



A PEACE, OR JUST A CEASE-FIRE?

THE MILITARY EQUATION IN POST-DAYTON BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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Bosnia and Herzegovina

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A PEACE, OR JUST A CEASE-FIRE?

THE MILITARY EQUATION IN POST-DAYTON BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Achieving the ambitious goals of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (DPA) -- forging a unified state out of the shaky Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and resistant and unstable Republika Srpska -- is a complex and difficult undertaking which has not been made easier by the quest for a so-called "exit strategy". Ultimately, success will be judged by the durability of the peace. But as the pre-announced departure date for the NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR) approaches, it is clear that a self-sustaining peace is not yet in sight.

Analysts agree on two plausible scenarios in the event of a premature withdrawal of NATO's stabilising presence. One revolves around the possibility of a Bosniac attempt to take advantage of Republika Srpska's geographic vulnerability, a scenario discussed extensively in the Bosniac media in the spring of 1997. The other hinges on the virtual certainty that, in the absence of international peace-keepers, localised incidents of ethnic fighting would occur which would be likely to escalate. Either scenario would generate further forced population movements and may trigger a chain reaction, with political instability expanding to other parts of the Balkans, proceeding to an unforeseen conclusion.

This paper concerns three military topics that are seldom raised in relation to one another but that cannot meaningfully be assessed in isolation. Taken together, they are likely to have a decisive effect on the future of the DPA: the balance of military forces among the former combatants on a sub-regional level; the US-sponsored Train and Equip programme; and the NATO exit strategy.

The balance of military forces among the former combatants, including the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and Croatia, has been the focus of a sub-regional arms reduction process monitored by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Levels were set at a ratio of 5:2:2, based on the approximate size of the populations of FRY, Croatia and Bosnia, further divided on a 2:1 ratio between the Federation and Republika Srpska. On 21 November 1997, the OSCE announced that all four parties had met their reduction liabilities by the 31 October deadline. Republika Srpska and the FRY destroyed the most weapons but remained at or near the allowed ceilings, since they had by far the largest excess of weapons at the start of the process. The Federation was only required to destroy artillery.

It must be assumed that there are weapons as yet undeclared on all sides, although over time these will deteriorate if they are not maintained and will diminish as a destabilising factor. Assuming continued mutual monitoring under OSCE auspices, quantitative uncertainties will become less pressing and qualitative factors such as economic conditions, morale, strategic liabilities and political dynamics will assume more importance.

Early in the arms reduction process, Republika Srpska balked at complying. This was in part the result of alarm about the US-sponsored "Train and Equip" programme of military support to the Federation. The assistance, worth about \$400

million to date, consists of military training, provided by a private US company -- Military Professional Resources Inc. (MPRI), as well as deliveries of military equipment. The US have adamantly backed "Train and Equip", citing the fact that at the start of the war in Bosnia, the correlation of military forces overwhelmingly favoured the Serb beneficiaries of the JNA. European governments, by contrast, have persistently questioned the wisdom of any military build-up so soon after the war.

Some journalistic portrayals of Train and Equip give the impression that MPRI is priming the Federation for an irredentist strike. But interviews with MPRI officials suggest the programme is actually far more complex, focused primarily on one of the essentials of "state-building", which is to create a coherent military establishment that has a monopoly on, and effective civilian control over, the use of military force. While, equipment received to date is far better than that held by the Federation at the end of the war and superior in quality and condition to most of the Republika Srpska arsenal, it is also well below the Federation's permitted arms control ceilings leaving Republika Srpska with numerical superiority in most categories of weapons.

In sum, the advantages of a judiciously managed and monitored Train and Equip programme outweigh its drawbacks. In addition, if Train and Equip is extended to the Bosnian Serbs -- as has recently been proposed -- it might lower tensions, increase transparency and over time build a military bridge between the Federation and Republika Srpska. It would, however, be naive to expect a sudden convergence of interests and lapse of animosities. To the extent that Europeans participate in the programme, it could serve as a mechanism to pull Bosnia closer to Europe.

Politicians in all democratic countries have to answer to their electorates for the costs of overseas involvements. The US Administration, in particular, feels under domestic political pressure to arrive at an "end-state" in which US combat troops, which make up the backbone of SFOR, are withdrawn from Bosnia. However, this preoccupation with "exit strategies" sends a confusing and destabilising message to Bosnians, perpetuating uncertainties about investment, displaced persons' returns and normalisation. Worse still, the prospect of a NATO departure encourages hard-liners to sit tight and wait NATO out.

Instead of an "exit strategy", it may be more constructive to develop "transition strategies" that alter the role and composition of the NATO force over time. If the follow-on force is intended to provide security for minority returns, enable freedom of movement and install municipal administrations, much less arrest indicted war criminals, it is unlikely to be reduced much below its present strength and, at the same time, remain credible. Perhaps over time, Europe can develop a common foreign policy and the Western European Union (NATO minus the US and Canada) could assume full responsibility for peace maintenance in the Balkans. But the entire region -- not only Bosnia but FRY and Croatia, as well as Macedonia and Albania -- will need continuing attention for many years to come. For the foreseeable future, that will involve a sizeable NATO force in Bosnia, US troops among them. Recent comments by NATO officials in this direction are encouraging.

I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the two years since the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Dayton Peace Agreement or DPA), the most frequently asked questions about the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina have been: Is the war really over? Did the DPA set the stage for a sustained period of peace, or did it merely mark the start of a cease-fire?

At the end of 1997, it is hard to find anyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia) who believes the war would not reignite if the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) -led Stabilisation Force were to withdraw in June 1998.¹ Recent comments by officials of NATO member states on both sides of the Atlantic indicate that they concur on the likely disastrous consequences of ending the international military presence prematurely and are determined to prevent such a denouement.

This paper concerns three military topics that are seldom raised in relation to one another but that cannot meaningfully be assessed in isolation. Taken together, they are likely to have a decisive effect on the future of the DPA:

- The balance of military forces among the former combatants, which has been the focus of a sub-regional arms reduction process monitored by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). This could obviously be an important factor in the event of renewed hostilities.
- The United States-sponsored effort to strengthen the armed forces of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation), known as the "Train and Equip" programme. This military assistance is controversial, although there has been little on-the-record comment.
- The NATO-led international military presence, IFOR/SFOR, which is due to terminate in its present form in June 1998, appears increasingly likely to be extended, perhaps in modified form.

II. THE INTERTWINED MILITARY ISSUES

A. The Regional Correlation of Military Forces

The signatories of the DPA agreed to a broad plan for "sub-regional arms control" that would reduce the size and offensive capability of the military forces of the former combatants: the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as well as the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina - Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation).

A 16-month period of phased reductions that began in July 1996 ended on 31 October. In November, an assessment by the OSCE found that there had

¹. The NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) was formed on 20 December 1995, just after the Dayton Peace Conference (Dayton). The force was reduced in size and renamed the Stabilisation Force (SFOR) on 20 December 1996. SFOR was given an 18-month mandate that expires in June 1998.

been compliance by all parties, and reported total cuts that were “even somewhat in excess” of the reductions needed to bring the parties into conformity with the agreed-upon ceilings.

Meanwhile, several issues arise: was the arms reduction process well conceived? Have the arms reductions been adequately verified? If NATO forces were to depart and the war were somehow to resume, would one side or another be left with an advantage? The latter leads back to a prior question: in drawing up this complex regional equation, how should one define the sides?

B. The “Train and Equip” Programme

The desire to provide indirect, arms-length, military assistance to the Federation has been a prominent aspect of US policy since well before the Dayton Peace Conference (Dayton). The “Train and Equip” programme, which took shape soon after Dayton, has been controversial, however. Views differ on whether military assistance to the Federation would make a breakdown of the DPA more or less likely, and hence the withdrawal of NATO troops more or less feasible.

Periodically since the programme began in September 1996, it has been the focus of attention in the Bosnian and international media. This coverage has tended to emphasise Train and Equip’s supposed impact on the viability of the Federation, and on the military capabilities of the Federation *vis a vis* Republika Srpska.

Now that the programme has been underway for more than a year, it should be possible to make a judgement about its practical impact, as opposed to the expectations or fears of its advocates and detractors, which may have been exaggerated. Has Train and Equip contributed anything substantial either to stability, or for that matter to instability, in the region?

C. The NATO “Exit Strategy”

Most leaders of states contributing troops to SFOR/IFOR appear to want to bring the engagement to a close as quickly as possible, to minimise the expense and reduce political exposure. In the United States, however, the subject has been politically contentious.

Since the Clinton Administration first committed US ground forces to IFOR/SFOR, sceptics and opponents in Congress have demanded that the Administration specify an “exit strategy” for ending US participation by a date certain. As it became clear that the NATO deployment would have to be continued past the December 1996 cut-off initially envisioned -- and now past the June 1998 exit date currently planned for SFOR -- some Administration critics in Congress have proposed to cut off funding for the US deployment.²

Since the DPA and even the Federation itself are largely creations of US diplomacy, and since the early emergence of a European “common security and foreign policy” appears unlikely, the political uncertainty about continued

². See “Bosnia: US Military Operations”, an issue brief of the Congressional Research Service, updated 25 September 1997, pp. 12-13.

US participation in an extended NATO mission has raised persistent doubts about the future.

Thus, it is time for a public discussion of the range of likely possibilities for an “exit strategy” and for an assessment of their probable impact.

III. HOW WAR MIGHT RESUME

A. Potential Triggers

The most evident causes for a possible renewed round of fighting stem from the clash between the separatist agendas of Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb nationalists, and Bosniac nationalist attempts to create a centralised Bosnia. Since there are hard-liners in various corners who are frustrated by the DPA's ambiguous outcome, one cannot dismiss the possibility that some may see an added round of fighting as a viable way of adjusting the results.

There have been periodic signs, most particularly in a discussion of “endgame scenarios” in the Bosniac media in the spring of 1997, that in the absence of full compliance by Republika Srpska with DPA provisions for the freedom of movement and return of displaced persons, some envision a day when the Federation's increased military capability would make it possible to modify the *de facto* territorial division by force.

The Bosnian Serbs, who at Dayton were given control of 49 percent of the territory, although they numbered only a third of the pre-war population, have an interest in maintaining the *status quo* and are not likely to reinitiate hostilities. The same is valid for the Bosnian Croat nationalists who, although in theory absorbed into the Federation, still maintain *de facto* independence in most of Herzegovina and benefit from a secure economic position due to their control of major trade routes to the Federation and to their open border with the Republic of Croatia, which provides significant economic assistance. Moreover, Croat separatists understand that in the event of war, Croat enclaves in Central Bosnia would be at immediate risk.

The two plausible scenarios for a resumption of fighting both hinge on an early withdrawal of the stabilising NATO presence. One revolves around the possibility of a Bosniac attempt to take advantage of the geographic vulnerability of Republika Srpska. Since such an attack has a greater chance of success as the military capability of the Federation armed forces improves, critics of “Train and Equip” have argued that it is potentially destabilising. The other plausible scenario for renewed warfare hinges on the virtual certainty that, once NATO forces leave, localised incidents of ethnic fighting would occur and that these would be likely to escalate.

B. Probable Outcomes

Rational calculations of the probable outcome of renewed warfare in Bosnia are difficult because of the stand-off between the three ethnic groups, each dominated by a nationalist party. When the war ended and the DPA was signed, the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL) recognised a *de facto* division

between Republika Srpska and the Federation. Moreover, nearly four years after its creation in the Washington Agreement of March 1994, the Federation itself remains effectively divided into Bosniac and Croat territories. The residual antipathies between Bosniac and Croat hard-liners are as powerful as the grudges between them and Bosnian Serb hard-liners.

In the absence of NATO, a Bosniac-initiated Federation offensive to take over vulnerable Serb-held territories may be likely. Because of Bosnian Serb strategic vulnerabilities at various points including the Posavina Corridor, Doboj, the Sapna Thumb near Zvornik, and the "Anvil" Southwest of Banja Luka, such an offensive might well rout Bosnian Serb forces in its initial stages, but there are major questions about what might follow.

With the Bosniacs engaged against the Serbs, Croat separatists in Herzegovina may attempt to break away from the Federation, and compete for the control of territory near Banja Luka and in the Posavina. Moreover, if large numbers of Bosnian Serbs fled Republika Srpska and spilled into the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), it is uncertain how the FRY would react.³ In the context of current trends toward more radical Serb nationalism within Serbia, the stress of a new humiliation generating hundreds of thousands of additional Bosnian Serb refugees would accentuate the already profound economic crisis there. It is certain that there would be pressure from Serb nationalists, for example militants in the Serb Radical Party, to reenter the fighting.⁴

A crisis of this nature would accentuate ethnic tension in the predominately Muslim Sandzak area bridging Serbia and Montenegro, and could spark an open rebellion by the 90-percent Albanian population of Kosovo. Complications would then almost certainly spill into the southern Balkans, possibly with the triggering of a "greater Albanian" uprising in western Macedonia, which would in turn raise the possibility for conflict between Greece and Turkey, both NATO members, whose relations are already under strain. Such a turn of events would also be of concern to Bulgaria, which considers many Macedonians to be temporarily misplaced Bulgarians.

None of these developments would be of immediate concern to Bosniac hard-liners who, in the absence of NATO, might envision a quick and easy "endgame" to regain territory from the Bosnian Serbs. The potential chain reaction is, however, a catastrophe from the point of view of NATO strategists who would be faced, not with a demanding and expensive "cold peace" in Bosnia, but with the possibility of a generalised war in the south Balkans.

Returning to the complications within Bosnia itself, one should at least note the so-called Karadjordjevo Agreement. This was a plan to carve-up Bosnia reportedly reached by then-President of Serbia Slobodan Milosevic and the Croatian president Franjo Tudjman in March 1991, at a hunting lodge at

3 The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, sometimes referred to as Serbia-Montenegro, is the rump state of ex-Yugoslavia that has held together thus far after the secession of Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia.

4 In an interview in June 1997, Vesna Pesic, a leading figure of the Serbian democratic opposition who has been celebrated for her anti-war stands and recently was awarded the Averill Harriman Human Rights Award, was asked by ICG whether, under such circumstances, FRY President Slobodan Milosevic would be likely to send troops across the Drina. She paused and then answered, "He might. Maybe I would too. What would we do with another 500,000 refugees?"

Karadjordjevo, near the border between Croatia and Serbia. Since that meeting, there have been persistent reports that the two agreed to divide Bosnia and to exchange Serb and Croat populations in minority areas, without regard to the wishes of Bosniacs and non-nationalist Serbs and Croats.

The rumours of a sell-out at Karadjordjevo contributed to the unstable relations between Bosniacs and Croats that led to mutual ethnic cleansing during the war in 1993. There were numerous other incidents of perfidy: Serbs renting tanks to Croats to shell Bosniacs in Kiseljak; Croats and Serbs helping Bosniac renegade Fikret Abdic create a separatist Bosniac enclave in Bihac; Serbs ceding territory to Croats in Herzegovina, to set the stage for the Croat ethnic cleansing of Bosniacs from towns such as Stolac and Capljina.

These are now semi-forgotten footnotes in the history of the war, but their memory has relevance in evaluating the possibilities for unforeseen consequences should NATO forces depart, leaving one side or another with an opportunity to adjust the outcome of the DPA with an ostensibly simple "endgame scenario".

IV. SUB-REGIONAL ARMS CONTROL

A. The Changing Balance

One of the reasons the war in the former Yugoslavia was so destructive was the availability of a huge quantity of modern weapons. These were a holdover from the early Cold War years after the late Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito was expelled from the Soviet Bloc in 1948. Tito built up a vast military arsenal as insurance against the possibility of a Soviet attack.

Many of the weapons manufacturing plants and weapons caches were located in Bosnia, which as the central part of Yugoslavia, was understood to be the region where Tito's forces might have to make their stand. These weapons were controlled by the Yugoslav National Army (JNA), which at its peak was ranked as one of the largest and best equipped military powers in Europe. During the winter and spring of 1991-92, many of these weapons were pre-positioned around Bosnian cities by the JNA, and were later released to Bosnian Serb military and para-military units largely made up of the same JNA personnel.

Thus in Bosnia in 1992, there was a massive disparity between the military capabilities of the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Croats and Bosniacs, who had no aircraft and, at the start, virtually no heavy weapons. This disparity led to the spectacle of well-equipped Serb units besieging and shelling civilians in virtually defenceless cities and enclaves, one of the defining features of the war.

By the time the war ended in 1995, the balance had shifted considerably. Gradually, the Bosniac and Croat forces had acquired weapons despite the arms embargo, and their superior manpower reserves had begun to offset the Bosnian Serb advantage in weaponry. But the decisive change was the build-up of a modern army in Croatia which counter-attacked in the spring and summer of 1995, using *blitzkrieg* tactics to rout the Serbs from western Croatia.

Thus by the closing months of the war, the tables had turned against the Bosnian Serbs. Suddenly, the Serbs in western Bosnia were isolated and virtually surrounded by a relatively well-equipped army, largely based on the entry of Croatian troops and equipment into Herzegovina and north-west Bosnia between August and October 1995. The Bosnian Serb forces were demoralised by the NATO bombing campaign which came soon after the massacre in Srebrenica. Indeed, in the period immediately before the Dayton Peace Conference, the Bosnian Serbs were falling back in disarray, and it appeared that, if the war continued for a few more weeks, they might lose the entire Banja Luka region and the vital Posavina Corridor.

The cease-fire that immediately preceded the Dayton Peace Conference stopped the Croat-Bosniac advance, giving rise to a sense among some Bosniacs that they had been cheated of a victory that at long last was within reach. As noted in the previous section, however, the internal contradictions within the Federation would have made a continued Bosniac advance increasingly risky. Most of the gains were being made by Bosnian Croat and Croatian units which at any moment might have stopped assisting the Bosniacs and veered toward a different agenda.

B. Arms Control at Dayton

It was clear at the Dayton Peace Conference that the arms control task was to reduce armaments and military uncertainties not merely in Bosnia, but throughout the region, including Croatia and FRY. This was the aim of Annex 1-B of the DPA, the “Agreement on Military Stabilisation” between the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina,⁵ the Federation, Republika Srpska, the Republic of Croatia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (the Parties).

The “general obligation”, set forth in Article I of Annex 1-B, stated: “The Parties agree that progressive measures for regional stability and arms control is essential to creating a stable peace in the region.” There were two main commitments, one to adopt “confidence- and security-building measures”, commonly called “transparency”, so that none of the parties would have to fear surprise attack; and the other to agree on a process for arms reductions and cuts in military manpower. In both cases the OSCE was assigned responsibility for organising and conducting the negotiations.

C. Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in Bosnia

Article II of Annex 1-B addressed the “transparency” issue. The Parties agreed to begin negotiations immediately under the auspices of the OSCE and to reach an agreement within 45 days, which they did on 26 January 1996 at Vienna.

The negotiations on Article II were guided by the 1994 Vienna Document of the Negotiations on Confidence and Security-Building Measures of the OSCE,

⁵ The Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was the state which conformed with the pre-war boundaries of the former Yugoslavia Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina but which had no armed forces of its own, since they belonged to the two “entities”: the Federation and Republika Srpska. The Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was renamed Bosnia and Herzegovina in Annex 4 of the DPA.

which had earlier developed a methodology for overseeing the post-Cold War build-down of NATO and Warsaw Pact forces in Central Europe.

Article II called for restricting military deployments and exercises; restraining the reintroduction of foreign forces; withdrawing forces and heavy weapons to cantonment areas and barracks (as was provided for in Annex 1-A of the DPA, the Agreement on Military Aspects); disbanding special operations and armed civilian groups; giving notification of planned military activities, including international military assistance and training (such as Train and Equip); identifying and monitoring weapons manufacturing capabilities; exchanging data on holdings of heavy weapons as defined by the OSCE-monitored Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE); and establishing military liaison missions between the armed forces of the Federation and Republika Srpska. Further, in Article III, on regional confidence building, the parties agreed not to import any arms for 90 days and not to import heavy weapons -- tanks, armoured vehicles, artillery and anti-aircraft weapons -- for six months.

The confidence-building negotiations resulted in the "Agreement on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures" signed on 31 January in Vienna. The main features of the Vienna Agreement were that the Parties would periodically exchange information on their military organisation, manpower and major weapons systems, give notice of manoeuvres and unusual military movements, limit the size and frequency of exercises, avoid deployments in sensitive areas such as territory close to the IEBL, and permit representatives of other Parties to observe manoeuvres and visit military bases. The Vienna Agreement has been in effect since 26 January 1996 and, according to officials of the OSCE and the Office of the High Representative (OHR)⁶, compliance has been smooth.

D. Sub-regional Arms Control

Under Article IV of Annex 1-B of the DPA, the same Parties negotiated the Agreement for Sub-regional Arms Control which was signed in Florence on 14 June 1996 and which has guided the arms reduction process.

The main point of Article IV was the establishment of numerical limits on the holdings of tanks, artillery, armoured combat vehicles, combat aircraft and helicopters, with the additional understanding that artillery were to be defined as pieces of 75mm calibre and above.⁷

The deadline for agreement on numerical limits was 180 days after the signing of the DPA, and a formula was established so that, if the parties had not reached agreement by that time, arbitrary limits would apply on a ratio of 5:2:2 based on the approximate ratio of the FRY, Croatian and Bosnian populations. The arbitrary baseline was "the determined holdings of the FRY". Once that was established, FRY would be allowed to keep 75 percent of its baseline; Croatia 30 percent of the FRY baseline; and Bosnia and Herzegovina 30

⁶ Under the DPA, the High Representative leads and co-ordinates the international civilian effort in Bosnia.

⁷ The more common definition of artillery is 105mm and above, but extending the definition down to 75mm meant that easily disassembled pack howitzers, and especially mortars which played a large part in the war in Bosnia, were covered.

percent of the FRY baseline, divided on a 2:1 ratio, two for the Federation and one for Republika Srpska.

The Florence Agreement on Sub-regional Arms Control had adapted an OSCE treaty format developed in the late 1980s to regulate the disarmament of the NATO and Warsaw Pact forces in Central Europe. It laid out detailed weapons definitions and “counting rules” for battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, artillery pieces, combat aircraft and attack helicopters. The reductions were to be achieved in two phases, the first ending 31 December 1996, and the second ending 31 October 1997, by which time reductions were to be complete. The build-down was end-loaded, with only 40 percent of artillery, combat aircraft and attack helicopters, and 20 percent of tanks and armoured combat vehicles to be reduced by the first deadline, and the remainder by the second.

In line with the prior OSCE model, the counting rules provided for a number of set-asides; the Parties were allowed not to count weapons that were in the process of manufacture or related testing; were used exclusively for research and development; belong to “historical collections”; had already been decommissioned; were in the pipeline for export or re-export; were committed to “peacetime internal security functions”; or were “in transit” to a destination outside the Parties’ territory.

The reduction process was governed by a protocol specifying the elaborate and irreversible damage to be done to the weapons. For example, in the case of a combat aircraft, this entailed “severing its nose immediately forward of the cockpit and its tail in the central wing section area so that the assembly joints, if there are any in the areas to be severed, shall be contained in the severed portions.” An alternative method is deforming the aircraft “by compression, so that its height, width or length is reduced by at least 30 percent.”

In the case of tanks and armoured vehicles, the OSCE model contained a set-aside provision. A limited number could be converted for about a dozen non-military uses, such as “general purpose prime movers”, bulldozers, oil rig vehicles, and environmental vehicles. A few others could be assigned to “static displays” in museums and similar sites, so long as their fuel tanks were punctured and their engines removed or packed in concrete. There were also elaborate provisions for mutual inspections by the Parties themselves, overseen by the OSCE, to verify the arms reduction process.

Finally, the parties also agreed in Florence to the following voluntary limits on military manpower to go into effect on 1 September 1996: Bosnia and Herzegovina 60,000 troops; Croatia 65,000; FRY 124,339; the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina 55,000; and Republika Srpska 56,000.⁸

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There is an evident discrepancy between the voluntary limit of 60,000 troops offered by the delegation representing Bosnia and Herzegovina at Dayton, and the sum of the two troop ceilings offered by the two entities of the state, the Federation and Republika Srpska, which is 111,000. OSCE officials explain the discrepancy as an anomaly stemming from the DPA. The ceilings are all “voluntary targets”. The delegation for the state volunteered to accept a ceiling of 60,000 troops, 5,000 fewer than Croatia’s voluntary ceiling. But was in a sense theoretical since the state actually controlled no armed forces at all. The more meaningful numbers were those of the entities, whose armies actually existed. The OSCE notes that, in July 1997, the Federation revised its self-established ceiling downward to 45,000 troops. If the DPA implementation continues, and if the Federation and Republika Srpska were one day to agree to combine their armed forces within the state, the combined voluntary limit would be 60,000.

Limits on Armaments Set by the Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control⁹

Attack	Battle		Armoured	Combat	
	Artillery	Tanks	Vehicles	Aircraft	Helicopters
FRY	3,750	1,025	850	155	53
Croatia	1,500	410	340	62	21
Federation	1,000	273	227	41	14
Republika Srpska	500	137	113	21	7

According to OSCE officials, the progress in compliance was uneven in the first phase of arms reductions which ended 31 December 1996. The main problem was that Republika Srpska took maximum advantage of the possible exemptions in the counting rules, assigning a wholly improbable number of weapons to museum displays, bulldozing, snow-plowing, mineral crushing duty and the like. This accentuated the continuing doubts about the comprehensiveness of the Republika Srpska baseline figures. In addition, the Bosniac and Croat components of the Federation military establishments were squabbling about weapons holdings throughout the first phase: that is, of the permitted heavy weapons, how many would be under Bosniac and how many under Croat control?

When the Peace Implementation Conference (PIC) of the Contact Group convened in London on 4-5 December 1996, several weeks remained before the deadline for Phase One reductions. This meant none of the Parties were as yet in technical non-compliance with the reduction ceilings. However, the spirit and eventual intent of the Parties, particularly of Republika Srpska, were much in doubt. In its concluding statement, the London PIC "deplored" the foot-dragging over baseline validation inspections, and warned the Parties to accelerate compliance, on pains of being denied SFOR permission to withdraw equipment from cantonment sites or to hold training exercises. This threat began to produce results, although Republika Srpska had no way to eliminate the backlog before the end of Phase One at the end of December 1996.

The pressures for compliance continued through the winter as SFOR exerted strict control on training and troop movements. Finally, faced with the threat of a special OSCE audit of all weapons holding sites in the spring of 1997, Republika Srpska acknowledged an additional "reduction liability" of about 850 previously undeclared weapons. This step brought Republika Srpska back into the good graces of OSCE monitors, and of SFOR observers who had also been conducting weapons counts by a separate methodology. As the 31 October 1997 deadline for Phase Two of arms reductions approached, a consensus had emerged -- including among officials of the OSCE, SFOR, and the US Embassy -- that the situation had improved substantially.

The OSCE announced on 21 November that all four Parties had complied in meeting their reduction liabilities by 31 October, and that the total count of weapons eliminated slightly exceeded the collective requirement. Republika

⁹ From Table 1 accompanying an OSCE briefing paper released at Vienna in November 1997.

Srpska and the FRY destroyed the most weapons but remained at or near the allowed ceilings, since they had by far the largest excess of weapons at the start of the process. The Federation was only required to destroy artillery.

Verified Reductions (Mainly Destruction) of Heavy Weapons¹⁰

	Artillery	Battle Tanks	Armoured Vehicles	Combat Aircraft
FRY	1,090	422	29	59
Croatia	697	--	--	--
Federation	2,219	--	--	--
Republika Srpska	1,731	280	52	1

Observers agree that Republika Srpska's delaying tactics had been motivated in part by alarm about the Train and Equip programme which was being vigorously publicised as giving the Federation NATO equipment and modern battle tactics similar to those which had overwhelmed Serb forces in Croatia during Operations Flash and Storm in May and August 1995.

In retrospect, one of the basic problems was that the OSCE counting rules, with their liberal provisions for exemptions, were designed to apply to the post-Cold War environment in Central Europe, where mutual fears of invasion had become a distant memory and both sides were ready for a new era of détente. The political and military prospects in Bosnia are far less settled, however, and it is hardly surprising that Republika Srpska initially exploited every conceivable loophole.

As for methodology, the OSCE, on the one hand, has conducted inspections in a formal way, making intermittent but precise inspections in which individual weapons are systematically matched by serial numbers to military units. SFOR, on the other hand, is mainly concerned with monitoring movements, manoeuvres and exercises. SFOR has conducted numerous spot checks of cantonment sites, but its counting is less systematic, based on counts of the weapons present rather than on audits of individual weapons, by serial numbers. Nonetheless, the OSCE and SFOR counts are close.

Could there be another 100, or even 500, heavy weapons hidden? Yes, SFOR and OSCE officials agree. Such weapons, they say however, are almost certainly not in good working order, are not easily deployable to troops, and do not exist in sufficient numbers to make a difference. Indeed, weapons and aircraft that are not used and maintained are totally useless.

Seeking a precise result in a weapons count in post-war Bosnia is simply not realistic, arms control monitors agree. "At the end of the war, nobody knew what they had," says an OSCE official, noting that some corps commanders undoubtedly kept weapons in their own private stock. "The bottom line," he adds, "is that as long as SFOR is here, nobody will start a war."

V. TRAIN AND EQUIP

¹⁰ From Table 10 accompanying the OSCE report released at Vienna on 22 November 1997.

A. The Terms of the Debate

Shortly after the start of the military reduction process described in the previous section, a US-directed effort to build the military capabilities of the Federation commenced. This assistance programme, christened "Train and Equip" by its US-backers, is an important element in the military equation in post-war Bosnia, although it has several different aspects and a rationale and identity that has shifted with the passage of time, leaving its ultimate significance unclear.

This section will outline the Train and Equip programme as it has developed since its inception, examine the main arguments for and against, and attempt to distinguish its practical impact in both military and political terms from the hopes and fears of advocates and detractors. A systematic look at the programme is overdue since public discussion of Train and Equip has been sporadic, consisting mainly of intermittent coverage in the national and international media when arms shipments arrive.

As its name suggests, the assistance provided under Train and Equip consists of several forms of military training as well as deliveries of military equipment. The training is provided by Military Professional Resources Inc. (MPRI), a US private sector company based near Washington. MPRI is licensed to provide military assistance to foreign governments and it employs a staff of about 180 former US military personnel in Bosnia. MPRI's initial 13-month, \$50 million contract with the Federation went into effect on 6 August 1996 and was recently extended for an additional year, through 5 September 1998.

Although MPRI is a commercial operation, its contract with the Federation is paid for with donor funds and is co-ordinated by the Department of State's Task Force for Military Stabilisation in the Balkans (OMSB). The director and chief spokesman for the effort is Ambassador James Pardew, US Special Representative for Military Stabilisation in the Balkans. Like the senior MPRI staff, Pardew is a retired US Army officer.

The arrangement for subsidising training that is provided by a civilian contractor was initially devised after the formation of the Federation in March 1994. One of the purposes was to side-step the international arms embargo then in effect without risking an open conflict between the US and the European governments which, then as now, opposed introducing more arms into the region.

MPRI's first appearance in the region had been a 1994 contract with the Croatian government to advise on the management of the Croatian defence ministry. MPRI spokesmen say they had nothing to do with the successful Croatian military campaigns in the spring and summer of 1995 since their training programmes had barely started when those campaigns took place.

The US has defended Train and Equip, arguing that at the start of the war in Bosnia, the correlation of military forces overwhelmingly favoured the Serb beneficiaries of the JNA. That imbalance was locked into place by the 1991 UN Security Council embargo on arms imports to all parts of the Former Yugoslavia, which the US supported when it was imposed, but later regretted. The absence of an organised Bosnian military force not only made it

impossible to deter or suppress the Serb and Croat secessionist drives, but left Bosnian cities such as Sarajevo and Bihac defenceless and unable to break sieges until the final months of the war.

The European governments that have committed troops to IFOR/SFOR have persistently questioned the wisdom of any military build-up so soon after the war on the grounds that it is “destabilising”. European officials have muted their disagreement with the US policy by not criticising Train and Equip openly, but they have opposed the military assistance indirectly and have turned a deaf ear to repeated US requests to contribute to the programme. Some US political and military analysts share European doubts about Train and Equip. Thus a low intensity debate about the programme has smouldered.

B. The Training Component

According to OMSB news releases, the training component of Train and Equip is designed to assist the Federation Army become “a self-sufficient and fully operable force capable of providing security for the Federation and stability for the region by attaining minimum levels of combat effectiveness and readiness.” The emphasis in OMSB literature and in nearly all statements by Pardew is on the defensive nature of the project. For example, the programme is said to aim to provide the Federation Army “with sufficient military capabilities to deter against ground attack by the Bosnian Serb Army and defend Federation territory should deterrence fail.”

However, it is worth examining several assumptions implicit in this formulation: that the Federation Army is indeed a viable and unified military organisation, as opposed to the sum of two separate and antagonistic Bosniac and Croat components; that a renewed Serb attack is still the primary threat scenario and is more plausible than, for example, a renewed Croat secession drive or a Bosniac misadventure; and that acquiring a defensive capability does not entail acquiring an offensive capability as well.

The MPRI trainers¹¹ provide a comprehensive bundle of military advice to the Federation Army. These consist of unit training for elements of platoons, companies, battalions and brigades; staff training for ranking officers; and a variety of individual training programmes: professional development courses for non-commissioned officers, company-grade officer training, and staff officer and leader training, including courses for about a dozen officers in the US.

Combat training takes the form of small unit tactics; battle management training through war games conducted with a sophisticated computer system at a combat simulation centre near Sarajevo; and live-fire tank and artillery training at ranges in western Bosnia and in Turkey. An additional component is flight training for the pilots of 15 utility (Huey) helicopters which is scheduled to take place this winter at a German military flight school. This appears to be the first direct European participation in the programme, although the German government maintains that the flight training is separate and distinct from Train and Equip.

¹¹ MPRI does not like the term “advisers”, which is associated with US military guidance projects in past overseas combat operations

Based on journalistic portrayals of the programme, which are often spiced with bellicose quotes from trainees about what they will do to the Serbs when the opportunity presents, one could get the impression that MPRI is turning out tens of thousands of warriors. But in interviews, MPRI officials insist the programme is actually far more complex, focused primarily on one of the essentials of “state-building”, which is to create a coherent military establishment that has a monopoly on, and effective civilian control over, the use of military force.

MPRI stresses that its aim is to build a “NATO-type” military. This means not only the use of NATO standard weapons, but tactics and doctrines that are standard in advanced western countries: for example, indoctrination in the principle that in a democracy the military is subordinate to civilian command, and that soldiers must not meddle in politics; that military leadership is a staff-work process in which subordinates respond to a “guidance” and generate proposals which are then evaluated by higher-ups and eventually confirmed as orders; that the troops of a professional army adhere to rules the US Army calls the Law of Land Warfare and consequently do not shoot prisoners, torch villages and shell civilian targets; and in general, that war-fighting is a complex management process the essence of which is planning, team-work, co-ordination, logistics and re-supply rather than issuing commands.

The degree to which this is novel in Bosnia may not be clear to those unfamiliar with the recent war. There was no Bosnian Army at all at the start and the initial desperate defence of Sarajevo was mounted mainly by self-defence units cobbled together by mafia organisations and made up largely of youths whose ideas of battle stemmed as much from action films as from the year of military service that most had spent in the JNA. They were bold, disorganised and inventive, a law unto themselves, and also sometimes responsible for atrocities. And when opportunities for theft and personal enrichment presented themselves, they were corrupt.

As the government began to organise the rudiments of the Bosnian Army, the mafia leaders were driven out and “regular” units were established, but these were by no means conventional either. The officer corps was small at the start. The Serbs had traditionally dominated the JNA officer corps, and relatively few Bosniacs had sought careers in the military. The initial Bosnian Army officer corps consisted of a few trained Bosniac officers and a handful of Serb and Croat officers who defected from the JNA, plus others who were promoted unsystematically, sometimes based on battlefield bravery and sometimes because they were well connected. One aspect of the war known to Bosnians but not to many internationals was the incompetence of some of the leaders. There are tales of poorly trained conscripts sent out on impossible missions. Corps commanders tended to operate independently in their areas of the country and sometimes, in the mould of “war lords”, to get rich through smuggling, often in partnership with enemy commanders. Bosnian Army units rarely helped each other in combined operations, and almost never took and held ground. Most of the front-lines were static until the last weeks of the war.

This dismal picture of the effectiveness of the wartime Bosnian Army should not cast a shadow over the bravery and commitment of thousands of officers and fighters. To the contrary, it indicates the grave obstacles they had to overcome. However, it also suggests the scope of the task inherent in Train and Equip.

C. The Equipment Component

Press accounts of Train and Equip have generally emphasised the provision of modern weapons and equipment which began to arrive in air shipments to Sarajevo in late August 1996, and by sea to the Croatian port of Ploce that November. The core equipment was provided from used but refurbished US surplus stocks paid for under a \$100 million “draw-down” which had been authorised by the US Congress several months before the Dayton Peace Conference.

The light equipment consisted of 45,100 M-16 rifles with ammunition; 1,000 M-60 machine guns; an assortment of field radios and telephones; and other key gear such as binoculars, generators and computers with software. The heavy equipment included 45 upgraded Vietnam-era M60A3 main battle tanks; 80 M113A2 armoured personnel carriers; 840 AT-4 light anti-tank weapons; and 15 UH-1H (Huey) utility helicopters.

In December 1996, the first non-US donation to Train and Equip arrived at Ploce: 36 105mm howitzers, with ammunition and spare parts, from the United Arab Emirates (UAE); and 12 130mm field guns, 12 122mm howitzers, and 18 23mm anti-aircraft guns, with spare parts, from Egypt. Later the UAE delivered 44 ML90 armoured personnel carriers and 42 French-built AMX30 tanks. And in October 1997, the US delivered an additional 116 refurbished 155mm field howitzers. Drawing on financial donations from countries including Brunei and Malaysia, the Federation has also purchased an assortment of several hundred refurbished trucks from a company in Holland.

According to MPRI, the total value of the equipment and training furnished to date is about \$400 million. The scale of this build-up is modest as can be gauged by comparison with the agreed ceiling on Federation heavy weaponry under Article IV of the Florence arms reduction agreement described above.

In sum, the equipment, is well below the arms control ceilings established at Florence, although it is far better than the equipment held by the Federation at the end of the war and is superior in quality and condition to most of the Bosnian Serb arsenal. In only one category, artillery, was the Federation obliged to destroy stock to stay under the Florence limits, whereas Republika Srpska had substantial “destruction liabilities” in tanks, armoured personnel carriers and aircraft. This suggests that Republika Srpska will maintain numerical superiority in most categories of weaponry unless international deliveries continue indefinitely, which Pardew says is unlikely.

D. The Practical Impact

It is evident from Pardew’s statements that much of the effort has gone into the creation of the bureaucratic structure of a unified Federation army. The key event, which had to take place before Train and Equip could begin, was the passage of the Federation Defence Law. That took place on 9 July 1996 and the MPRI contract was signed on 16 July. Thereafter, although some training began and most of the weapons were shipped, the release of weapons was held back, pending other key organisational steps such as approval of the joint

Federation force structure in January 1997, agreement on the location of major unit headquarters in May, and adoption of a joint Federation military strategy.

Initially, neither Bosniacs nor Bosnian Croats seemed to have much enthusiasm for unification. They simply wanted to receive the weapons, divide them up and learn to use them. Much of Pardew's labour has gone into persuading the reluctant partners that there is a *quid pro quo* for the military aid: they at least have to demonstrate a good-faith effort to become a unified force.

MPRI officials say that, at the start, the Bosniacs and Croats would barely talk to each other. But they add that, with some key personnel changes, an atmosphere of civility and co-operation has begun to emerge and that, during the past year, there has been great progress. Whether this co-operation will prove permanent remains to be seen.

MPRI needs to emphasise different aspects of the programme to different audiences. The Bosniacs and Bosnian Croats need to be prodded with hold-backs of equipment as well as encouraged with positive reinforcement. On the one hand, most in the US want to hear the programme is doing well and is helping to prepare the way for an "exit strategy", meaning the withdrawal of US forces from Bosnia. On the other hand, some in the US and European officials need to be persuaded that the programme is not doing so well that it will cause an eventual resumption of the war.

Building an integrated NATO-type military in Bosnia is still an uphill task. SFOR officials agree with MPRI estimates that, despite progress made to date, the Federation Army is by no means capable of mounting "combined operations" (using forces in an integrated, synchronised manner) at the battalion level, and will not be capable of doing so for several years. Meanwhile, as a measure to encourage Bosniac-Croat co-operation, the heavy weapons are stored on Bosniac territory and the ammunition on Croat turf.

The most fundamental question concerning the effect of Train and Equip is raised by Europeans and sceptical analysts in the US: can the programme be considered truly "defensive", or does it have a destabilising offensive potential as well?

In answering that question, neither the numerical count of weapons nor the implementation of bureaucratic steps such as adoption of joint defensive doctrines are as meaningful as a judgement of qualitative factors such as the attitudes, morale, economic base, strategic vulnerabilities and military skills of the parties, all in the context of the political environment in Bosnia and the Balkans, as noted above in section III.

Pardew says that the Train and Equip programme, although improving Federation planning, logistics and command and control capabilities, will not radically change its capabilities. He notes that, even with Train and Equip, the Federation Army will have no air force, very little air defence, limited mobility, and insufficient logistical capability to sustain an operation beyond two or three days, which is the key to offensive action.

Pardew insists that Train and Equip is purely defensive in nature and that, moreover, the Bosniacs are well aware of their complicated situation and would

not attempt a rash act. But he acknowledges with some frustration the difficulty of countering sceptical analysts who emphasise the destabilising potential of even an ostensibly defensive build-up. Such analysts assume that more weapons would be likely to restart an arms race and fuel an “endgame” attack by the Bosniacs, or entangle the US into an endless preventive commitment. “The Bosnian people have the right of self defence,” Pardew counters. “The problem is you can’t prove a negative, and you can’t prove intentions,” he adds.

E. The Shifting Logic and Packaging

An important element in the controversy over Train and Equip stems from the complexity of the goals that the programme is intended to achieve, which have shifted in emphasis over time as the situation in Bosnia has changed.

Most advocates of Train and Equip, on the one hand, argue from a moralistic position that has its antecedents in the US debate over the war in Bosnia dating back almost three years before the Dayton Peace Conference. Advocates of what was then called the “Lift and Strike” option -- that is, bombing the Bosnian Serb forces and lifting the arms embargo as to be able to deliver weapons to the Bosniacs -- argued that it was immoral not to right the obvious imbalance in military capabilities.

In the prevailing European view, on the other hand, the emphasis is not on righting past wrongs but rather on assuring regional stability in the future. In this view, the tragedy in 1992 was not entirely the fault of European governments which could not agree on a common foreign and security policy. It was also caused by the inherent political divisions in Bosnia, and by US unwillingness to risk troops on the ground alongside the Europeans in the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR). This weakened the UNPROFOR peace-keeping effort and reduced the chances of enforcing the long succession of UN Security Council resolutions for which the US voted, but for the implementation of which it declined to assume any risk. Thus, opponents of Train and Equip argue that if the main objective is preventing the war next time, maintaining the post-war military stalemate is more useful than giving the Bosniacs military means to accompany the motive they may have to launch an “endgame strategy”.

These sharply conflicting views of Train and Equip and of each other's wisdom in supporting or opposing it are to some degree caricatures, and they have impeded a serious discussion of the programme. Moreover, among diplomats and military officers in Bosnia, it is generally taboo to discuss the pros and cons of Train and Equip on the record.

If and when such a discussion does take place, the shifting rationales for military assistance offered at different junctures should be examined:

- As noted above, the initial US aim was to “level the battlefield” and oppose Bosnian Serb aggression without risking American lives.
- By the time of the March 1994 Washington cease-fire between Bosniacs and Bosnian Croats, military assistance was seen as a carrot to persuade the two sides to coexist within the Federation and make common cause against the Bosnian Serbs.

- Simultaneously, military assistance was promoted as a way to replace the “foreign” (extremist) influence which was by then quite evident in Central Bosnia and in a few branches of the Sarajevo government.
- During the year before the Dayton Peace Conference, pressure was building in the US Congress to force the Clinton Administration to unilaterally break the arms embargo. The Administration refused to do this overtly because of the damage that step would have done to relations within NATO, but it evidently approved, or at least turned a blind eye to, some covert arms shipments from the Middle East. Promising to provide assistance through Train and Equip was seen by the Clinton Administration as a way to win Congressional support for the peace settlement whose implementation would clearly require American ground forces.
- At Dayton, Train and Equip was offered to the Bosniac delegation as a sweetener to win acceptance of a territorial division that left Sarajevo in effective control of far less than half the country despite the huge numbers of displaced Bosniacs trying to return to their homes.
- In selling the DPA to Congress, Train and Equip was pitched as a way to strengthen the Federation so that it would become a free-standing entity capable of defending itself and enabling the NATO force, especially the US component thereof, to withdraw within 12 months. Thus, it became closely linked in the minds of many in Congress to the Administration's “exit strategy”.

F. Train and Equip and Republika Srpska

In the period since Dayton, Train and Equip has served an interesting two-sided function with respect to Republika Srpska. The prospect of increasing Federation strength through Train and Equip has been portrayed, at least tacitly, as a sword of Damocles that might lever the Bosnian Serbs into complying with the key civilian provisions of the DPA, such as permitting freedom of movement and the return of displaced Bosniacs and Croats to their homes in Republika Srpska.

In recent months, however, as the West has courted Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plavsic and supported her moves against the hard-line leadership in Pale, Train and Equip has begun to assume a surprising reverse image. Pardew and others have begun to hold out “membership” in Train and Equip to Republika Srpska as an ambiguous form of carrot. The form this membership might take is far from clear, but it seems the programme could evolve into an inducement to reward Republika Srpska for co-operation, analogous to its post-1994 function in the formation of the Federation.

Bosnian Serb officials have shown some interest in this latest incarnation of Train and Equip. However, they have focused on the prospect of getting new equipment, while minimising the training. A 1 November commentary in the Belgrade newspaper *Vecernje Novosti*, for example, indicated that Bosnian Serb politicians see the offer of training as a stalking horse for the creation of a joint executive command which “the international community seems to be longing for, and by which the framework of Dayton would be exceeded, since the entities have full independence regarding the military and defence.”

On the theme of NATO expansion, the commentary continued: "The establishment of a joint command would facilitate NATO's goal to come closer to the East by another step, and to stay permanently in the [Bosnia] area.... It is becoming more obvious that this programme has much wider and deeper interests than mere help for the 'unarmed' Muslim army...."

The next day, *Vecernje Novosti* carried a statement by Bosnian Serb Chief of General Staff Gen. Pero Colic that the Republika Srpska army "is interested in entering the NATO project regarding equipment, but it will need only a basic training for new weapons. A programme of possible participation by our army is being made. We don't need training as much as the Federation army does."

In a 4 November interview in *Demokratija*, a Belgrade newspaper, President Plavsic also welcomed the idea of receiving new equipment. "Regarding preservation of peace and stability, I think that equal treatment of the Republika Srpska and Federation armies may only contribute to that," she said. "Of course, without conditioning, since the Federation is not presented with any conditions either.... We accepted Dayton as it is, and we can neither reduce it nor add anything."

The general thrust of these comments suggests, unsurprisingly, that the Bosnian Serbs remain allergic to the idea of trading "membership" in Train and Equip for incorporation into a unitary state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, they seem cautiously open to the idea of being "westernised" to the extent of accepting some assistance, although Colic said subsequently that this could not be done without FRY and Russian approval.

Presumably, the extension of Train and Equip to cover the Bosnian Serbs would be a drawn out process that would have benefits in terms of lowering tensions and increasing transparency. It is far too early to predict whether that process could lead to the creation of a single army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, given the bitterness of the recent war and the sharply clashing goals of the Federation and Republika Srpska.

In any case, it should be clear that with such a complex and chameleon-like identity, Train and Equip merits straightforward and serious discussion rather than the oblique criticism it has received to date. Conclusions listed in the final section of this report could serve as a point of departure for a new look at Train and Equip.

VI. "EXIT STRATEGY": SQUARING THE CIRCLE

A. The Double-Bind

As the pre-announced end-date of the SFOR mandate approaches, civilian and military planners are coming to grips with the realisation that a self-sustaining peace in Bosnia is not yet in sight.

Achieving the ambitious DPA goals -- forging a unified state of Bosnia and Herzegovina out of the shaky Federation and resistant and unstable Republika Srpska -- is a complex social engineering project. And it is not made easier by the quest for a so-called "exit strategy".

On the one hand, the US Administration is feeling domestic political pressure to arrive at an "end-state" in which US combat troops, which make up the backbone of the NATO force, are withdrawn from Bosnia. On the other hand, the international community, led by the US, is seeking full implementation of aspects of the DPA which experience has demonstrated can only occur if the NATO force intervenes more actively than it has done to date, and if it continues to intervene for an extended period.

The key DPA undertakings that national authorities have proven generally unwilling to fulfil are: guaranteeing the security and the rights of displaced national minorities trying to return to their homes; installing the winners of municipal elections in areas where they belong to the minority group; and especially in the Republika Srpska, arresting accused war criminals indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former-Yugoslavia (ICTY) and surrendering them to The Hague for trial.

Establishing additional conditions central to any democratic state -- rule of law, professional police forces, independent judiciaries and fully open media -- appears beyond the present capacity or will of the authorities in all three national groupings, although Bosniac authorities have made greater progress than the others in some areas.

Thus two years after Dayton, it is generally recognised that the conditions for a lasting and stable peace will not have been achieved by June 1998, not even if SFOR were to take a more interventionist posture in the meantime. In these circumstances, a withdrawal of the NATO force would lead to an intensification of the political conflict driven by nationalist parties in all three groups and renewed fighting would be almost inevitable.

B. The NATO Force In Bosnia

The NATO force which stabilised the cease-fire after the DPA was signed began life as the "Implementation Force" (IFOR) and a year later was halved in size and renamed the "Stabilisation Force" (SFOR). Planning papers make clear that if the mandate of the NATO force is extended past June 1998, it will be called something else, probably the "Deterrence Force", not only because the mission may change, but also because whenever a new name is adopted, the prior mission can be declared "accomplished", which is a domestic political consideration in troop contributing countries such as the US.

Beneath the nomenclature, the reality is that NATO countries dispatched a multilateral intervention force to attempt to enforce a treaty that imposes a new code of conduct on a deeply divided society. Euphemistic renamings do not hide the fact that the intervention is a complex undertaking that will not be completed soon.

The original NATO force was authorised by the UN Security Council on 15 December 1995 and approved by the North Atlantic Council the next day. It numbered close to 60,000 troops, some of them European units already in Bosnia as part of the prior UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR), and about 19,000 of them American. IFOR was created on 20 December 1995 when UNPROFOR transferred its authority in Bosnia, and it lasted until 20 December

1996, when it metamorphosed into the SFOR. SFOR today is about 32,000 strong, of which about 8,000 are American.

IFOR's primary tasks, listed in its mission statement, were to ensure its self defence ("force protection") and freedom of movement, to establish and mark the Inter-Entity Boundary Line and Zones of Separation, to ensure a cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of "foreign forces" from Bosnia, to monitor and enforce the redeployment of entity forces agreed in the DPA, to assist in the withdrawal of UNPROFOR, to control Bosnian airspace; and to establish a Joint Military Commission to resolve all military issues.¹²

IFOR's secondary tasks, to be undertaken "within the limits of its assigned principal tasks and available resources", were to help create conditions for civilian agencies to carry out non-military provisions of the DPA, including: to assist the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international organisations in the accomplishment of their humanitarian missions and other tasks associated with the peace settlement; to assist in prevention of interference with the freedom of movement of civilians, refugees and displaced persons; responding appropriately to deliberate violence; and to assist in demining.¹³

The primary tasks were prerequisites to establishing even a short-term peace, and IFOR, which was weighted heavily to armoured units, accomplished them in a matter of weeks. During the winter and spring of 1996, NATO officials prided themselves on that accomplishment, implicitly calling attention to the relative disorganisation and slow pace of progress of the civilian effort. This chiding began to subside, however, as civilian officials pointed out that the military task was infinitely simpler than the unprecedented social engineering called for in the civilian side of the DPA, and as civilian agencies began to call on IFOR for a greater emphasis on its "secondary tasks".

Among the secondary tasks, the ones that involved engineering, logistics and simple forms of police work were the easiest. As soon as its own bases were established, IFOR began repairing bridges and roads, and it responded with enthusiasm to requests to assist in the holding of elections, especially since elections were being advertised as a major step toward IFOR's withdrawal.

Other tasks which involved potential risk to IFOR personnel or involvement in politically ambiguous and open-ended commitments were rejected. These included participation in civilian demining, which entailed exposure to the risk of mine strikes; escorting minority group returnees to their homes in hostile communities, which would raise the issue of safeguarding them once they were there; and above all seeking out and arresting persons who had been indicted by ICTY, which was seen as politically entangling as well as risky.

As it became clear that nationalist political parties in Croat and Serb areas of Bosnia were closely identified with, indeed run by, some of the indicted war criminals, international civilian officials endorsed the view of human rights activists and independent observers that this was the absolute top priority in efforts to change the political culture in the secessionist parts of Bosnia. Thus, IFOR began to face steadily rising expectations and criticism in the media for

12 DPA, Annex I-A, Articles VI and VIII.

13 DPA, Annex I-A, Article VI(3).

declining to arrest indicted war criminals, above all Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic who was the most notorious.

IFOR began to decline in size in the summer of 1996. But as it began to shrink, the demands it was facing were becoming more complex. After a policy review in April 1997, the US Administration concluded that only a more aggressive effort could lead to successful implementation of the DPA. Eventually, on 10 July, that conclusion -- coupled with a change of government in Britain, led to the arrest of one indicted Serb and the killing of another in a shoot-out during a "snatch" operation conducted by British Special Air Service (SAS) troops in Prijedor.

At the 30 May meeting of the Peace Implementation Council in Sintra, Portugal, the High Representative was given added powers to force the restructuring of entity police forces and to force an opening in the media. Then, when an open split occurred between Karadzic loyalists in Pale and Republika Srpska President Biljana Plavsic, based in Banja Luka, international officials began to intervene increasingly openly on the side of Plavsic.

By this time, SFOR was a main player in what had become a relatively activist team effort. By late summer, it had assumed a key back-up role, covering attempts by Plavsic to take control of police stations that were still held by Karadzic loyalists in northern Bosnia, as well as to secure television transmission towers in an attempt to silence a bellicose media in Pale that had repeatedly incited the population to violence.

Thus, despite some evident misgivings about being drawn into a process that may take a long time to complete, SFOR is far more deeply engaged in implementing its secondary tasks than it was six months ago.

C. The US Political Context

Just as understanding the complications of implementing the DPA requires an appreciation of recent Balkan history, making sense of the exit strategy debate requires an awareness of the domestic political context in troop-contributing states.

The term "exit strategy" entered US political usage about a decade ago, meaning a plan developed by a US Administration to terminate an overseas military involvement which commits US ground forces in a potentially hostile or entangling environment.¹⁴ The issue has been a factor in Congressional debates over all recent military engagements in places such as Haiti, Somalia

14 "Exit strategy" became a common term in 1984 when then-Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger announced in a speech that, henceforth, one of the prerequisites for US military involvements would be a pre-planned strategy for ending them. Along with other criteria, such as a clear definition of the mission and the assurance of broad political support, the exit strategy requirement became known as the Weinberger Doctrine. In the early 1990s the doctrine was restated by former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Colin Powell, who emphasised the requirement that forces deployed in hostile situations had to have ready access to decisive fire-power. That aspect of the Powell Doctrine, demonstrated in the Persian Gulf War, is not directly relevant to the mission in Bosnia, but the exit strategy requirement has lingered on in political discourse.

and Bosnia where overwhelming economic or strategic national interests were not perceived to be at stake.

An Administration contemplating such a deployment is invariably asked to present a plausible exit strategy before Congress will authorise funding for the operation to begin. The Administration would have difficulty winning congressional approval if it states that its strategy may well have to be revised or extended as events require. One short cut to approval is to simply announce a date certain for completion of the mission. That, however, is a double-edged tactic.

In presenting the DPA to the US public, President Clinton justified US participation by arguing that it was necessary to stop suffering, bring stability to Europe and maintain US leadership in NATO, and because all three parties in the war insisted that US ground troops be part of the NATO force. He also stated that the deployment would last “about one year”.

A year later, President Clinton announced that IFOR would metamorphose into SFOR and remain in Bosnia for another 18 months. Military planning for the transition had been underway for many months. However, there were immediate and predictable congressional accusations that the Administration had kept its policy deliberations secret and never had been serious about withdrawing US troops in “about one year”.

Throughout 1997, the exit strategy was debated intensely in the US. By the end of the year, it appeared to have been resolved in favour of continuing US participation in an extended NATO operation. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said on 4 November that “a consensus is developing that there will or should be some form of US military presence post-SFOR”. Speaking at a news conference alongside German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, Albright added, “We need to do what is necessary to make [the DPA] work.”¹⁵ Then on 28 November, US Gen. Wesley Clark, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, told NATO ambassadors at a meeting in Brussels that NATO should remain at about its current strength and that a withdrawal in June 1998 would leave a dangerous “vacuum”.¹⁶

Also, there is said to be agreement in the US that it would not be wise or credible to set yet another arbitrary deadline for the withdrawal of the SFOR follow-on force, but policy makers are wrestling with the size of the force, possible changes in its mission and the size of the US component, all of which are related. They are said to believe that, if the force is to intervene more aggressively to enforce civilian aspects of the DPA, such as freedom of movement, it cannot be reduced in size. Nor, for reasons explained below, can the US component probably drop below its current one-quarter share.

D. European and US Perspectives on Involvement in Bosnia

Bosnia fell apart rapidly at the start of the war because the Bosnian Serbs, armed by the JNA, were fully prepared for a secessionist campaign, and

15 Reuters, 5 November 1997.

16 Reuters, 28 November 1997.

because the government in Sarajevo had no means to block the rebellion or control its territory.

Facing this reality, European diplomats tried to head off the war in March 1992 by persuading Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic to accept the division of Bosnia into ethnically-based cantons. Leaving aside the relative merits of this so-called Lisbon Agreement, which was brokered by the then Portuguese Foreign Minister Jose Cutilheiro, some European diplomats feel that it was fatally undermined by US interference. Having signed the cantonisation agreement in principle, Izetbegovic backed out after, among others, consulting with Warren Zimmerman, the then US Ambassador to Yugoslavia.

When the war started soon thereafter, mainly British, Canadian and French troops were quickly committed to the UN Protection Force which opened the besieged Sarajevo airport in June and then tried for the next three years to open the way for humanitarian aid deliveries and to serve, by its presence, as a shield for the civilian population.

The US voted consistently for Security Council resolutions that expanded the UNPROFOR mandate -- for example declaring "safe havens" around cities and enclaves such as Srebrenica -- but it did not contribute troops whose presence would have inevitably stiffened the NATO peace-keeping operation. President Clinton promised more assertive US leadership in Bosnia during the 1992 presidential campaign, but facing complicated domestic relations, Clinton distanced himself from the issue soon after his election.

By spring 1993, it had become clear that the US would under no circumstances commit ground troops to the peace-keeping effort. Thereafter, Americans who favoured active intervention to stop the war in Bosnia coalesced around low-risk policy options such as "Lift and Strike" -- aerial bombardment of the Bosnian Serbs and delivering arms to the Bosniac side -- which would allow the US to influence the situation by technical means. Almost no US political figures were willing to defend a view that is widely taken as a given today: that the European effort needed to be made tougher, and could not be made tougher without US involvement, alongside the others, on the ground.

The remote control policy options favoured by US officials, such as air strikes, were unacceptable to European leaders because their ground troops were already deployed across Bosnia in small, highly vulnerable detachments of the UN peace-keeping force. Europeans saw the Lift and Strike approach as likely to intensify the war rather than to end it, in which case their troops would be caught in a cross-fire and pay the price. In fact, as the US pressed for Lift and Strike, arguing that the arms embargo was unfair, the Europeans threatened to withdraw from UNPROFOR.

Such a withdrawal would have been extremely difficult as well as risky because peace-keepers were likely to be taken hostage by all sides to serve as shields. Thus, the US was pressed to begin planning a tough NATO extraction force to cover the UNPROFOR withdrawal which Lift and Strike would provoke. This would have required US ground troops, however. Faced with the European threat to withdraw UNPROFOR, the Clinton Administration delayed its plans for air strikes and dropped the idea of overt arms shipments.

In a May 1995 episode, NATO tried some bombing to chasten the Bosnian Serbs for violating a weapons exclusion zone. This led within hours to the taking of hundreds of UNPROFOR soldiers hostage by the Bosnian Serbs, proving the European case. The bombing ended after one day and the hostages were released.

A renewed NATO bombing campaign at the end of the war came after the massacre at Srebrenica and was triggered by a shell which landed outside the closed market building in Sarajevo on 28 August, killing 43. In that campaign, US and other NATO planes flew numerous sorties against Bosnian Serb targets such as communications facilities and bridges, which crippled the Bosnian Serb forces at the same time they were coming under attack from the massive Croat-Bosniac offensive in western Bosnia. This devastated Serb morale and led quickly to the cease-fire immediately preceding Dayton.

E. US and European Perspectives at Present

The foregoing history of US and European involvement in Bosnia during the war is a necessary part of the context for understanding the current NATO debate on the composition of a successor force to SFOR.

In recent months, the basic conflict of interest between those who have troops at risk and those who do not has surfaced again as US politicians have called for an early pull out of US troops, even though the future of Bosnia remains in doubt. Most European leaders have said that if the US quits Bosnia, they will withdraw too.

US politicians point out with irritation that European countries clearly have a much more direct interest in preserving peace in Bosnia than do Americans, since economic dislocation and refugee flows would affect them first. Moreover, in theory this powerful group of states should be able to manage troubles in its own "back yard". Accordingly, the US has tried until recently to consider nothing more than an arms-length support role, providing logistics, intelligence, communications, and air cover for an all-European post-SFOR ground force.

But European leaders are determined not to be caught again in something resembling the wartime situation when the US decided what kind of peace settlement was acceptable, pressed for expansions of the UNPROFOR mandate, and pressed continually for Lift and Strike, without willing to share the risk on the ground.

Although it may be argued that peace in the Balkans is above all a European concern, if a premature US withdrawal led the Dayton peace to collapse, US interests would be affected in several ways. Since US diplomats negotiated and took credit for Dayton, its collapse would be a significant US diplomatic setback. In the ensuing recriminations, NATO unity would be threatened and, in fact, the reason for NATO's existence would be in doubt, just at the moment the US is pressing to expand NATO eastward to include Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

Finally, if an SFOR withdrawal led to a Bosniac attack on the Bosnian Serbs, there could be grave implications for western relations with Russia. Russian involvement, first in UNPROFOR and then in IFOR/SFOR, has been important

in winning Serb acceptance. It has been even more important, however, by engaging Russia and drawing it into the western world. This East-West co-operation has been a precedent-setting experiment in bridging East-West military suspicions which have subsided but not entirely vanished after the Cold War.¹⁷ The chance of seriously undermining relations with Russia at a time when the West is trying to expand NATO, and seeking Russian acquiescence as well as active co-operation in dealing with other crises, is not a risk western strategists want to run.

F. The Muted Debate

Quietly, planning has been underway in Washington for options after SFOR. One reflection of this is a recent political-military exercise that was developed at the National Institute for Strategic Studies (NISS) and run at the US Army Concepts Analysis Centre to provide policy options for the US Joint Chiefs of Staff.

This exercise explored a range of theoretical “transition options” for SFOR post-June 1998:

- The first was “Out Together”, meaning a total NATO withdrawal in June;
- The second was “Zero Force” (ZFOR), meaning removing all NATO combat forces and leaving military observers only;
- The third was a “European-Only Force” (EFOR), which is not an option for reasons explained above;
- The fourth was an “Over-the-Horizon” Force (OHFOR) composed of a European NATO force stationed nearby, but outside Bosnia, with US combat support and material pre-positioned in Bosnia;
- The fifth was a “Transition Force” (TFOR) in which a European combat force would remain in Bosnia, with US support units, and with a US combat force stationed nearby, probably in Hungary, but returning often to conduct exercises in Bosnia to maintain the impression of continuing US deployment, at least initially.

Each option was analysed for its probable impact on several key issues: the likelihood of deterring an endgame attack; ability to control escalation of local ethnic clashes; ability to back up the UN International Police Task Force (IPTF), which is regarded as playing a crucial role under any scenario¹⁸;

17 SFOR officials say the experiment has gone relatively well. Russian IFOR and SFOR units have been seen as partial to Bosnian Serbs in a number of ZOS incidents, and are thoroughly distrusted by Bosniacs, but they get generally high grades for professionalism from US officers.

18 One idea which has been presented at intervals over the last year, that of substituting an armed international police force to fill the so-called “mandate gap” between SFOR and the unarmed IPTF in dealing with civilian unrest. This has been advanced by some as a measure to allow NATO forces to avoid being drawn into peace-keeping duties, and enable them to exit more easily. UN officials have pointed to several fundamental problems with the concept, not the least of which would be that it would thrust isolated IPTF officers, who have none of the force protection capability of SFOR, into situations where SFOR fears to tread. Pentagon planners in Washington appear to understand that an armed IPTF is not a viable concept and the NISS exercise focuses only on supporting IPTF. It concludes that IPTF is “crucial to the success” of all force options that were considered; that SFOR relies on IPTF heavily for early warning of problems; and that IPTF cannot continue to operate in Bosnia without NATO support.

likelihood of an early exit; impact on NATO-US relations; NATO credibility at a time of expansion; impact on US-Russian relations; engendering NATO self-reliance; impact on US relations with the Islamic World; and impact on displaced persons returns.

The exercise reached the following conclusions:

- “Out Together” and ZFOR were seen as likely to trigger a resumption of genocidal warfare, tarnishing of US credibility, grave damage to US leadership in NATO, a NATO fall into disrepute, magnified Russian mistrust of US motives, and other worst case results;
- “EFOR” was seen as good in that it would force NATO to adapt, but as disastrous for US leadership;
- “OHFOR” was seen as good for NATO adaptation, Russian relations and NATO expansion, but dubious for NATO credibility, US leadership and relations with Islamic states, and bad for displaced persons;
- “TFOR” was seen as somewhat workable in all regards, but dubious for displaced persons return;
- The one alternative which scored highest in the exercise, receiving positive scores in NATO credibility, US leadership, NATO expansion, and relations with Islamic states, was continuing SFOR much as it is, but calling it perhaps “DFOR” for “Deterrence Force”. DFOR, however, received negative scores in the exit strategy column and on domestic implications, both for failing to meet the June 1998 deadline and for costs.

In sum, military planners have been looking hard at the whole range of options. They think that getting the Europeans to carry on if the US leaves is wishful thinking. They see the most politically acceptable compromise inside Washington to be a transition force with Americans commuting regularly from Hungary. But they seem to think the only safe choice -- however unsavoury politically -- is to soldier on, much as at present, but with a name change. “Over the horizon forces are fine until things go wrong... and then they usually don't come,” says a ranking European SFOR officer. “I don't feel that you have a credible military commitment in Bosnia unless you are prepared to take casualties.”

Although there now seems to be a consensus that SFOR will be followed with a force that includes US troops, it remains to be seen how ambitious the mandate of the follow-on force will be. If it is intended to provide security for minority returns, enable freedom of movement and install municipal administrations, much less arrest indicted war criminals, it is unlikely to be reduced much below its present strength.

Curing the gravely-wounded political culture of Bosnia is an intensely complicated undertaking. While a more aggressive NATO presence, which includes arresting indicted war criminals, will no doubt push the peace process forward, the political situation is likely to remain delicate.

Perhaps in a few years, much of the US component can be reduced and based over-the-horizon, and one can expect US planners to push steadily in this direction. It is unlikely, however, that this could be achieved in the short run without risking a rapid reoccurrence of instability in Bosnia as local parties challenge the remaining force, which will inevitably be seen as less capable.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

A. On the Military Balance

1. It must be assumed that there are weapons as yet undeclared on all sides, although over time these will deteriorate if they are not maintained and will diminish as a threatening factor. However, assuming continued mutual monitoring and mutual transparency under OSCE auspices, quantitative uncertainties will become less pressing. Qualitative factors such as economic conditions, morale, strategic liabilities and political dynamics will remain of decisive importance.
2. It will be important to note whether the OSCE and SFOR remain in agreement that "reduction liabilities" have been met and that confidence-building measures are on course. The issue will require continued monitoring, since there was a huge reservoir of JNA armaments available at the beginning of the war, and since there is no way of making an accurate baseline count.
3. It should be remembered that evenly matched sides often get into wars. A level battle-field does not guarantee a stable peace. The weapons count remains a factor but not, by itself, a decisive one.

B. On Train and Equip

1. Train and Equip should cease to be a taboo subject. At present, the programme is supported vigorously by the US and is deprecated obliquely by others in the international community. It is an important part of the international effort in Bosnia and it deserves a closer examination than it has had to date.
2. Proponents of Train and Equip who argue the "moral case" for righting a wrong that existed egregiously four years ago, but which has much less relevance today, make a fundamental mistake: their arguments look to the past rather than to the future and are less-than convincing to those whose main concern is future stability in the region.
3. The belief among some in the US that Train and Equip will build up the Federation and permit an early exit by US forces is a grave error. Pressure for an early US exit strategy is almost certain to be highly destabilising. If NATO departs prematurely, Train and Equip could easily serve as trigger for a new war which might begin well but end badly for the Federation, as well as generate a new wave of refugees that will destabilise a broader region.
4. Detractors of Train and Equip who see it as purely destabilising and ignore its potential as one path toward the gradual westernisation of Bosnia are taking too narrow a view. There are indications the programme has brought some stability to the Federation Ministry of Defence; indeed, by some

accounts the level of co-operation is more promising there than in other Federation ministries.

5. Those suspicious of Train and Equip should acknowledge that it provides an important window into the workings of the Federation Defence Ministry and a substantial influence over Federation military thinking. It has been one factor in the reduction of extremist influence in the Federation army. To the extent that Europeans participate in the programme, it could serve as a mechanism to pull Bosnia closer to Europe. It would be foolish to scrap this asset.
6. A simple path to easing European misgivings about Train and Equip would be to make MPRI an equal opportunity employer, building a portion of its staff by hiring retired military officers from European NATO states, rather than solely from the US. The transparency principle is relevant here, since the Europeans are properly concerned about stability.
7. A defensive capability inevitably has offensive implications, and because of terrain, short distances and configuration of the IEBL, there are inherent instabilities in Bosnia. Thus far, there is no reason to think the scope and quantity of the assistance offered through Train and Equip has crossed the line. But substantial numbers of tanks and other weapons with clear offensive potential would be problematic.
8. If Train and Equip is extended to the Bosnian Serbs, it might lower tensions, increase transparency and over time build a military bridge between the Federation and Republika Srpska, as it seems to have been doing between Bosniacs and Croats. It would be naive to expect a sudden convergence of interests and lapse of animosities, however. Progress on this front will depend on the form of membership offered to Republika Srpska, whether it involves equipment or training or both. A transformation will also require dropping the implicit threat that after a NATO exit, the new-and-improved Federation army might take matters into its own hands.
9. Train and Equip should not be seen or advertised for US domestic political purposes as a quick and easy "exit strategy", an alternative to US involvement in Bosnia. If the US makes clear it is engaged in Bosnia alongside its allies for the long haul, it is much more likely the Europeans will see the merits of Train and Equip as a step toward gradually Europeanising Bosnia. European objections could be expected to diminish, and European support for Train and Equip would be more likely.
10. In sum, Train and Equip provides a useful window into the Federation military, and an obvious means to compete successfully with extremist influence. It should be seen as one element in an extended and complex process of westernising post-war Bosnia. The advantages of a judiciously managed and monitored Train and Equip programme outweigh its drawbacks.

C. On Exit Strategy

1. NATO preoccupation with exit strategies sends a confusing and destabilising message to Bosnians, perpetuating uncertainties about investment, refugee returns and normalisation. Moreover, the prospect of a premature NATO departure encourages hard-liners to sit tight and wait NATO out.
2. The treatment of NATO follow-on planning as a taboo subject is damaging to public understanding of events and prospects in Bosnia, and can undermine domestic political support. Since it is widely understood that a continued international military presence will be required for years in Bosnia, this should be acknowledged. Recent moves in this direction are encouraging.
3. However, the sensitivities of politicians are part of the political context in which Bosnia policy is made. It may be politically necessary for the extension of the NATO presence past June 1998 to appear different in form from SFOR. Whatever the new force is called, however, it will still require the presence of a significant fraction of US ground troops who share duties and risks alongside troops from other NATO countries. Early withdrawal of US ground forces would render the NATO follow-on force far less effective, even if European contingents remained, and a US pull-out would severely undermine the US claim to leadership within NATO.
4. Since troubles in the Balkan countries have a more direct impact on their European neighbours than on the US, it is reasonable to expect the European states to assume more of the burden over time. There must be no abrupt transition, however. Tentative US plans to withdraw to an "over-the-horizon" role -- offering logistics, intelligence and air support, and promising a "rapid reaction force" if circumstances require -- are not realistic in the near term.
5. The option of partitioning Bosnia, decreeing it, managing population exchanges, and then withdrawing the NATO troops -- is offered by some. However seductive the idea may be as a means of bringing current US exposure to a close, such a partition would be disastrous. Given the resistance of displaced persons to being moved again, nothing short of a new round of warfare may be required to force the sought-after population movements. The policy will be a disaster for a large number of Bosnians who are of mixed families, and a harbinger of more instability in the international system if it became a precedent justifying other changes of borders. Moreover, none of the entities makes economic sense standing alone. The Croatian areas are likely to gravitate toward Croatia, and the Serb areas -- at least eastern Bosnia -- to gravitate toward Serbia. This would leave the Bosniac area with a huge, embittered displaced population, which would be a breeding ground for trouble and a magnet for extremists who would pull rump Bosnia away from the current westernising influence of NATO involvement, producing the outcome that European governments fear most. Conceivably, if the Republika Srpska divides and the north-western areas are linked to the Federation, a partition might be more feasible, but there should be no illusions about the difficulties and the drawbacks, including further forced movements of populations with repercussions in

neighbouring states. The situation would remain turbulent and managing such a partition would also require an open-ended NATO presence, including a US presence for years into the future. Whatever else it does, partition does not offer an exit strategy.

6. Instead of formulating another "exit strategy" for the SFOR follow-on force, it may be more constructive to develop "transition strategies" that alter the role and composition of the NATO force over time. For example, perhaps over time Europe can develop a common foreign policy and the Western European Union (NATO minus the US and Canada) could assume full responsibility for peace maintenance in the Balkans. In the meantime, however, the entire region -- not only Bosnia but FRY and Croatia, as well as Macedonia and Albania -- will need continuing attention. For the foreseeable future, that will involve a sizeable NATO force in Bosnia, US troops among them.
7. It should be acknowledged in retrospect that one way to have avoided a costly and long-term involvement in the post-war recovery of Bosnia would have been to pay more attention five years ago, when the eventual catastrophe was still only a crisis.

Sarajevo, 15 December 1997

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Senator George Mitchell, ICG Board of Trustees Chair

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