



# İÇ SAVAŞLARIN ULUSLARARASI MÜDAHALE YOLUYLA SONA ERDİRİLMESİ: BOSNA SAVAŞINDA "ZORLAYICI ARABULUCULUK"

ENDING CIVIL WARS THROUGH INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION:  
"COERCIVE MEDIATION" IN THE BOSNIAN WAR

İDİL TUNÇER KILAVUZ\*

## ABSTRACT

The Bosnian War (1992-1995) was one of the most horrendous wars in recent history. In it, more than 200,000 people died, and 2 million people were displaced. This study attempts to understand why some mediation attempts fail and some succeed. Why did international actors wait so long to intervene in the Bosnian War? After four years of non-engagement, why did the US decide to intervene? Why did the mediation at Dayton result in agreement, while the previous attempts to end the Bosnian war had failed? Analyzing the mediation efforts in Bosnian War may help us understand what may make mediation more effective in future.

**Keywords:** Bosnia, war, civil war, international intervention, international mediation.

## ÖZ

Bosna Savaşı (1992-1995) yakın tarihin en dehşetli savaşlarından biriydi. Bu savaşta 200.000'den fazla insan ölmüş ve 2 milyon kişi yerinden edilmiştir. Bu çalışma, niçin bazı arabuluculuk girişimlerinin başarısız, bazı arabuluculuk girişimlerinin ise başarılı olduğunu anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Uluslararası aktörler Bosna Savaşına müdahale etmek için neden bu kadar uzun süre beklemişlerdir? ABD, neden savaşın başlamasından dört yıl sonra müdahale etmeye karar vermiştir? Bosna savaşını sona erdirmek için daha önce yapılmış olan girişimler neden başarısız olurken, Dayton'daki arabuluculuk anlaşmayla sonuçlanmıştı? Bosna Savaşı'ndaki arabuluculuk çabalarını analiz etmek, gelecekteki arabuluculuk çabalarının nasıl daha etkili olabileceğini anlamamıza yardımcı olabilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Bosna, savaş, iç savaş, uluslararası müdahale, uluslararası arabuluculuk.

\* Assist. Prof., İstanbul Medeniyet University, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, idil.kilavuz@medeniyet.edu.tr

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9226-0584>

Makale Atfı Bilgisi: KILAVUZ İdil Tunçer, (2019). Ending Civil Wars Through International Intervention: "Coercive Mediation" In The Bosnian War, *Avrasya Etüdleri*, 5-21.

Gönderim Tarihi: 25.02.2019 Kabul Tarihi: 24.05.2019

## 1. Introduction:

The Bosnian War (1992-1995) was one of the most horrendous wars in recent history. In it, more than 200,000 people died, and 2 million people were displaced.<sup>1</sup> Atrocities such as death camps and mass rape figured prominently, and the term ‘ethnic cleansing’ entered into the English language as a result of this war.<sup>2</sup> Bosnian Muslim hopes that the international community would come to their aid were not realized until four years had passed.

This study attempts to understand why international actors waited so long to intervene in the Bosnian War. After four years of non-engagement, why did the US decide to intervene? Why did some mediation attempts fail and some succeed? Why did the mediation at Dayton result in agreement, while the previous attempts to end the Bosnian war had failed?

Analyzing the mediation efforts in Bosnian War can help us understand what may make mediation more effective in future.<sup>3</sup> In Bosnian case, the peace initiative was pursued along both diplomatic and military dimensions. Coercive mediation employed military force to persuade the Serbs to change their terms, redraw the map and restructure the bargaining conditions.<sup>4</sup>

Initially in Bosnia, major actors lacked a coherent policy, national interests outweighed moral concerns, and international organizations proved inept mediators. The war in Bosnia was not seen as a direct threat to US or Western European strategic interests. However, as the war continued, key US officials began to express concern that US inaction would put the credibility of the US and NATO at risk, and threaten US credibility as a world leader.

In the case of Dayton negotiations, the use of force was combined with diplomacy and linked to a political objective. Also Bosnian case shows that battlefield outcomes are important to negotiations, and that parties to a conflict base their decisions at the negotiation table on the military situation on the ground. This observation is supported by the existing literature on civil war negotiations.<sup>5</sup> The warring

1 Jane M.O. Sharp, “Dayton Report Card”, *International Security*, 22, no.3 (Winter 1997-1998), p.102.

2 Ivo H. Daalder, “Fear and Loathing in the Former Yugoslavia”, in *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, edited by Michael E. Brown, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996, p. 54.

3 Saadia Touval, *Mediation in the Yugoslav Wars: The Critical Years, 1990-95*, Great Britain: Palgrave, 2002, p.1.

4 Touval, “Coercive Mediation on the Road to Dayton”, *International Negotiation* 1, 1996, p.568. Touval defines coercive mediation as employing limited force to persuade the other to change its terms.

5 See: R. Harrison Wagner, “Bargaining and War,” *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 44, no. 3, July 2000; and Darren Filson and Suzanne Werner, “A Bargaining Model of War and Peace: Anticipating the Onset, Duration, and Outcome of War,” *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 46, no. 4, October, 2002. Wagner stresses that fighting must be considered as part of the bargaining process. Information revealed by war is important in determining the outcome. Similarly, Werner and Filson argue that the war itself provides the information necessary for the disputants to reach a settlement and to end the war.

parties need to see negotiations as the better option. They should conclude that a continuation of the war might impose a great cost on them, otherwise they will not agree to compromises.<sup>6</sup> Third, military ‘surrogates’ were effective. Since outside powers were reluctant to send their own ground troops, one alternative was to strengthen local forces on the ground. A key development which helped end the war in Bosnia was the formation of a Muslim-Croat alliance against the Serbs. With US facilitation and training, the Croats and Muslims joined forces against the Serbs.

In Bosnia sanctioning the supporter of the aggressor put pressure on the aggressor. Belgrade had been a very important sponsor of the Bosnian Serbs. Sanctions imposed on Serbia seriously damaged the Serbian economy. The Western powers offered Serbian president Milosevic relief from sanctions on the condition that he put pressure on the Bosnian Serbs. It worked, and Belgrade played a critical role in efforts to end the Bosnian war. Yet another factor is that airstrikes were effective in demonstrating to the Serbs that their defiance would be punished.

In addition, this study argues that no-fly zones protected civilian populations in Bosnia. The Bosnian example also shows that safe areas are useful only when protected by the international community. Based on the past actions of the UN and NATO, Bosnian Serb leaders became convinced that if they attacked the safe areas, the international community would do nothing to stop them. So they attacked Srebrenica, where they committed one of the worst massacres of the war.

## 2. Why did International Actors Wait So Long to Intervene in Bosnia?

### 2.1. National interests outweighed moral concerns

One reason why the US and its allies avoided becoming involved in the Bosnian conflict was that the policymakers of these countries came to the conclusion that no vital Western interests were at stake. Burg and Shoup write that ‘The Bosnian case thus suggests very clearly that when an escalating conflict is not perceived as having implications for the international community or key international actors, crisis intervention to end the fighting will not take place.’<sup>7</sup> According to Daalder, ‘With the end of the Cold War, Yugoslavia’s strategic importance to the US had indeed been significantly reduced. Yugoslavia would remain important but it no longer was of strategic interest to the US. Therefore the US was reluctant to get involved.’<sup>8</sup>

6 See: Donald Wittman, “How a War Ends: A Rational Model Approach”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol.23, no.4, December 1979 and T. David Mason and Patrick J. Fett “How Civil Wars End: a Rational Choice Approach”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol.40, no.4, December 1996.

7 Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2000, p. 390.

8 Daalder, “Fear and Loathing in the Former Yugoslavia”, p.61.

## 2.2. The costs of intervention seemed prohibitive

Another factor was the judgment of policymakers that the use of force to resolve the internal conflicts of other countries was too costly and risky. France and Britain, which had soldiers on the ground as UN peacekeepers, vetoed the use of force in Bosnia out of fear for the safety of their troops, on the assumption that a NATO attack would invite retaliation.

The US proved equally reluctant to intervene. Although Bill Clinton had argued for more forceful action in Bosnia during his presidential campaign, his views changed after his January 1993 inauguration. Opposition from the Pentagon was a major obstacle to direct US involvement.<sup>9</sup> US military officials had opposed from the beginning, fearing that the use of force would lead to ground combat and, very likely, drag the US into a Vietnam-style quagmire, or a repeat of the disastrous US experience in Lebanon (1982-1984).<sup>10</sup>

## 2.3. Fears of retaliation were exaggerated

In Bosnia, the US military and the UN each overestimated the risks to various proposed missions. UN officials opposed implementation of the no-fly zone, arguing that the likely Serbian response would threaten UN peacekeepers. In the summer of 1995, UN Under Secretary General Yasushi Akashi objected to the deployment of a Rapid Reaction Force to Bosnia, for fear that its presence would lead to a fight between the UN and the Serbs. In September 1995, General Bernard Janvier, commander of UN forces in Bosnia, pushed for an end to NATO airstrikes on the grounds that they would lead Serbia to intervene in the war. All of these fears were ultimately proven wrong.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.4. Major actors lacked a coherent policy

Differences among the major powers, and in particular between the US and Western Europe, presented another obstacle to ending the war through international action. The various countries pursued their own, often conflicting national interests, and were unable to coordinate and pursue a coherent policy.<sup>12</sup> Differences also existed among Western European countries, although they had more in common with one another than with the US.<sup>13</sup>

9 Burg and Shoup, 200. see also Robert L. Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War: 1989-1992*, Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1997 and David C. Gompert, "The United States and Yugoslavia's Wars", in *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars*, edited by Richard H. Ullman, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1996.

10 Daalder, "Fear and Loathing in the Former Yugoslavia", p.62.

11 Burg and Shoup, p.402

12 James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, p.182.

13 Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, p.182.

The Clinton administration decided to support lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnian government. On 16 April 1993 the president confirmed that airstrikes were under consideration. The strategy, which would come to be known as ‘lift and strike,’ was that the US would support arming the Bosnian Muslims, and use air power to protect them while they received weapon and training. This was seen as a ‘a costfree way for the US to have an effect on the war’.<sup>14</sup> “Lift” referred to lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnian government, while “strike” referred to airstrikes against Serb forces committing aggression against or attacking UNPROFOR.

The use of airstrikes without follow-up by ground forces was not seen as an effective strategy. Senior US Air Force officials predicted that after the first air attack, Bosnian Serb artillery units would go into hiding, making the task of destroying them much more difficult. Without follow-up by ground forces, the Serbs would survive any airstrikes.<sup>15</sup> In choosing the ‘lift and strike’ strategy, the US expressed its belief that once armed and trained, Muslim ground forces would improve the effectiveness of airstrikes.<sup>16</sup> France and Britain worried that airstrikes would expose their troops to Serb retaliation. The Russians and French strongly opposed lifting the embargo, and France made it clear that it would withdraw its troops from UNPROFOR if the embargo were lifted.<sup>17</sup>

European and UN officials were very critical of the Clinton administration’s refusal to contribute troops to the peacekeeping efforts. They wanted the US to accept equivalent risks by deploying American troops alongside European forces. However, the Clinton administration consistently refused to do this.<sup>18</sup> As a result, relations between the US and its European allies significantly deteriorated. While the US insisted on airstrikes, Britain and France threatened to withdraw their troops from Bosnia if the US proceeded.

## 2.5. International organizations made inept mediators

The Bosnian War saw an unprecedented degree of organizational involvement from the international community. Many multinational organizations-among them the UN, EU, WEU, CSCE, and NATO-became involved in diplomatic and peacekeeping efforts, and a number of collective mediation efforts were implemented by these organizations between 1992 and 1994. However, none of them were successful in ending the war.

---

14 Burg and Shoup, p.250

15 Ibid, p.251

16 Ivo H. Daalder, *Getting to Dayton: The Making of America’s Bosnia Policy*, Washington D.C.: Brooking Institution Press, 2000, p.15.

17 Burg and Shoup, p.251.

18 Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, p.7

Collective mediation efforts were hindered by the inadequate leverage of the international organizations, and by disagreements among their members, which were reluctant to commit troops and other resources. Different states had different preferences-based on their different domestic and foreign policy considerations-as to which parties should receive pressure, and by what means. Touval observes that ‘Attempts to coordinate the mediating governments and organizations took almost as much effort as mediating between the three warring parties.’<sup>19</sup> She adds that the failures of the 1992-1994 period can be ascribed in large part to the fact that the mediation efforts were collective.

With the aim of developing a coherent policy, the EC and UN organized an International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) in London on 26 August 1992. The mediators of the ICFY were handicapped by their lack of leverage during the negotiations. They were not seen as credible bargainers, because their governments, not the ICFY, were in control of the economic and military resources needed to apply pressure. Their credibility was also impaired by the inability of the international community to speak with one voice.<sup>20</sup>

Since the EU lacked a military capability or a common foreign policy, and was divided over the question of whether national forces should be employed, its diplomatic efforts were ineffective.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, the UN ignored developments in Bosnia in early 1992, and was slow to respond when war broke out. After that, its emphasis was on humanitarian relief rather than negotiating peace. By 1995, the UN was largely discredited in Bosnia.<sup>22</sup> As for NATO, Daalder writes that ‘Without strong US engagement, NATO was a little more than a larger and less united European community. Only when the US showed an interest in the conflict did NATO accept a role-primarily as the means to enforce a number of Security Council resolutions.’<sup>23</sup>

All these international institutions collectively failed to deal with the war. The credibility and effectiveness of NATO and the UN were badly affected. There are many reasons for this, including institutional incompetence; however, the main problem was the refusal of member states, especially the most powerful ones, to take the steps necessary to deal with the conflict in a decisive manner.<sup>24</sup>

---

19 Saadia Touval, *Mediation in the Yugoslav Wars: The Critical Years, 1990-95*, Palgrave, 2002, p.103.

20 Ibid.,p.117.

21 Carl Bildt, *Peace Journey: The Struggle For Peace in Bosnia*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998, p.386.

22 Daalder, “Fear and Loathing in the Former Yugoslavia”, p.60.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid. p.61.

Although the final achievement at Dayton was a result of numerous factors, one of the most important factors was the simplification of the negotiation structure, with the US playing the key role in negotiations.

### 3. Why did the US and Western Europe Ultimately Intervene in Bosnia?

Studies of mediation suggest that third parties intervene to mediate international conflicts out of self-interest, especially when the conflict threatens the mediator.<sup>25</sup> In this case it was not so much the war itself as other, indirect factors that led the US to get involved in Bosnia.

As stated above, the fighting in Bosnia was not seen as a direct threat to US or Western European strategic security or military interests. As the war continued, however, key officials in the Clinton administration began to express concern that US inaction would put the credibility of the US and NATO at risk: ‘The issue was US’s credibility as a world leader, its credibility in NATO, the UN and at home.’<sup>26</sup> US intervention seemed motivated by a desire to reaffirm the effectiveness of US leadership of the international community. This desire acted as a counterweight to the disincentives against intervention which prevailed at the end of 1994.

One aim was to maintain the cohesion of NATO, and defend its credibility in the face of its failure to end a war on European soil. For three years, the alliance had been divided over what to do in Bosnia. Its internal relations were strained, and its role in managing European security was in doubt.<sup>27</sup>

Another concern was that acquiescing in the ethnic cleansing of the Bosnian Muslims would have implications for Western interests throughout the Muslim world.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, continued inaction could potentially destabilize new democracies elsewhere, if ethnic conflict was allowed to go unchecked. Some analysts, both inside and outside of the government, warned of the ‘repeated failure of the US and its allies to follow up on their warnings and threats to the Serbs.’<sup>29</sup>

Yet another concern was the prospect of having to send US ground forces to Bosnia to assist the withdrawal of the UNPROFOR troops. In December 1994, Clinton had promised that if UNPROFOR troops needed to withdraw as a result

25 See: William Zartman and Saadia Touval, ‘International Mediation in the Post-Cold War Era’, in *Managing Global Chaos*, edited by Chester A. Crocker and Fen Osler Hampson, with Pamela Aal, Washington: United Institute of Peace Press, 1996 and C.R. Mitchell, ‘Motives for Mediation’ in *New Approaches to International Mediation*, edited by C.R. Mitchell and K. Webb, New York: Greenwood Press, 1988.

26 Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, p.108.

27 Ibid, p.164

28 Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994, p.144.

29 Burg and Shoup, p. 412

of airstrikes, the US would send its own troops to extricate the peacekeepers and ensure their safe withdrawal.<sup>30</sup>

In May 1995, NATO bombed Bosnian Serb targets as punishment for the Serbs' shelling of Sarajevo, and their refusal to remove heavy weapons from the exclusion zone around the city. As retaliation against the two days of pinprick airstrikes, the Serbs took 370 UN peacekeepers hostage and used them as 'human shields,' handcuffing them to the expected targets of future strikes. Images of UN soldiers waving white flags-broadcast around the world-deeply embarrassed the countries contributing troops, notably France and Britain. UNPROFOR lost credibility after this humiliation.

The Western powers sought to avoid an even more humiliating UN withdrawal from Bosnia. France and Britain agreed to reinforce UNPROFOR with the deployment of a well-equipped, well-armed and trained Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) of 10,000 soldiers.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, US officials calculated that the risks of inaction were higher than the risks of engagement, since US troops might have been deployed to extract UNPROFOR in the event of a withdrawal. The looming US presidential elections no doubt also affected their deliberations.

These factors-the impact of the war on the credibility of the US, UN and NATO; the prospect of US troop deployments; and the pending US presidential campaign-were the main ones contributing to the US decision to engage. As a result, actions were finally taken that might have ended the war several years earlier.

#### **4. Relationship between the Battlefield and the Negotiating Table**

Bosnian experience shows that used carefully, military force can support diplomatic efforts. It indicated that although the use of force is important, in order for it to be effective, there needs to be a political strategy behind it. In particular, the use of force against the Bosnian Serbs was crucial to the successful outcome of the Dayton negotiations. In Bosnia, the use of force was combined with diplomacy, and linked to a political objective.

Bosnian case also shows that the party who is strongest on the battlefield generally does not want to negotiate. Parties to a conflict base their decisions at the negotiating table on the military situation on the ground. Battlefield outcomes were important to negotiations. Since the Bosnian Serbs were militarily superior to the Croats and Muslims, they had little incentive to make concessions at the negotiating table.<sup>32</sup>

---

30 Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, New York: The Modern Library, 1999, pp.66-67.

31 Touval, *Mediation in the Yugoslav Wars*, p.143.

32 Burg and Shoup, pp.210-211

Progress toward an agreement would emerge only after international intervention against the Serbs changed the military balance. At the end of 1994, the Americans realized that while outside actors could not impose a settlement on the warring parties, Serb military power needed to be counteracted on the ground.<sup>33</sup>

After a difficult bargaining process, on 21 December 1993 the ICFY concluded an agreement among the warring parties, under which Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Muslims, and Bosnian Serbs were respectively allocated 17.5 %, 33.5 % and 49 % of the country's territory. This allocation was later incorporated into the plan of the Contact Group, established April 1994 as a new negotiating forum (consisting of the representatives of the US, UK, France, Germany and Russia).<sup>34</sup>

Previously, the Bosnian Serbs had rejected the proposed map. Since Western Europe and Russia were opposed to the use of force, there was no credible threat of the use of force to compel the Serbs to accept the plan. By the end of 1994, the international community appeared to be uniting around a coordinated strategy with both political and military aspects. The US launched an extensive air campaign to weaken the Serbs, and to facilitate the redrawing of front lines approximating the boundaries it wanted to establish.<sup>35</sup> That is to say, military power was placed in the service of diplomacy. An alliance between the Bosnian Muslims and Croats was forged to counter Serb forces on the ground. In addition, Milosevic was pressed to end his military and economic support for the Bosnian Serbs, in return for the relief of sanctions which continued to harm the economy of Serbia. Bosnian Serbs ultimately found themselves in a militarily and diplomatically weak position, and under pressure from Belgrade.<sup>36</sup>

The US gave military assistance to the Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Muslim militaries, strengthening their capabilities. For example, US personnel advised the Bosnian army on war tactics, and supplied it with weapons. The aim of these efforts was to create a military counterbalance against the Serb forces on the ground, and thus create the conditions necessary to bring them to the negotiating table.<sup>37</sup> Also by doing so the US avoided the need to deploy US ground troops against the Serbs.

Continued fighting in the spring and summer of 1995 altered the political and military balance among the warring parties. Difficult territorial issues that had blocked a settlement in the past, were settled by the parties themselves

---

33 Ibid., p.313.

34 David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1995.

35 Touval, *Mediation in the Yugoslav Wars*, p.168.

36 Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, p. 269.

37 Burg and Shoud, p.313.

militarily on the ground. While NATO continued to bomb Serb targets, Serb forces suffered many defeats against the Croatian and Bosnian armies, and had been losing territory. The military balance of power changed abruptly against the Serbs. Support from Milosevic was unlikely, because his main concern was to attain a settlement and the removal of sanctions. The deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force in the summer of 1995 (a result of the hostage crisis at the end of May) brought an international force with an even greater military capability.

These developments shifted the military balance decisively in favor of the Croatian / Bosnian Muslim / Bosnian Croat alliance, and resulted in a drastic redistribution of the territories under Croat, Muslim and Serb control, bringing them more closely in line with the Contact Group map.<sup>38</sup>

Richard Holbrooke, the chief US negotiator at the Dayton talks, repeatedly emphasizes the necessity of force to diplomacy. ‘If we do not resume the bombing,’ he writes, ‘[i]t will be another catastrophe. NATO will again look like a paper tiger. The Bosnian Serbs will return to their blackmailing ways... Give us bombs for peace...’<sup>39</sup> He elsewhere explains that

...the success of the Croatian (and later the Bosnian-Croatian Federation) offensive was a classic illustration of a fundamental fact: the shape of the diplomatic landscape will usually reflect the actual balance of forces on the ground. In concrete terms, this meant that as diplomats we could not expect the Serbs to be conciliatory at the negotiating table as long as they had experienced nothing but success on the battlefield.<sup>40</sup>

## 5. Military ‘Surrogates’:

One key development, which helped end the war in Bosnia, was the formation of a Muslim-Croat alliance against the Serbs. The Croats and Muslims had conflicting claims to territory in Central Bosnia and the Neretva Valley. Thanks to a deal brokered by the Americans, a ceasefire was agreed to on 22 February 1994, which ended the Croat-Muslim fighting. Then-again with US facilitation and training<sup>41</sup>-the Croats and Muslims joined forces against the Serbs, in order to counterbalance Serb power on the ground.<sup>42</sup>

---

38 Ibid, p. 331.

39 Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p.132.

40 Ibid., p.73.

41 Touval, *Mediation in the Yugoslav Wars*, p.151. Also see Daniel Serwer, “A Federation Memoir”, in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela All eds., *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in A Complex World*, Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1999, pp.561-7; and George Rudman, “Backtracking to Reformulate: Establishing the Bosnian Federation”, *International Negotiation*, 1, no.3, 1996.

42 Sharp, “Dayton Report Card”, p.111.

With their decisive military advantage, the Serbs had no incentive to concede territory during negotiations. US officials calculated that a Muslim-Croat alliance would improve the military balance of power on the ground, and thereby provide better settlement terms for the Bosnian Muslims.<sup>43</sup>

In May 1994, Bosnian Croats and Muslims agreed with one another on a delimitation of territory, and established a Croat-Muslim federation. However, their territorial disputes with the Serbs continued unresolved. Serbs then held almost 70 percent of Bosnian territory. Resolution of the territorial dispute required this to be reduced to 49 percent. The Croat and Muslim advances that summer reduced Serb-held territory to approximately 50 percent, with the Serbs ceding many of the areas that the Contact Group proposal had required them to abandon.

In this way, Bosnian Serb forces were weakened, and made more receptive to American demands. The new front lines also produced a territorial distribution closer to the one proposed in the 1994 Contact Group plan. This was an essential condition for the successful outcome of the Dayton negotiations.

## 6. Sanctioning the Supporters of the Aggressor

In Bosnia, sanctioning the supporter of the aggressor put pressure on the aggressor. Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic played a critical role in US efforts to end the Bosnian War. On 30 May 1992, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 757, imposing a complete economic embargo on Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).<sup>44</sup> Belgrade had been a very important sponsor of the Bosnian Serbs, providing them with military assistance, logistical back-up, supplies and financing.<sup>45</sup> Without the support of Belgrade, the Bosnian Serbs would be isolated and weakened, and their war-making capacity severely diminished. It was for this reason that the sanctions were imposed on Serbia, which seriously damaged the Serbian economy.

The Western powers then offered Milosevic relief from sanctions, on the condition that he put pressure on the Bosnian Serbs, and cooperate with the UN embargo against them.<sup>46</sup> He agreed. At Dayton, he negotiated on behalf of the Bosnian Serbs, delivering the required concessions.<sup>47</sup>

---

43 Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, p.27

44 Daalder, "Fear and Loathing in the Former Yugoslavia", p.59.

45 Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, p. 264.

46 Saadia Touval, "Coercive Mediation on the Road to Dayton", *International Negotiation*, vol.1, 1996, p.563.

47 Touval, "Coercive Mediation on the Road to Dayton", p.556.

## 7. Airstrikes:

In Bosnia, airstrikes were seen as a necessary complement to diplomacy. A factor which would fundamentally change the strategic landscape in Bosnia was the initiation of a bombing campaign against Serb forces. In the beginning there was no support for airstrikes, which were judged to be ineffective unless backed up by ground troops. Many in the US military (including Joint Chiefs of Staff Chair General Colin Powell and NATO Supreme Commander General John Shalikashvili) argued that ground forces would be necessary to exploit any opening provided by airstrikes.<sup>48</sup> Europeans were also against the use of air power, fearing that their soldiers in Bosnia might become targets. However, a contrary view slowly emerged, to the effect that airstrikes were a necessary complement to diplomacy—necessary to punish the barbarous behavior of the Bosnian Serbs, and force them to the negotiating table. This view finally prevailed.<sup>49</sup>

NATO bombers destroyed Serb air defenses, command posts, communication links, ammunition depots, bridges, artillery and tanks. NATO air support was also vital to the success of the Croat-Muslim ground offensives, “which were themselves, at least in part, a result of American assistance in training.”<sup>50</sup> On 4 August, Croatia began its “Operation Storm” which, in two days, succeeded in liberating the Serb-controlled parts of Croatia (with the exception of eastern Slovenia). By November 1995, the situation on the ground had radically changed.

The NATO bombing campaign, in combination with Croat and Muslim ground forces, “endowed western diplomacy with credibility, demonstrating to the Serbs that their defiance would be severely punished, and it redrew the front lines, thus establishing a new starting point for the territorial bargaining.”<sup>51</sup> The combined effect of airstrikes, Muslim-Croat ground offensives, and sanctions against the Milosevic regime brought a successful outcome against the Serbs on the battlefield and at the bargaining table.<sup>52</sup>

## 8. No-Fly Zones:

No-fly zones protected civilian populations in Bosnia. UN Resolution 781 (adopted 9 October 1992) prohibited the use of Bosnian airspace by the combatants, in order to deny the Bosnian Serbs their absolute military advantage

---

48 Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, p. 13.

49 Elizabeth M. Cousens, “Making Peace in Bosnia Work”, *Cornell International Law Journal*, vol.30, p.795.

50 James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, p.278.

51 Touval, *Mediation in the Yugoslav Wars*, p. 152.

52 Elizabeth M. Cousens, “Making Peace in Bosnia Work”, *Cornell International Law Journal*, vol.30, p.795.

in the air, and protect the besieged Muslim population. Initial efforts to implement the ban had been resisted by Western European countries and the Russians. The Bosnian Serbs also failed to comply with Resolution 781. On 24 December, Karadzic even threatened a ‘declaration of war’ against UNPROFOR if the ban was enforced.<sup>53</sup>

In March 1993, in response to Serb offensives, the Western Europeans dropped their objections to the implementation of the ban. The Russians agreed soon after, and Security Council Resolution 816 (31 March 1993) authorized NATO aircraft to shoot down planes violating the no-fly zone over Bosnia.<sup>54</sup> When the US announced that it would participate in enforcing the no-fly zone, the Serbs grounded their aircraft. Although the Bosnian Serbs and JNA forces in Serbia did use helicopters for troop transport or resupply, the no-fly zone was largely successful in stopping attacks by aircraft, and was important in terms of protecting civilians.

## 9. Safe Areas:

The Bosnian case shows that safe areas are useful, but only when protected by the international community. The establishment of safe areas was initially proposed by the Europeans but rejected by the US, which feared that it would accelerate ethnic cleansing by encouraging Muslims to leave Serb-held territories. The Americans were also worried that defending the safe areas would require additional ground troops, at a time when the Europeans were already pressing the US to commit troops to existing operations in Bosnia.<sup>55</sup> At this stage, the Europeans were still rejecting US proposals for airstrikes against Bosnian Serb forces (“lift and strike”) out of concern for their forces on the ground. On the other hand, the US was not prepared to use force unilaterally against the Serbs.

Pressed by the Europeans, the Clinton administration accepted the establishment of safe areas for Muslims, on the model of the one established for Kurds in northern Iraq after the Gulf War. A 1993 UN resolution declared Srebrenica, Bihac, Goradze, Sarajevo, Tuzla and Zepa as UN safe areas.<sup>56</sup> Muslim refugees moved into them, and small contingents of UN peacekeepers (470 in Srebrenica, 79 in Zepa) were deployed to each area. However, these soon proved insufficient. Based on the past actions of the UN and NATO, Bosnian Serb leaders were convinced that if they attacked the safe areas, the international community would

---

53 Burg and Shoup, p. 250.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid, p.254.

56 Sharp, “Dayton Report Card”, p.110.

do nothing significant to stop them. The Serbs therefore attacked Srebrenica, capturing it on 6 July 1995.

There followed one of the worst massacres in human history, in which Bosnian Serbs summarily executed some 8000 men and boys en mass.<sup>57</sup> Serb forces then moved on to the Zepa and Bihac safe areas. On 19 July, the Serbs attacked Bihac. Zepa fell on 25 July.<sup>58</sup> The powerlessness of the UN to prevent this tragedy would be remembered as a historic and embarrassing failure.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, the experience demonstrated the need to engage the Serbs militarily, and take adequate steps to protect the safe areas.

## 10. Conclusion

The Dayton Accords represented a new and distinct approach to resolving ethnic conflicts, in that their terms were largely imposed, rather than reached by the parties to the conflict themselves.<sup>60</sup>

The ‘hurting stalemate’ argument—the argument that when combatants find themselves locked in a conflict which neither side can win, and this deadlock is painful to all combatants, the situation is ripe for resolution of the conflict<sup>61</sup>—does not explain the case in Bosnia. There was no hurting stalemate when the 1995 mediation began; the situation was quite the opposite. Croat and Muslim forces, having equipped and trained their armies, were making territorial advances, and had prospects of even greater gains. Bosnian Serbs were satisfied with their achievements in Bosnia, and confident that they would be able to hold onto their territorial gains. The actions of the US were decisive in making the agreement possible, in that they changed the dynamics of the conflict itself, a necessary step in bringing the parties to the negotiation table.<sup>62</sup>

The peace agreement had many shortcomings, including an extreme degree of decentralization in which the constituent entities of Bosnia were granted wide-ranging powers over defense, fiscal policy and relations with neighboring states. Especially by granting these subnational entities the sole right to maintain armed forces, the accord deprived the central government of a key attribute of

---

57 David Rohde, *The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica: Europe's Worst Massacre Since World War the Second*, New York: Penguin Books, 2012, and Jan Willem Honig and Norbert Both, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*, New York: Penguin Books, 1997.

58 Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, p.273.

59 Ibid, p.274.

60 Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, p. 180.

61 William Zartman, “Ripeness: The Hurting Stalemate and Beyond,” in *International Conflict Resolution After the Cold War*, edited by Paul C. Stern and Daniel Druckman, Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000, p.228.

62 Touval, *Mediation in the Yugoslav Wars*, p.167 see also Touval, “Coercive Mediation on the Road to Dayton”.

sovereignty.<sup>63</sup> The principles of rejecting ethnic purity and seizure of land through force were also abandoned.<sup>64</sup> However, the Dayton Accords were at least successful in ending the war-halting violence in the short term, and creating the basic framework for a sustainable peace.<sup>65</sup> After four years of horrors suffered by the people of Bosnia, this was a significant achievement.

In Bosnian case, the peace initiative was pursued along both diplomatic and military dimensions. Coercive mediation employed military force to persuade the Serbs to change their terms, redraw the map and restructure the bargaining conditions.

In the case of Dayton negotiations, the use of force was combined with diplomacy and linked to a political objective. Also Bosnian case shows that battlefield outcomes are important to negotiations, and that parties to a conflict base their decisions at the negotiation table on the military situation on the ground. This observation is supported by the existing literature on civil war negotiations. The warring parties need to see negotiations as the better option. They should conclude that a continuation of the war might impose a great cost on them, otherwise they will not agree to compromises. Third, military ‘surrogates’ were effective. Since outside powers were reluctant to send their own ground troops, one alternative was to strengthen local forces on the ground. A key development which helped end the war in Bosnia was the formation of a Muslim-Croat alliance against the Serbs. With US facilitation and training, the Croats and Muslims joined forces against the Serbs.

In Bosnia sanctioning the supporter of the aggressor put pressure on the aggressor. Belgrade had been a very important sponsor of the Bosnian Serbs. Sanctions imposed on Serbia seriously damaged the Serbian economy. The Western powers offered Serbian president Milosevic relief from sanctions on the condition that he put pressure on the Bosnian Serbs. It worked, and Belgrade played a critical role in efforts to end the Bosnian war. Yet another factor is that airstrikes were effective in demonstrating to the Serbs that their defiance would be punished.

In addition, this study argues that no-fly zones protected civilian populations in Bosnia. The Bosnian example also shows that safe areas are useful only when protected by the international community. Based on the past actions of the UN and NATO, Bosnian Serb leaders became convinced that if they attacked the safe areas, the international community would do nothing to stop them. So they attacked Srebrenica, where they committed one of the worst massacres of the war.

63 Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, p. 180. For the details of the Dayton Agreement, see the official text at [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/BA\\_951121\\_DaytonAgreement.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/BA_951121_DaytonAgreement.pdf).

64 Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, p. 324.

65 George Downs and Stephen John Stedman, “Evaluation Issues in Peace Implementation”, in *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, edited by Stephen John Stedman, Donald Rothchild, and Elizabeth M. Cousens, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002.

## Bibliography

- BILDT, Carl. *Peace Journey: The Struggle For Peace in Bosnia*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998.
- BURG, Steven L. and Paul S. Shoup. *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*, New York, M.E. Sharpe, 2000.
- COUSENS, Elizabeth M., “Making Peace in Bosnia Work”, *Cornell International Law Journal*, 30: 789-818.
- DAALDER, Ivo H. “Fear and Loathing in the Former Yugoslavia”, in *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, edited by Michael E. Brown, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1996.
- DAALDER, Ivo H. *Getting to Dayton: The Making of America’s Bosnia Policy*, Washington D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2000.
- DOWNS, George and Stephen John Stedman, “Evaluation Issues in Peace Implementation”, in *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, edited by Stephen John Stedman, Donald Rothchild, and Elizabeth M. Cousens, Boulder and London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002.
- DREW, Elizabeth, *On the Edge*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1994.
- FILSON, Darren and Suzanne Werner, “A Bargaining Model of War and Peace: Anticipating the Onset, Duration, and Outcome of War,” *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 46, no. 4, October, 2002.
- General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/BA\\_951121\\_DaytonAgreement.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/BA_951121_DaytonAgreement.pdf).
- GOMPERT, David C. “The United States and Yugoslavia’s Wars”, in *The World and Yugoslavia’s Wars*, edited by Richard H. Ullman, New York, Council on Foreign Relations, 1996.
- GOW, James, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1997.
- HOLBROOKE, Richard. *To End a War*, New York, The Modern Library, 1999.
- HONIG, Jan Willem and Norbert Both, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*, New York, Penguin Books, 1997.
- HUTCHINGS, Robert L. *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War: 1989-1992*, Washington, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1997.
- MASON, T. David and Patrick J. Fett “How Civil Wars End: a Rational Choice Approach”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 40, no. 4, December 1996.
- MITCHELL, C.R. “Motives for Mediation” in *New Approaches to International Mediation*, edited by C.R. Mitchell and K. Webb, New York, Greenwood Press, 1988.
- OWEN, David. *Balkan Odyssey*, New York, Harcourt Brace and Co., 1995.
- Rohde, David, *The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica: Europe’s Worst Massacre Since World War the Second*, New York, Penguin Books, 2012.
- RUDMAN, George, “Backtracking to Reformulate: Establishing the Bosnian Federation,” *International Negotiation*, 1, no.3, 1996, pp.525-545.
- SERWER, Daniel, “A Federation Memoir”, in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall eds., *Herding Cats Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World*, Washington D.C., United States Institute of Peace, 1999.

- SHARP, Jane M.O. "Dayton Report Card", *International Security*, 22, no.3, Winter 1997-1998, pp.101-137.
- TOUVAL, Saadia, "Coercive Mediation on the Road to Dayton", *International Negotiation* 1, 1996, pp.547-570.
- TOUVAL, Saadia. *Mediation in the Yugoslav Wars: The Critical Years, 1990-95*, Great Britain, Palgrave, 2002.
- WAGNER, R. Harrison, "Bargaining and War," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 44, no. 3, July 2000.
- WITTMAN, Donald, "How a War Ends: A Rational Model Approach", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 23, no. 4, December 1979.
- ZARTMAN, William and Saadia Touval, "International Mediation in the Post-Cold War Era", in *Managing Global Chaos*, edited by Chester A. Crocker and Fen Osler Hampson, with Pamela Aall, Washington, United Institute of Peace Press, 1996.
- ZARTMAN, William. "Ripeness: The Hurting Stalemate and Beyond," in *International Conflict Resolution After the Cold War*, edited by Paul C. Stern and Daniel Druckman, Washington D.C., National Academy Press, 2000.