitarize the area in fact; they could hope to force movement on the diplomatic front to obtain not only a local but a general cease-fire and pressure for a political settlement to end the war that would give them recognition of their statehood; and in the worst case, that of no international attention, they might succeed in expelling the Muslim civilians and taking the territory.

The creation of safe areas, motivated largely by the humanitarian objective, thus made possible an escalation of the war and further exposure of civilians to bombardment. Because the safe areas were created explicitly as havens for Muslim-majority towns and against Bosnian Serb attack, protecting them with air strikes risked compromising the neutrality of the UN mission. The more that air power was used, the more it moved the UN mission toward war against the Bosnian Serbs, risking not only retaliation against its personnel but also a fundamental change in the mandate from a humanitarian to an offensive or enforcement operation that required different rules of engagement and statement of mission. This view was reinforced by the fact that the primary proponent of assertive use of air power, the United States, had no troops on the ground in Bosnia-Herzegovina and held to the view that this was not a civil war but a war of Serbian aggression. But the result was also constant pressure on UNPROFOR officials to activate air power, threatening a shift from decisions that carefully weighed the costs and benefits of a particular air action in relation to the humanitarian tasks throughout the republic and the efforts to bring the war to an end by negotiation and cooperation among the parties to a contest of wills and relative power between NATO and the UN and between the United States and its allies with troops on the ground.⁶⁴

The humanitarian objective of international intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina also included upholding international and European conver-

tions on humanitarian norms. This goal was a priority for the United States in its approach to the conflict as significant only in terms of broader norms, but it was also the main focus of those actively promoting military intervention on the side of the Bosnian government and of Muslims. It led as well to contradictions in practice as a result of the humanitarian-security distinction. The primary method of defending these norms was transparency: monitoring violations of international law and UN resolutions so as to shame the parties by public attention, or its threat, into observing the norms. But fighting interrupted the freedom of movement necessary for UN military observers or the ICRC to perform this task, whereas no warring party preparing a military offensive or activities that violated the norms would be likely to give consent to observe violations of those norms—expulsions, massacres, rapes—unless they wanted to be seen. Those parties who already had widespread international support were more vulnerable to international opinion but less likely to be exposed, whereas those who were most accused of such atrocities and on whom media attention focused—the Bosnian Serbs in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina—were far less susceptible because they had little international support to lose or to try to maintain. In fact, the conditions in which publicity and shaming were most likely to have their desired effect (stopping such violation) were those that promoted the outcome the United States and the Bosnian government supporters also opposed—the further creation of states on ethnic bases and the consolidation of power for nationalist leaders, such as when it gave leaders an excuse to dismiss local rivals (as occurred with the exposure of the Bosnian Serb detention camps in summer–fall 1992 and their eventual closing).

The problem lay not in the goals but in the methods. The primary policy was to declare that warring parties and regional leaders obey existing norms regardless of their actual effect on civilian lives or the continuation of war and with little attention to the means necessary to enforce. The recording of numbers of atrocities, artillery and mortar rounds, flights of soldiers and supplies, and deaths was of no use without external action, for the observers themselves did not have the mandate or the rules of engagement to prevent them. The U.S. government pressed for an international war crimes tribunal on the model of Nuremberg, apparently intending that this would deter violations of the Geneva conventions on conduct in war and against genocide by holding leaders accountable for “serious violations of humanitarian law” and would force leaders to negotiate.⁶⁵ Many argued that it was one thing to look the other way at a Pol Pot or an Idi Amin, but when the threat of genocide reached Europe, the procedure had to be revived. Otherwise, the world community would lose the instrument itself for lack of legitimacy.⁶⁶

But threats that pushed warriors further into a corner and that increased incentives to create a separate state and the sanctuary inherent in national sovereignty were unlikely to stop the war. Investigations into abuses caused by ethnic cleansing in both Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were taking place at the same time as new, intensified campaigns of forced expulsion and exchange of populations, under cover of cease-fire and military peace. Accusations of war crimes and threats of prosecution after the war against political leaders who claimed to be acting to protect the nation tended to induce fiercer loyalty among their followers rather than rejection. By ignoring this counterproductive result—encouraging the conditions that led to violations—supporters of the War Crimes Tribunal appeared to give priority to defending the norms rather than to preventing conditions that would result in more victims.

A threat depends on its credibility. The fact that the war was in part the result of a process of political disintegration and the destruction of one state and creation of others meant that the conditions for upholding norms without external force did not exist.⁶⁷ Political and military leaders unaccountable to a stable legal order are unlikely to have the “paper trail” necessary for legal proceedings.⁶⁸ Moreover, because the procedure was pushed largely by the United States, the accusations became a servant of American policy toward the conflict itself, which required a conspiracy of silence about atrocities committed by parties who were not considered aggressors. Such atrocities by Bosnian Croats were acknowledged at Mostar, Stupni Do, and Ahmića. Timed when Bosnian Serb forces were pressing in August 1992 for a political settlement and again in December 1992 when opposition forces in Serbia had realistic hopes of defeating President Milošević in Yugoslav elections, a war crimes prosecution was given priority over the goal of a political settlement. UN envoy Madsden Albright intensified pressure for the tribunal and its financing during 1993, arguing that the U.S. policy was following two separate tracks, one seeking negotiations and one aiming toward a tribunal. The British insisted that the two were in conflict. The original proponents of a war crimes tribunal, in fact, were antiwar activists within the country (particularly from Belgrade but also from Sarajevo) who believed that a tribunal would interrupt the cycle of revenge that kept the conflict going. It would take the obligation of vengeance out of the hands of local communities and citizens and hand the task of judging and punishing to an international body of neutral, respected professionals, enabling all victims to begin the healing process.

The humanitarian focus was also seriously constrained by its reliance on the categories of victims and victimization. Focusing on the defense of victims instead of on the military or constitutional protections necessary to prevent their victimization created more victims. This was most noticeable, as discussed above, in the American defense of Muslim victims

rather than Bosnian sovereignty. Without a nonethnic definition of citizenship, Muslims would lose their claim to an integral state against Croats and Serbs. When the U.S. Congress and the Clinton administration derided the Vance-Owen plan for "appeasing Serbs" and rewarding "land grabs," they withdrew support from the one remaining effort to protect a multiethnic state and to constitute Bosnian integrity. One could not defend Muslims without consistently defending Bosnia as a concept. When the Bosnian army went on the offensive to control or to retake land, foreign support for the Bosnian Muslims waned. When they no longer acted like victims, the basis for defending them was difficult to sustain. Indeed, reports of atrocities and ethnic cleansing by Muslim militia as well seemed to affirm the judgment that military intervention was not wise and that this was in fact a civil war after all.

The most problematic consequence of the focus on humanitarian needs, moral arguments, and the need to uphold universal norms instead of arguments based on vital security interests was the role it gave to the mass media, the most sophisticated weapon of the late twentieth century. Monitoring and recording abuses of norms depended on publicity and media attention. The image of victim, particularly within Europe, was unusually telegenic and was well suited to the "human interest" and (perversely) "entertainment" approach of television news in the 1990s that abhors complexities and emphasizes the fast-moving "sound bite" measured in seconds. The country was far more accessible to journalists and to their audiences than many other places. Twenty-two journalists were killed in the first nine months of the war; four more were missing and presumed dead.⁶⁹ The traditional Balkan portrait is of backward peoples, but they are not only fully Europeans but also highly educated in communications technology and sophisticated in its manipulation. Just as nationalist intellectuals and politicians had used the mass media to encourage war at home, they also built it into their external strategies.⁷⁰ It was the most successful weapon of the Bosnian government. Whenever attention to Bosnia's plight lagged, the government provoked incidents around Sarajevo and other safe areas. These incidents were immediately reported live by ham radio operators employed by the government. The resulting public pressure was so persistent that even the Bosnian government's most consistent supporters began to complain. In the fall of 1993, for example, members of the U.S. administration berated the dangerous role of the global media in stimulating humanitarian impulses for action that was not in the interest of the United States. The administration referred to this phenomenon as the "CNN curve" of public opinion.⁷¹ "Television images," Secretary of State Warren Christopher told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "cannot be the North Star of America's foreign policy."⁷²

Classifying action toward Yugoslavia as "humanitarian" did just that. By denying any political or strategic objective, Western governments gave their publics no other option but to pressure policymakers on humane and ethical grounds. But humanitarianism is rarely sufficient motive for sustained political action or effective policy. When the Bosnian war was entering its second winter and citizens had far fewer reserves of fuel and fat than the previous year, European donors had committed only 20 percent of the food and funds necessary for UNHCR to sustain the population—even though UNHCR was there to protect European states from an even greater refugee flow by assisting displaced persons within Yugoslav borders. Because moral outrage is organized within individual countries, cultures, and media networks, it even exacerbated the tendency of Western leaders to address their policies on the Yugoslav crisis toward the attention span of domestic audiences and a voting cycle.

Moreover, this was a false humanitarianism. Channeling moral concerns into humanitarian relief while refusing to confront the political causes of the conflict (both within the country and among foreign powers) was creating more war, more casualties, and more need for humanitarian assistance. The humanitarian approach was only a way for the EC and the United States to avoid defending the choices they had made and defining a political objective in intervening. There was a particular irony, in fact, in the offer of humanitarian aid after Western creditors and leaders had demanded welfare cuts, unemployment, an end to socialist securities, and an absence of safety nets other than land ownership and family protection in the austerity to repay foreign debt and implement economic reform in the 1980s. The cost to the United States alone of military operations to enforce the no-fly zone and economic embargo and to drop aid packages from the air during 1993 was far in excess of \$300 million.⁷³ Bosnian medical doctors criticized UNHCR in the first year of the war for delivering medicines appropriate to diseases and conditions in a third world setting but not to those in Europe. But the organization was transformed by the magnitude of the conflict, and it managed to provide supplies such as orange juice and toiletries that would never be delivered to third world populations.⁷⁴ European governments spent fabulous sums on the spectacular evacuations of children for medical care in their capitals when the medical skills were available locally and the repair of damaged equipment would be far less costly.⁷⁵

Cyprusization?

The delivery of humanitarian assistance was meant to last only as long as it took to achieve a political agreement that would justify a true peace-keeping operation and permit reconstruction. UNHCR depended on vol-

untary contributions from donor governments for which the high commissioner often had to appeal. After its first twelve-month mandate, the UNPROFOR mandate was never renewed for longer than six months at a time. But the political negotiations, which operated parallel to this intervention (the original division of labor between negotiations and peace-keeping had survived the organizational linkup at Geneva of the EU and the UN), suffered from the unsustainable distinctions in the approach to that intervention. The consequence was to prolong the end of the war and to fill the vacuum with cease-fires that threatened a complex form of Cypriotization.

The primary problem was that the political negotiations were based on the principle of "good offices"—Western leaders repeated frequently that it was up to the people of Bosnia to decide their fate—but that they also intended an outcome (as a principle of European security) that was not neutral. Commitment to the sanctity of the republican borders and to a minority-rights concept of national rights favored some warring parties (in Croatia, the Croatian government, and in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the SDA leadership) over others. Negotiations were also based, however, on the goal of avoiding military action, including peace enforcement. Since Western powers refused to enforce these nonmartial choices, negotiators had to obtain a voluntary agreement among warring parties to commit them to enforce it themselves.⁷⁶ The EC and CSCE idea of good offices presumed that the parties could compromise through negotiation, but the negotiators refused to entertain the compromises that might have ended the war in Bosnia sooner and prevented its spread, compromises with their own positions such as exerting pressure on the SDA leadership to negotiate when they did not militarily control land they claimed, redrawing republican borders, or permitting special relations among Serbs caught on different sides of international borders as a guarantee of the security and national rights they sought (the same applies to Croats, but that was conceded by the Washington Agreement in March 1994).

Europeans declared that they would not accept an outcome in Bosnia-Herzegovina that was not coincident with their commitment to pluralism.⁷⁷ At the same time, however, they encouraged ethnic partition to avoid military commitment in March 1992 and to obtain a cease-fire—any cease-fire—in the fall and winter of 1993–94. U.S. President Clinton declared for more than a year beginning in January 1993 that the United States would only accept a political agreement that was fair and that the Bosnian government considered just. Even though he continued his predecessor's insistence that no U.S. ground troops be deployed to enforce such an agreement, his policy delayed a settlement because the Bosnian government had no incentive to negotiate any compromise, when the United States offered air strikes against Bosnian Serbs, a lifting of the arms embargo,

and covert—and eventually overt—military aid to win back control of all Bosnian territory.

One result of this contradiction between the declared neutrality of the negotiations and the actual choice about admissible and inadmissible outcomes was that negotiations went around in endless circles. Political negotiations could not question the recognized republican borders, while warring parties increasingly created a reality of national territories, including their resident populations. The German policy of recognition to legitimize the republican borders for Croatia in place of interposing troops prevented acknowledgment that states were not yet fully sovereign, that their fates were linked, and that a more rapid end to the war might be reached if territories were negotiable or compensations were required where they were not.

By treating Bosnia-Herzegovina as separable from the rest of the former country, not only were negotiators limited dramatically in their options, but proposals alternated between those that acknowledged the emerging partition on the ground by recognizing three ethnominational entities and those that insisted on denying such entities (at least to the Bosnian Serbs) to recreate an integral Bosnia-Herzegovina. Recognition of the Bosnian Muslim leadership gave it the public relations advantage in its media strategy, but this meant that political negotiations became a part of the media war to put pressure on international public opinion and from there on foreign governments. Geneva negotiators found frequently that the Bosnian government had reached the media with privileged information even before it had briefed the secretary general and the Security Council—making serious negotiating extremely difficult. But all leaders used the negotiations to enhance their own visibility, stature, and authority in power struggles at home, to gain time for military advances, and to consolidate their national political entities rather than a Bosnian state. Signatures were not commitments so much as ways to delay while military forces regrouped and built up their strength and to sway international opinions to one's own side as peacemakers and against one's opponents who did not sign. Since the momentum of negotiations lagged behind the momentum of the military situation, the maps and the constitutional proposals within peace packages were also inevitably behind, based on government goals and the relative bargaining position of the various sides that had prevailed months before. All this made the Geneva process appear ineffectual and undermined the authority of the cochairmen.

The same contradiction undermined the authority of the UN forces on the ground. Two aspects of this contradiction generated the dominant criticism. One was the result of sovereignty norms: was the UN there to protect Croatian and Bosnian sovereignty or to protect the norm of sovereignty through neutrality and consent? The other was the conflict be-

tween ends and means arising from the norm of sovereignty: that the UN was not enforcing (or equipped to enforce) the particular outcome approved by the international community. But the actual cause of the declining authority of UN forces was the contradiction in their mandate itself as a result of conflicts among Western powers on the best policy. In Croatia, peacekeeping forces were sent to monitor a cease-fire agreement before Croatia became a member of the UN. That subsequent decision granted Croatia sovereignty over the territory protected by UN forces in direct contradiction to their mandate in the Vance plan to protect the peace "without prejudice to the final political settlement." Although humanitarian assistance and UN protection arrived in Bosnia-Herzegovina after its admission as a UN member state, the mandate also was not to interfere in the political and military conflict but to provide humanitarian aid to all civilians regardless of ethnicity while political negotiations took place elsewhere. Until those political negotiations came to a conclusion or Western powers chose to intervene militarily, the UN would be trapped in contradictory requirements: to give preference to the government of a member state in all political dealings (in practice, the SDA leadership of President Izetbegović) and to give preference to neutrality among the three parties of that government (SDA, HDZ, and SDS).

The contradiction was embedded in all Security Council resolutions after May 20, 1992, which reemphasized the humanitarian mission and principle of consent while simultaneously attempting to support the Bosnian government leadership's fight for sovereignty. It invaded the entire peace process at Geneva under ICFY beginning in September 1992. It led to conflicts and tensions between UNPROFOR and the different forums of major power engagement—the Security Council, the UN Secretariat in New York, and ICFY. Many of the tasks assigned UNPROFOR could not be implemented, in part or in full, because they were contradictory. Limits were imposed on what UNPROFOR could do to promote peace on the ground while political negotiations stalled. Persistent and harsh criticism from the political authorities in Zagreb and Sarajevo for not implementing their expectations of the UN presence combined with popular anger of citizens who were told that the UN forces were there to guarantee their sovereign borders against aggressors contributed to the image of ineffectiveness emanating from the difficulties in Geneva.

Since both these contradictions and the similar ones plaguing the negotiating process contained within them the conflict in interpretations of the war and possible outcomes between the United States and Europe, the repeated attempts of major powers to present a united front toward all warring parties was not in fact able to reduce the tensions between them over a permissible political solution, the best means to terminate the war, and the vulnerability of troops on the ground to the U.S. policy of "lift

and strike." The growing frustration of the leaderships in Sarajevo and Zagreb with the presence of UNPROFOR was matched by that of their strongest patron, the United States. The United States, responding to its frustration against UNPROFOR for not taking a more assertive posture against the Bosnian (and Croatian) Serbs, increasingly criticized its civilian head, Yasushi Akashi, and UN peacekeeping in general.

Outsiders insisted that they could do little other than assist civilian victims while the conflict played itself out. Yet the continuing delays at the bargaining table and limitations on the ability of UNPROFOR to implement cease-fire and demilitarization agreements to the letter led to a growing impatience at the cost of the UN operation. This was the costliest peacekeeping operation in UN history, as well as the largest—its annual budget of \$1.6–1.9 billion was almost half the entire peacekeeping budget of the UN.⁷⁸ The priority on containment also encouraged impatience because it seemed that the longer the war continued, the greater was the risk that it would spread. Impatience became the defining factor in negotiations, rather than the goal of achieving a realizable outcome. The warring parties were increasingly under pressure to sign a peace agreement—by July 1994, the Contact Group peace proposal made a take-it-or-leave-it demand of the Bosnian Serbs—rather than to change their approach. Moreover, this toughened bargaining stance on the part of the international community conveyed a lingering doubt about U.S. support, since that would require President Clinton to follow through on his commitment to send ground troops to implement a true peace agreement.

As a result of the various limitations on a political settlement, negotiators from ICFY and in UNPROFOR returned time and again to the more limited objective of achieving cease-fires. They made the reasonable assumption that as long as there were active hostilities, the conditions for a settlement would continue to deteriorate. Bilateral agreements were far easier to negotiate than the multilateral deals necessary for the republic, as were cease-fires that froze territorial gains without acknowledging political rights. Localized cease-fires in particular did not have to prejudice the overall outcome, and local security interests were not always the same as those of the republican or federal government.

UNPROFOR officials thus began to focus on building a peace, piecemeal, "from the bottom up," which created stalemates on the political issues and allowed each side to buy time to further its goals, but which also provided conditions in which mutual interests might develop. But for all their benefits, such cease-fires are bought at the price of frozen lines of confrontation, partial but unlegitimized autonomies, and a continuing sense of personal insecurity that the absence of a comprehensive political agreement on territory and sovereignty would bring a resumption of hostilities and the use of military force to hold, take, or regain territory if the

chairmen Cyrus Vance and David Owen were hopeful that signatures on their peace plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina were only a matter of days away. These expectations were precipitously dashed when the negotiations unraveled as a result of the military incursion at Maslenica, Zemunik, Petruća, and the surrounding area in Croatia on January 22. The response of the SDA leadership, particularly President Izetbegović, to the July 1993 proposal to partition Bosnia-Herzegovina into three states was to seek to expand. Having lost their project of a Bosnian state and concerned about the strategic and economic viability of their "piece," they began to assert that the Muslim-majority area of the Sandžak in Serbia and Montenegro had originally been part of Bosnia and that they would seek, either militarily or politically, to link up with it.

If the principles of transparency and internationally declared borders, implemented by unarmed or lightly armed monitors, were insufficient to prevent the war from spreading to Croatia and then to Bosnia-Herzegovina, what would make them work in Kosovo and Macedonia? The official answer was that these warnings were accompanied by economic and diplomatic sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro and that, although they had not seemed to stop the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, this was because the sanctions had needed time to work. By July 1994, the diplomatic efforts of the newly created Contact Group to end the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina by imposing a peace proposal on the Bosnian Serbs came to depend entirely on the ability of President Milošević to isolate the Bosnian Serbs in exchange for a gradual lifting of the sanctions.⁸⁴ Act one, in the Washington Agreement between the Bosnian government and Bosnian Croats, similarly centered on support from President Tudjman to exert pressure on Bosnian Croats. The question remained whether this diplomatic strategy to use the leverage of the two presidents would bring a settlement or whether it would only keep alive the national bases of political formations that were being created in the Balkans. Accepting that there was no legitimate reason to deny to the Bosnian Serbs the same right granted Bosnian Croats to confederate with Croatia, French foreign minister Alain Juppé publicly contradicted the U.S. policy in early September 1994. The result, however, was an immediate announcement by the elected president of the Kosovo Albanians, Ibrahim Rugova, that they too, therefore, had the right to confederate with Albania.⁸⁵

The policy of containment had allowed the major powers to ignore the political questions at stake, but if they did not confront these issues directly and seek solutions that transformed incompatible goals into acceptable compromises and provided security guarantees for individuals and nations instead of for states, the conflict could not be contained.

Chapter 10

The Dynamic of Disintegration and Nationalist War

Few inside or outside Yugoslavia had believed the dire predictions in 1990 or earlier that the country would disintegrate in bloodshed, or even the forecasts in 1991 that violence would spread. The European Community mediators and foreign ministers from the more active states such as Germany and Austria assumed that they could negotiate Slovene and Croatian independence with minimal violence, leaving the rest of the country to form a rump Yugoslavia. There would thus be three states where there had been one. In July 1991 many people in Yugoslavia also believed this would happen.

Even in February 1992 many in Sarajevo could not conceive of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. They saw no will to war, and they felt protected by the complete interwinning of the lives of individuals from different national communities and by the multicultural tradition that defined Bosnian culture. The same refrain—"it can't happen here; we've lived together forever"—could be heard during 1992–93 among leaders of multiethnic states in the former Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had also dissolved in spite of the conviction in Western capitals during 1991 that the policy signals that they were sending from the Yugoslav case would be enough to prevent the breakup.

This failure to predict and to prevent was a failure to understand the real causes of the wars. The views underlying Western policy toward Bosnia-Herzegovina, as discussed in chapter 9, made this worse. One view was that this was a civil war, ingrained in the history and temperament of the Balkans, particularly Bosnia, and inclining its populations inevitably toward ethnic conflict and war over territory whenever an imperial or dictatorial protection collapsed. The other explanation—expansionist aggression by a revanchist Serbia—accused leaders in Serbia (often only President Slobodan Milošević) of having a deliberate plan to annex territory