

The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

Volume 24
Number 1 *Parameters* 1994

Article 32

7-4-1994

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Recommended Citation

Roskin, Michael G.. "The Third Balkan War, and How It Will End." *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 24, 1 (1994). <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/vol24/iss1/32>

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The Third Balkan War, and How It Will End

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From *Parameters*, Autumn 1994, pp. 57-69 . (Note: Two maps printed with the original article are not included in this on-line version. To request a copy, send your fax number or postal address to carl_Parameters@conus.army.mil.)

The current fighting in ex-Yugoslavia gains clarity if we look at it as the Third Balkan War--a series of purposeful, planned moves to enlarge the power and territory of the Serbian state, rather than the chaotic "mess" depicted in the news media. The first two Balkan wars also offer some clues as to how the third might end.

The media focus us too narrowly on Bosnia, as if that were the only problem in the region. The Serb-Croat fight is deemed more or less settled; after all, UNPROFOR (the United Nations Protection Force) is in place. This is seriously deceptive, for Croatia and Bosnia are simply different fronts of the same war, the Third Balkan War. The US Central Intelligence Agency and news media do not help matters when they publish maps showing the extent of Serbian conquests in Bosnia alone or (now rarely) in Croatia alone, and on two different maps, as if to imply they are two wars.

The First Balkan War concerned how big Ottoman Turkey's holdings in Europe should be and ended when a military coalition pushed Turkey back to its present corner of Europe. The Second Balkan War concerned how big Bulgaria should be and ended when a military coalition forced Bulgaria to give up its recent conquests. The Third Balkan War concerns how big Serbia should be and will likely end when a military coalition forces Serbia to give up some or all of its recent conquests.

The first two Balkan wars narrowly preceded World War I and were to some extent evidence of the breakdown of the great-power balance that had kept general peace in Europe, albeit with increasing difficulty, for a century. The Third Balkan War broke out in 1991 as Yugoslavia disintegrated, which to some degree reflected the end of the superpower duopoly that had kept Europe in peaceful though tense equilibrium for more than four decades.

Three Balkan Wars			
	Years	Question	Outcome
First	1912-13	How big Turkey?	Turkey loses
Second	1913	How big Bulgaria?	Bulgaria loses
Third	1991-	How big Serbia?	?

Figure 1. Comparison of Balkan Wars.

The First Balkan War of 1912-13 was a multilateral (Montenegro, Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria) effort to erase the remaining belt of Turkish territory that stretched across the peninsula from Albania on the Adriatic to Thrace on the Black Sea. Bulgaria gained Western Thrace (giving Bulgaria direct access to the Mediterranean Sea) and claimed

Macedonia, both of which had been part of the medieval Bulgarian kingdom.

This claim led immediately to the Second Balkan War. Serbia and Greece refused to evacuate Macedonia, and in 1913 Bulgaria attacked its erstwhile allies. Meanwhile Romania struck Bulgaria from the north in order to obtain Southern Dobrudja (the wedge of land south of the mouth of the Danube). It is for such behavior that "Balkan war" connotes an opportunistic pile-on. Overextended Bulgaria lost, and Greece and Serbia divided Macedonia between them and ordered the local inhabitants to speak, respectively, only Greek and Serbian. (Not all complied.) Greece also took Western Thrace from Bulgaria. In World Wars I and II, Bulgaria, allied with Germany, again occupied Macedonia only to be thrown out as the wars neared their end.

The Third Balkan War

The present Balkan war began in 1991 when a conservative Serbian coalition in Belgrade, led by Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and including the commanders of the old Yugoslavian army, decided to use all means fair and foul to keep Yugoslavia together and under Belgrade's tutelage.[1] Serbia always had seen itself as the heroic molder and pillar of Yugoslavia, and most of Yugoslavia's civil and military officers were Serbs. Accordingly, a great many federal jobs were at stake. Events appeared to unroll spontaneously, but that is not quite true. Rather, with varying degrees of control and efficiency the general staff of the old *Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija* (JNA, Yugoslav Peoples Army) in Belgrade planned and executed the Third Balkan War.[2] Initially, the JNA tried to preserve Yugoslavia by force of arms, but this quickly became impossible, so the JNA lowered its aims to carving out a Greater Serbia. In this war local Serb militias would do much of the dirty work in "ethnically cleansing" all areas of Serbian settlement in Croatia and Bosnia. Amid totally unreal claims of impending genocide against the Serbian people, Serbs who did not like this policy were isolated as "enemies of Serbia." [3]

Although the JNA deliberately cloaks its actions in the fog of war, it appears that most lines of authority lead back to the general staff in Belgrade. With nothing more than a change in shoulder patches, Serbian officers, specialists (intelligence, communications, radar, artillery, and so on), and even ordinary soldiers rotate in and out of the Krajina (western Croatian) and Bosnian Serb armies. These armies try to preserve the fiction that they are purely local militias defending their respective Serbian communities. But weapons and ammunition flow from Serbia. Heavy equipment is returned to Serbia for repair. Seriously wounded are evacuated to Serbia. Military conscription continues in Serbia, although ostensibly "Serbia" is uninvolved in the fighting.

The first fighting flared in mid-1991 as Slovenia, the rich northwest corner of old Yugoslavia, declared its independence and moved to take over border posts. In a few days of fighting with a few dozen killed (only 14 of them Slovenes), the JNA decided to withdraw, at least for the moment. After they had taken care of Croatia, which separates Slovenia from the rest of Yugoslavia, they would have secure lines of communication by which to retake Slovenia.

But Croatia, which declared its independence at the same time, put up unexpected resistance. The Croats were terribly outgunned, relying on the meager arsenals of the territorial defense forces that had been set up in the old Yugoslavia. These resembled the US National Guard except they relied entirely on republic (i.e., state) funding with which to purchase weapons, mostly from the federal government in Belgrade. The richest republic, Slovenia, did buy arms, including non-Yugoslav weapons. Poorer republics, such as Macedonia in the extreme south of the country, could afford almost nothing, and that is the condition of its arsenal today. "When the war began, the Serbs had as many tanks as we had rifles," say Croatian officers, who also claim that a few hundred armed Croatian civilians held off a large JNA force attacking Vukovar for weeks.[4] In the end, only 137 Croats surrendered, to the Serbs' amazement. "Vukovar is our Alamo," intone Croatian officers.

Nonetheless, with plentiful manpower and munitions, Serbian forces took from Croatia what Belgrade decided were areas of Serb settlement: Eastern Slavonia (including Vukovar), a spur of Western Slavonia, and the large bulge of Krajina that curves around Bosnia and pushes toward the coast.

Historical Background

Contrary to what the media tell us, the fighting in Yugoslavia does not trace back to ancient ethnic hatreds.[5] The hatreds are relatively recent and hyped by manipulative politicians on all sides. Most of Krajina did have a Serbian

majority stemming from at least the late 17th century, when Serbs fled Ottoman territory and received lands from the Habsburgs to serve as settler-soldiers on the military frontier (in Serbo-Croatian, *Vojna Krajina*) that separated the two warring empires for two centuries. Under the Austro-Hungarian empire, Serbs and Croats in this region lived together for centuries without violence. Ethnic relations in Titoist Yugoslavia were not bad. (To be sure, if you said otherwise, you could do jail time.) In areas of mixed Serb and Croat settlement, as in Krajina and Bosnia, the rate of intermarriage was quite high.

Serbs do have motivation for their territorial seizures in Krajina and Bosnia, for these were the regions of the worst massacres of Serbs by the fascist Croatian Ustasha during World War II. (Hitler gave the Croatian puppet state all of Bosnia.) The Ustasha killed an estimated 350,000 Serbs, although Croats say it was only 60,000, whereas Serbs claim 750,000 or more. Virtually every Serbian family from this region lives with the memory of relatives butchered. The Zagreb government that declared independence in 1991 ignored these memories. It demanded that Krajina Serbs take an oath of loyalty to Croatia and was vague about minority rights. (The new Croatian constitution now guarantees, on paper at least, ample minority rights, but it came much too late to assure the Krajina Serbs, many of whom would not have believed it anyway.)

Serbs accuse Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, a former partisan officer and later general in postwar Yugoslavia, of destroying a monument at the dread Jasenovac concentration camp, where the Ustasha killed tens of thousands of Serbs, Jews, and gypsies without benefit of gas. Croats dispute the accusation as utter nonsense: Jasenovac (near Croatia's border with Bosnia, in the Western Slavonian spur) has long been in Serbian hands, not Croatian.

The new Zagreb regime used some of the same symbols as the wartime Ustasha (coat of arms, police uniforms, and currency), convincing some Serbs they would be massacred again. Would they have been? It's very unlikely, but Croatian heavy-handedness played into the hands of local Serbian extremists, who were carrying out Belgrade's orders. Starting in 1990, the JNA formed, trained, and armed Serbian militias in Krajina.[6] This region, under local leadership, then declared itself the independent "Republic of Serbian Krajina" (RSK) even before Zagreb declared Croatia independent in 1991 and drove out local Croats by brutal means. It was here that the expression "ethnic cleansing" was first overheard on Serbian military radio.

This ethnic cleansing was not a spontaneous outpouring of hatred but rather part of a carefully planned media campaign that has now produced a climate of extreme ethnic stereotyping on all sides. Serbs now regard Croats as natural-born fascists who strive pathetically to imitate Germans and Austrians. Serbs see themselves as the historically aggrieved party, as brave and sturdy defenders of an authentic Slavic culture against Turks and Teutons alike. Croats now regard Serbs as non-European barbarians who lived so long under the Turks they became like them. Croats regard themselves as Central European rather than Balkan and heirs to centuries of Habsburg high culture and civilization. Outsiders can't tell them apart.

Historically, Serbs considered Bosnia part of Serbia; this was the spark that ignited World War I. Serbs do not regard Bosnian Muslims as a separate nationality--indeed, designating them such was a fiction of the Tito regime--but as treasonous Serbs who "turned Turk" over the centuries for personal gain (for example, avoiding taxes). Serbs also claim to detect in the earlier writings of Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic an Islamic fundamentalism inimical to Bosnian Serbs. As in Krajina, Bosnian Serbs were taken over long in advance by local extremists for the purpose of building a "Serbian Republic" that now covers 70 percent of Bosnia and is being "cleansed" of non-Serbs.

All totaled, Croatia lost 30 percent of its territory to Serbs in 1991 and 1992. Always a curious shape, with its long, thin Dalmatian coast, it has now been hollowed out to resemble a horseshoe. As such, Croatia may not be economically viable. The major Croatian city of Karlovac is 12 miles from Serbian-held territory, within artillery range. Serbian lines neared the coast, but the Croats beat them back. Belgrade had its eye on the important port of Zadar; otherwise Serbia's only outlet to the sea is the port of Bar in Montenegro, which stayed with Serbia in the rump Yugoslavia.

The most serious loss to Croatia is the westernmost bulge of the Krajina republic, specifically the town of Knin, through which pass the only rail line and main highway from Zagreb to Split, chief city of the Dalmatian coast. With these cut, one must first go to Rijeka, tucked up under the Istrian peninsula, and then journey by road or boat down the

coast. In effect, Dalmatia, home of an important regionalist movement in Croatian domestic politics, is semi-isolated from Zagreb. Croatia's big foreign-exchange earner, the tourists who used to flock to the Dalmatian Coast, haven't been coming in recent years. Recovery of Knin is thus an urgent political, economic, and military matter for Croatia.

At this writing, the Serb-Croat front is calm. A United Nations Protection Force patrols the 1992 lines, observed by both sides because both want a respite, unlike the war in Bosnia, which continues at a low level. This war, however, really should be considered of a piece with the Croatian war. It simply started a year later, in 1992, as Bosnian Serbs, armed and prepared well in advance by the JNA, declared their own Serbian Republic of Bosnia even before a Muslim-led (but multiethnic) Bosnian government declared its independence.

Current Instability

The present lull in the Third Balkan War is inherently unstable and may soon end. At least three (and maybe more) discontented elements profoundly want Serbian territory and power reduced. First, the Croats believe they must recover their lost territories, especially Knin. They swear they will not rest until all of Croatia is again under their control. If diplomacy does not work, they will do it by military means. There is no reason to doubt them. Virtually all Croats--even antiwar pacifists--agree the lost lands must be recovered; they are a vital national interest.

Croatian hatred for Serbs, if it was not before, has become virtually racist. Some Croatian officers now proudly identify themselves with the Ustasha, who, they say, also fought for Croatia. Croatia continues to mobilize and purchase equipment through the leaky arms embargo. Analysts claim that large amounts of Soviet-type arms and munitions from the defunct East German *Volksarmee* reached Croatia via a sympathetic Hungary. Germany has clearly favored Croatia and pushed the rest of West Europe into diplomatic recognition of Zagreb in late 1991.

Second, the Bosnian Muslims desperately wish to overthrow Serbian power; otherwise the Muslims are trapped in a few towns surrounded by--and indiscriminately shelled by--Serbian artillery. The Muslims will either beat back the Serbs or suffer exile or death. For the better part of a year, however, Muslims and Croats fought each other, mostly in Herzegovina, the triangle-shaped southernmost fifth of Bosnia that is heavily Croatian in makeup. The Croats were perfectly willing to knife the Muslims in the back in order to secure Herzegovina for Croatia. Croats, however, claim that historically they have never been anti-Muslim the way Serbs are; the Ottomans occupied only about half of Croatia, and for not nearly as long as they occupied Serbia. There may be some truth to the assertion, but one would never know it from the ferocity of Croat-Muslim fighting in the museum-town of Mostar, famous for its graceful Turkish bridge, an arc of stone now destroyed.

Nonetheless, Bosnian Croats and Muslims claimed to have patched things up with the US-brokered agreement signed in Washington in March 1994. They agreed to form a Croat-Muslim federation within Bosnia and then confederate this with Croatia proper. This solidifies Croatian power in Herzegovina and provides Bosnian Muslims with much-improved access to arms and munitions. The improved relations mean that Croatian airfields and ports serve as conduits for war materiel from sympathetic Islamic states.[7] In sum, Croat-Bosnian cooperation has become a much more serious military proposition for a Serbian war machine that is already stretched thin.

The third bitterly discontented element is the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo, Serbia's southern province and, before the 1389 Turkish conquest, heartland of the Serbian kingdom and church. Now its population is some 90 percent Albanian *Kosovari*, but Serbs swear they will never relinquish it. It was in playing to Serbian anti-Albanian fears that Slobodan Milosevic climbed to elected power in 1987. Under martial law, Kosovo is patrolled by Serbs much the way Israeli forces patrol the West Bank. Some Serbian extremists, such as the gangster Arkan, swear they will "cleanse" Kosovo after they are through with Bosnia.[8] Albanian spokesmen in Tirana claim low-level ethnic cleansing and the creation of refugees has long been underway. Although the local (underground) Kosovar leadership urges self-restraint, the province could explode at any time.

In the meantime, Serbia may be weakening. Although it has one of the largest armies in Europe, morale problems have appeared, and many young Serbs emigrate to avoid conscription. Conspicuously weak is Serbian infantry (which obviously requires high morale); Serbs would rather lob artillery and mortar rounds into their opponents' positions. This helps to explain why the Serbs have been unable to take all the Bosnian-Muslim enclaves that they surround.[9] Under an admittedly leaky economic embargo, Serbian industry has all but collapsed. The economy depends on the

remittances of Serbs working abroad, chiefly in Germany; indeed, the new Serbian currency is tied to the mark in the hope of limiting inflation. The unlimited printing of money to pay civil and military employees and to prop up industries produced the world's highest hyperinflation, worse than Weimar Germany's. Markets run by barter or deutsche marks. Fuel is hijacked at gunpoint from passing barges on the Danube. In a few years, Serbia could be economically lower than Albania.

Scenario for the Third Balkan War

The following scenario is thus not hard to imagine unfolding within the next few months.[10] Fighting in Bosnia flares up as newly equipped Bosnian forces probe for areas where the Serbs are stretched thin and lack heavy weapons. Much of Serbia's reserve military forces are sent southward to deal with Bosnia. But Serbia has weakened while Croatia has strengthened. With classic Balkan opportunism, Croatia attacks in the north in an effort to regain its lost territories. If successful, the Bosnian Muslims and Croats settle accounts with local Serbs. One must expect renewed ethnic cleansing, this time with Serbs as victims.

Meanwhile, the underground ethnic-Albanian leadership of Kosovo, in consultation with Tirana, senses that this is their chance, and attempts to seize control of what it has already declared an independent state. Serbian resistance to this attempt is savage, and refugees and fighting spill over into neighboring Albania and Macedonia, thus internationalizing the war. One must include the possibility that Greece, a historic ally of Serbia, will move to secure its claims to southern Albania (Northern Epirus to the Greeks) and southern Macedonia, which, according to the Greeks, should not even exist. It is also conceivable that Hungary could take an interest in northern Vojvodina, where the 400,000 ethnic Magyars are virtual hostages under Serbian control and pressure. Hungary held this area during World War II. The Third Balkan War could be quite large. (Swiss-like Slovenia, shielded from Serbian wrath by Croatia, will do nothing in all of this.)

At this writing (summer 1994), we are likely between phases one and two of the Third Balkan War. The first phase was the fighting that accompanied the independence declarations of Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia. The second phase is likely to see the Croatian pushback of Serbian-held territories, as the Serbs become tied down in renewed fighting in Bosnia. This likely second phase, unfortunately, by itself will probably not bring an end to the Third Balkan War. Something more will be required.

How to End This War?

The Third Balkan War is likely to end only when Serbian power is insufficient to retain current Serbian territorial holdings, which are trimmed back by force of arms, much like the First Balkan War ended with the military pushback of Turkish power and the Second Balkan War ended with the military pushback of Bulgarian power. The international community's efforts to impose a peace before Serbia has suffered one or more military reverses is a non-starter. Belgrade will take peace opportunities seriously only when it realizes that Serbia is overextended, its economy is ruined, its young men flee the draft, and it faces too many enemies at once. Serbia has actual or potential territorial claimants on four borders: Bosnia, Croatia, Hungary, and Albania. Could we give these claims a boost? Would it hasten the coming of peace or provoke a wider war?

All scenarios, of course, are speculative, and the reader is entitled to be skeptical. To suppose the contrary, however, that the Third Balkan War is starting to wind down, requires a bit of speculation, too. It requires one to believe, namely, that the Croats are unserious about regaining the lost 30 percent of their country or that they will be able to do so by diplomatic means. This last point is not impossible, but neither is it very probable. On 30 March 1994 a delegation of Krajina Serbs signed a cease-fire with Croatian authorities in the Russian Embassy in Zagreb.[11] The two sides see the cease-fire quite differently, though. Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic described the agreement with "Serb rebels" as part of "the overall process of the peaceful reintegration of the occupied areas into the constitutional and legal system of the Republic of Croatia." [12] At the same time, the president of RSK (i.e., the "Serb rebels") Milan Martić pledged continued resistance to the "genocide" of the "new Ustasha state" and the unification of all Serbian lands.[13] Martić was to have led the Krajina delegation to Zagreb but dropped out because he is wanted there as a war criminal.

Could Zagreb and the RSK finesse an arrangement that would return Krajina to Croatia but give the Krajina Serbs substantial autonomy (their own police, school system, use of Cyrillic, and so on)? If such an agreement--now an optimistic wish--were to work, it would have to include reopening the rail and highway corridor for Croatian traffic from Zagreb to Split through Knin. Meetings on the subject quickly broke down. With Serbia so far the victor, there is simply no pressure on the Krajina Serbs to settle for anything less than integration into a Greater Serbia.

Some hope that Milosevic, under Russian pressure, could abandon the Krajina Serbs and let them reach the best deal they can with Zagreb. That, of course, would mean the end of the maximalist dream of Greater Serbia ("All Serbs in one country") and the abandonment of brother Serbs to reprisals by Croatian and Muslim fascists. As of this writing, no such movement is afoot in Belgrade. Instead, nationalist rhetoric flies high, and one hears of no Serbs who worry they could lose more by fighting than by compromising. Serbs have never been noted for a spirit of compromise, and there are no important Serbian opposition "peace parties" urging a settlement of the war. Only the very small Civil Alliance, composed of Belgrade intellectuals, opposes the war.[14]

If Serbia wished to, could it call off the war? Could it keep its present conquests in Croatia and Bosnia and say, "All right, we have enough. We are prepared to negotiate with Zagreb and Sarajevo to make our territorial holdings permanent"? Zagreb and Sarajevo would accept such an offer only if they felt they had more to lose by continued fighting, and they do not. For the war to end by negotiation that leaves a Greater Serbia along its present lines is out of the question. Croats and Bosnian Muslims will not ratify the existing status quo unless faced with imminent annihilation. And time may be on their side.[15]

There are few ways to turn this war off any time soon, and attempts to do so could make the war longer and more widespread. At present, no side is willing to admit defeat. Even the seemingly impossible position of the Bosnian Muslim government is buoyed by the prospect of Croatian and/or major-power help.[16] The UN/NATO effort, muddled as it has been, has unwittingly evolved into a virtual guarantee that most of the remaining Muslim cities, including Sarajevo, will not be taken by the Serbs. Humanitarian concern has turned into a city-by-city defense of Muslims, one month Sarajevo, the next Tuzla, then Gorazde, and so on. A leopard-spot Muslim state, under UN protection, could survive for years.

Could outside powers--the United Nations, NATO, the United States, a consortium of major European powers--hasten the day when the Serbs and their adversaries think it is time to settle? The minimum precondition for Serbian willingness to compromise would be one or more serious Serbian military setbacks. Why compromise when you are far ahead and face no credible military challenges? Could--and should--outside powers issue such challenges?

For Croats, Bosnian Muslims, and even Albanians the dream solution is for one or more major outside powers to give the Serbs a real thrashing. Then they could move in for the kill. And kill it would be. Croats, Muslims, and Albanians would do to Serbs as Serbs have done to them. Those whose concerns are primarily humanitarian must be careful here, lest they tilt the playing field too suddenly against the Serbs and turn today's victims into tomorrow's avengers. The indiscriminate killing of Serbian civilians is no moral improvement over the indiscriminate killing of Bosnian civilians. Eventually, there may have to be a UN protection force to shield local Serbs from vengeful Croats, Bosnian Muslims, and Albanians. Such a new UNPROFOR could be announced in advance as part of a peace package.

The key question is whether major intervention by outside powers would do more harm than good. Would it prevent the war from expanding or make sure that it expanded? Would it mean an end to war against civilians or worse civilian casualties? Would it push Russia into hostility with the West and increase the chances of an extreme nationalist taking over in Moscow?

Ring Around Serbia

Rather than a sudden reversal of fortune for the Serbs, peace would best be served by a re-equilibration that makes it clear to an exhausted Serbia that if it pushes the war any longer it could lose a great deal. How does one communicate this to people currently steaming with nationalism and in no mood to compromise? The answer may be simple but risky: outside powers side with Serbia's historical enemies and make it clear they are willing to support their territorial claims against Serbia. Then the best course for Belgrade would be to agree to a compromise settlement soon that retains some new territory plus rights and guarantees for Serbs outside of Serbia.

Specifically, suppose a group of Western countries, certainly under American leadership but perhaps under the cover of NATO or the Partnership for Peace, moves credible forces and materiel into Hungary and Albania. Politically, the Western group states that it "views with sympathy" both host nations' territorial claims. The favorable scenario at this point is that Serbia backs down from its maximalist position, relinquishes some of its territorial conquests, and negotiates for the rights of Serbs outside of Serbia in exchange for the rights of Hungarians in Vojvodina and Albanians in Kosovo. (Unarmed Macedonia and historically friendly Romania have no claims on Serbia.)

There is no guarantee this would work. A worst-case scenario at this point would have the Serbs, now in a paranoid frenzy, attack all the new threats. Therefore the outside powers would have to be perfectly willing to capture Belgrade and destroy the current nationalist regime. The good news here is that from the Hungarian border south to Belgrade, 100 miles, the land is flat as a pancake, part of Hungary's great Pannonian Basin. Indeed, it was part of Hungary until World War I. Serbs joke: "In Vojvodina you can stand on a pumpkin and see Budapest." The only serious obstacles would be some river crossings, including the Danube, which Belgrade overlooks on high bluffs at the confluence of the Sava. For modern, mobile warfare, the terrain is vastly better than the mountains of Bosnia.

The direct engagement of outside powers in Bosnia must be avoided, for at least two reasons. First, the rugged terrain and frequent overcast in Bosnia make the effective application of air power difficult; an attack would have to be by ground forces, and this would mean considerable casualties. Why fight the Serbs where they wish to be fought? (Or, as some American soldiers wisecracked after the Gulf War: "We do deserts; we don't do mountains.")

Second, direct engagement of outside forces in Bosnia ignores where the orders, supplies, and key personnel come from: Belgrade. In Clausewitzian terms, the center of gravity is not the mini-governments of the Serbian Republics of Bosnia and Krajina but the real Serb government in Belgrade. Change the mind of Belgrade's leaders and you change minds in Pale and Knin, the respective capitals of the temporary Serbian ministates. Aim for the head, not the tail.

An indirect approach has never been tried against Serbia, partly because many "area experts" and journalists continue to look at the fighting as local outbursts and refuse to see them as one war directed by Belgrade. If successful, a "ring around Serbia" approach would force Serbia to reconsider and negotiate. If unsuccessful, it would entail further bloodshed and cost Serbia the northern Vojvodina (which Hungary seized in World War II) and Kosovo (which Albania seized in World War II), a tragedy for Serbia but a matter of supreme indifference to us.

The problems of such an indirect strategy are great. Balkan states have a historical tendency to go it alone rather than form alliances. To participate in a risky venture they would insist on elaborate guarantees and generous gifts of money and weapons. All states in the region wish for free security and think America should provide it. Greece likely would be furious and drop out of NATO. We must ask ourselves how great a loss this would be.

What are the alternatives to a strategy of "ring around Serbia"? One is to declare that we have no interests in the region and distance ourselves from it. Another is to declare that we have some interests in the region but will pursue them only by peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and a long-term economic embargo of Serbia.[17] This approximates the present approach, if the Administration should ever get around to defining it. This too is a dangerous strategy, for it could drag us into the conflict incrementally and without clear goals or sufficient buildup of armed strength. Congress has never voted on the question and would turn vengeful if the United States should stumble into a war in the disadvantageous terrain of Bosnia.

If we are going to participate in the Third Balkan War, let us control events rather than letting them control us. At the right time, immediately after the Serbs are sobered by military reverses, a US-led "ring around Serbia" policy might jolt them to the negotiating table. The time to start building such a ring is now.

NOTES

1. For a brilliant explanation of the internal Serbian politics and policies of this conservative coalition, see V. P. Gagnon, Jr., "Serbia's Road to War," *Journal of Democracy*, 5 (April 1994), 117-31.

2. For this insight I am especially thankful to Dr. Anton Zabkar of the Slovenian Defense Ministry, interviewed on 21 March 1994 in Ljubljana. He was kind enough to give me a copy of his unpublished paper, "A Third Yugoslavia: Reality or Utopia?" of July 1993.
3. Gagnon, p. 126.
4. From the author's discussions with Croatian officers at the Croatian Defense College, Zagreb, 18 March 1994.
5. For a fuller discussion of this question, see Michael G. Roskin, "The Bosnian-Serb Problem: What We Should and Should Not Do," *Parameters*, 22 (Winter 1992-93), 4, anthologized in Glenn Hastedt, ed., *American Foreign Policy 94/95* (Guilford, Conn.: Dushkin, 1994).
6. Sabrina P. Ramet, "The Breakup of Yugoslavia," *Global Affairs*, 6 (Spring 1991), 2; and Branka Magas, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracking Yugoslavia's Break-Up, 1980-1992* (New York: Verso, 1993), p. 311.
7. Quickly, outside support flowed into Bosnia via Croatia. The first week of May 1994, for example, an Iranian air force transport landed with 60 tons of explosives at Zagreb. See John Pomfret, "Iran Ships Material for Arms to Bosnians," *The Washington Post*, 13 May 1994, p. A1.
8. According to Tirana, Arkan already put at least some of his forces into Kosovo in early May 1994 and appeared there himself. *Daily Report*, Foreign Broadcast Information Service--East Europe (hereafter FBIS), Annex, 3 May 1994, pp. 13-14.
9. See the remarks of a French officer on the scene in Roger Cohen, "For the First Time, Bosnia Feels Time Is on Its Side," *The New York Times*, 13 May 1994, p. A10.
10. One Western diplomat noted the renewed Croat-Bosnian cooperation and said in late June 1994, "There are active preparations for a joint attack in the fall." Roger Cohen, "New Strife in Bosnia?" *The New York Times*, 28 June 1994, p. A9.
11. For the text, see FBIS, 31 March 1994, pp. 23-24. Original text was from TANJUG, Belgrade, 30 March 1994.
12. Granic's remarks were carried by Zagreb radio and reported in FBIS, 1 April 1994, p. 39.
13. Reported in *Vecernje Novosti* (Belgrade), 27 March 1994, and carried in FBIS, 31 March 1994, p. 25.
14. Veran Matic, editor of Belgrade's opposition radio station B92, interviewed by Ivo Skoric, "B92: Struggling for Air," *Uncaptive Minds*, 6 (Fall 1993), 97, 99.
15. Within two months of the Croat-Bosnian agreement, military observers detected a much-improved Bosnian military capability. See Cohen, *The New York Times*, 13 May 1994.
16. Some observers think that by early 1994 the balance of forces in Bosnia had already begun to shift in favor of the Muslims. See Patrick Moore, "A New State in the Bosnian Conflict," *RFE/RL Research Report*, 4 March 1994, pp. 33-36.
17. The latest war-without-gore approach argues for a Kennan-like long-term economic embargo plus informational penetration of Serbia until it collapses internally. This implies an indefinite continuation of the present lull, which the Croats and Bosnian Muslims will likely soon end. The Third Balkan War is not a replay of the Cold War; it is a hot one, and thus extremely fluid and explosive. See David Gompert, "How to Defeat Serbia," *Foreign Affairs*, 73 (July-August, 1994), 4.

attention to the Balkans and gained many insights from visits to the region in 1993 and 1994.

Reviewed 9 May 1997. Please send comments or corrections to carl_Parameters@conus.army.mil.