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Multilateralism Matters but How?

The Impact of Multilateralism on
Great Power Policy Towards the
Break-up of Yugoslavia

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*** Paper prepared for the Workshop: 'Approaches to European Multilateralism',
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Introduction

'Multilateralism matters' is the title and the claim put forward in a recent book edited by John Gerard Ruggie.¹ Multilateralism is defined as "an institutional form which coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of "generalized" principles of conduct - that is, principles which specify appropriate conduct for a class of actions, without regard to the particularistic interests of the parties or the strategic exigencies that may exist in any specific occurrence."² In practice, adherence to generalized principles of conduct means that the states in question treat one another as indivisible on the relevant matters - all subscribe to principles that apply to each of them, and that expectations of diffuse reciprocity, as a result of this, are generated among them.

The institution of multilateralism may, but need not, find formal expression in an organization. Similarly, organizations with more than three members can exist without being multilateral. Ruggie defines a multilateral organization as "a separate and distinct type of institutionalized behavior, defined by such generalized decision-making rules as voting or consensus procedures."³

Multilateralism should be the focus of a new research programme because "multilateral norms and institutions appear to be playing a significant role in the management of a broad array of regional and global changes in the world system today."⁴ The approach's claim to fame is that this institutional form makes a substantive difference to state policy. The approach thus entails a specification of the general neoliberal institutional argument that institutions make a

¹ John Gerard Ruggie (ed.) *Multilateralism matters: the praxis of an institutional form* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

² John Gerard Ruggie, "Multilateralism: the anatomy of an institution," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Summer, 1992), p. 571. This article is identical to the one in *Multilateralism matters: the praxis of an institutional form*.

³ Ruggie, "Multilateralism," p. 574.

⁴ Ruggie, "Multilateralism," p. 561.

substantive difference to state policy.⁵ It follows that multilateralism also challenges the (neo)realist view that institutions have but a marginal impact on state policy.⁶

Ruggie makes two suggestions about how multilateralism should be studied:

- 1) Recover the principled meanings of multilateralism from actual historical practice by showing how and why those principled meanings have come to be institutionalized throughout the history of the modern interstate system.
- 2) Explore how and why the principled meanings of multilateralism may perpetuate themselves today, even as the conditions that initially gave rise to them have changed.⁷

It is the latter suggestion that will be taken up here. As is indicated in the title, the purpose of this paper is to analyze how multilateralism has affected the international community's policy towards the break-up of Yugoslavia.

The break-up of Yugoslavia provides fertile ground for assessing the utility of multilateralism as a research programme, and assessing whether Ruggie's favourable view of multilateralism can stand up to reality. Yugosla-

⁵ Ruggie, "Multilateralism," p. 565.

⁶ This point is discussed at length by Steve Weber, "Shaping the postwar balance of power: multilateralism in NATO," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 3, (Summer 1992), pp. 633-680. As this debate has dominated the field in recent years, there is no reason to discuss it further here. The main contributions are included in David Baldwin, (ed.) *Neorealism & Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (Columbia University Press, 1993). See also Robert O. Keohane, Joseph S. Nye and Stanley Hoffman (eds.) *After the Cold War. International Institutions and State Strategies in Europe, 1989-1991* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

⁷ Ruggie, "Multilateralism," p. 567.

via is well-suited for such a test for two reasons. The first is that strong policy disagreement among the major powers has put the multilateralist consensus principle under pressure throughout the conflict. In game theory terms, the break-up of Yugoslavia constitutes a collaboration problem, meaning that the incentive to defect is high.⁸ Yet policy has been coordinated through multilateral organizations and unilateral actions (defections) have been the exception, not the rule.

The second reason is that efforts to end the fighting have failed for more than two years, casting doubt on Ruggie's benign image of multilateralism.

The analysis will primarily focus on the policies pursued by the competent organs of the two most important multilateral organizations involved in the Yugoslav case: the European Community (EC)/ - from November 1, 1993 - European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN). Reference to other international organizations involved, such as the West European Union (WEU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will be made where appropriate.

It is important to bear in mind that the organizations crowding the institutional map of Europe are set up by states and run by states, and that the overlap of members is substantial. As the autonomy of the various organizations is limited by the interests of their members, analysis must focus on the interests and ideas of the most influential member States. This fact, which is taken for granted by the realist tradition, is often forgotten in contemporary institutional analyses.

⁸ Following Arthur Stein, Lisa L. Martin defines collaboration games as situations where equilibrium outcomes are suboptimal. The Prisoners' Dilemma is the classic illustration of a collaboration game. The problem the two players encounter is that by agreeing to collaborate they will be better off than by not collaborating. However, each player will gain even more by defecting from the agreement to collaborate, provided that the other player respects it. Defection is the rational strategy if one does not trust the other party to respect the collaboration agreement. See her "The Rational State Choice of Multilateralism," in John Gerard Ruggie (ed.) *Multilateralism matters: the praxis of an institutional form* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 95.

The international response to the break-up of Yugoslavia can be divided analytically into two, a EC dominated phase and a UN dominated one:

Phase one: 25 June to December 16, 1991: The EC as the principal actor with the UN entering scene in late September.

Phase two: January 3, 1992: The UN in the driving seat with the EC/EU in the rear.

The analysis contains two distinct parts: one descriptive, the other explanatory. The descriptive part shows the extent to which the members of the EC/EU and the UN have respected the multilateralist principle of consensus. To this end, the description centres on how the relevant states resolve their differences over policy.

The explanatory part aims at establishing why multilateralism mattered and to what extent, if any, it made a substantive difference to Yugoslav policy. To mitigate the methodological problems associated with this task, I shall follow the methodological advice given by Robert O. Keohane. He proposes the identification of situations in which institutional rules are inconvenient to governments as a way of assessing whether institutions have an impact on state policy.⁹ If a government violates the rules preventing it from pursuing its preferred policy, then the rules clearly have no impact on policy. Conversely, if the rules are adhered to in situations where they prevent a government from pursuing its preferred policy then it can be taken as evidence that institutions do have an impact on policy.

However, to simply analyze whether or not rules are adhered to is insufficient, however. It is also necessary to investigate why violation occurs. Putnam has claimed that defection from international agreements and hence

⁹ Robert O. Keohane, "Multilateralism: an agenda for research," *International Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Autumn 1990), pp. 731-764.

violation of institutional rules may be "involuntary" in the sense that governments may be unable to sustain agreements because of domestic political constraints.¹⁰

Phase one: June-December 1991. The EC takes the lead on Yugoslavia

"This is the hour of Europe. It is not the hour of the Americans."¹¹

The first phase is dominated by the EC. Geography and economic links with Yugoslavia put the Community in a good position for dealing with the conflict. Moreover, several EC members see the crisis as a welcome opportunity for the Community to prove itself as major actor on the international scene and to make up for loss of prestige suffered during the Gulf War, where Europe again had to rely on the US to protect its interests.

Having little direct interest in Yugoslavia, the Americans are more than happy to leave the conflict to the Europeans, - as an American official notes when the fighting begins: "After all, it's not our problem, it's a European problem."¹²

Russia was preoccupied with its internal problems, and decided to keep a low profile. It warned the EC against intervening militarily in Yugoslavia on August 6 and made an unsuccessful attempt to mediate a cease-fire in early October.

The unwillingness of the US and Russia to get involved in the Yugoslav conflict goes some way to explaining why the UN was kept on the sidelines during most of this period, but the internal character of the conflict also limited

¹⁰ Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games," *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Summer 1988), pp. 438-39.

¹¹ Jacques Poos, leader of the EC Troika and Foreign Minister of Luxembourg, *The New York Times*, June 29 1991.

¹² *Financial Times*, June 29-30 1991.

the scope for UN action. In early June, the UN Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar thus rejected the idea of sending UN observers to Slovenia on the grounds that "Slovenia is not an independent UN member."¹³ The UN did get involved in the conflict once the Community effort had become bogged down in September, the UN envoy, Cyrus Vance, succeeded in establishing a lasting cease-fire in Croatia on January 3, 1992. However, given the multilateralist perspective of the present paper there was no point in analyzing the UN's involvement during this period, as there is no disagreement over policy among the permanent members of the Security Council.¹⁴

EC agreement was among the first casualties of the Serbo-Slovene war which began on June 27, 1991. All the EC members supported the idea of sending the EC Troika to Belgrade to mediate a cease-fire, but they disagreed strongly over its mandate. The German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, wanted the Community to recognize the independence of Croatia and Slovenia. Britain, and France along with most other EC members wanted to preserve the political unity of Yugoslavia and were successful in opposing the German policy.

Being isolated, Germany accepted the view of the majority but it did not refrain from threatening the Yugoslav federal government that it would unilaterally recognize Croatia and Slovenia, unless the fighting ceased.¹⁵

The disagreement intensified to such an extent that a full-scale civil war broke out in Croatia in late August. In September, when there seemed to be a real possibility of unilateral action by Germany, the French President, François Mitterrand, intervened successfully to prevent it. During a meeting on September 18 Kohl promised him that Germany would refrain from taking any unilateral action vis-à-vis Yugoslavia. Mitterrand reciprocated by accepting Croatia and

¹³ Interview in *Der Spiegel*, Vol. 45, No. 27 (July 1 1991), p. 126

¹⁴ The peacekeeping dispute does surface in the negotiations preceding the adoption of resolution 713, but this dispute will be covered in the EC analysis.

¹⁵ *The New York Times*, July 2 1991.

Slovenia's right to self-determination in principle.¹⁶

By mid-December most EC members had come to view recognition as inevitable, but disagreement on the appropriate timing persisted. In an attempt to force the issue, Germany made clear its intention to recognize Croatia and Slovenia unilaterally if need be on December 23. During an EC meeting on December 16 France worked out a compromise to preserve EC unity. In the ensuing declaration the Community declared its readiness to recognize the independence of the Yugoslav Republics, wishing it, on January 15 1992, provided that a number of specified conditions had been fulfilled by December 23.¹⁷ Chancellor Kohl, however, defected from this compromise immediately after the meeting stating that Germany would recognize Croatia and Slovenia automatically on December and implement it on January 15 1992. He kept his word. This clear-cut violation of the declared EC policy marks the first German unilateral foreign policy action (Alleingang) since 1949.¹⁸

The impact of multilateralism during phase one

Clearly great power compromises are the most important determinants of EC policy. France led the opposition against the German recognition policy until the latter forced recognition upon the Community in December. France suggested deployment of a WEU peace-keeping force which was vetoed by Britain. Undoubtedly, changes in EC policy during the crisis were influenced by events in Yugoslavia, but great power compromises determined the form of the EC's

¹⁶ The declaration issued after the meeting is printed in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 20 1991.

¹⁷ The EC declaration is printed in *Review of International Affairs*, Vol 42, No. 998-1000, (1991), p. 28.

¹⁸ "Ein grosser Erfolg für uns," ("A great success for us"), *Der Spiegel*, Vol. 45, No. 52 (December 23 1991), p. 18.

responses.¹⁹ Thus, EC policy during this period is an example of what Miles Kahler terms "disguised minilateralism."²⁰ I prefer to call it "great power cooperation with a multilateralist face."

At first sight, EC policy during phase one seemed to support Ruggie's claim that multilateralism matters. Despite strong disagreement over recognition and peace-keeping, the multilateral principle of consensus was generally respected. Germany was the sole violator by virtue of its unilateral recognition of Croatia and Slovenia on December 23. This finding is in complete accordance with Ruggie's expectations. Given that multilateralism is a highly demanding institutional form which restrains state autonomy to a considerable extent, perfect adherence cannot be expected.²¹ Yet, in order to determine whether multilateralism did make a substantive difference, situations where the consensus rule was inconvenient for one or more of the three great powers need to be analyzed further. Three such situations can be identified.

- 1) France accepted the British veto of its peace-keeping proposal.
- 2) Germany refrained from recognizing Croatia and Slovenia until December 23.
- 3) Britain and France gave in on recognition on December 16.

In the following paragraphs, these situations are analyzed in greater detail.

French acceptance of the British veto of its peace-keeping proposal

One possibility is to regard the French proposal as cool-headed Realpolitik. From this perspective, France wanted Britain to veto its proposal, hence it was made

¹⁹ This point is thoroughly documented in my *EC Great Power Disagreement over Policy vis-à-vis the Wars in Croatia and Slovenia: Causes and Implications for the Future Stability in CSCE-Europe*, MA-thesis (Institute of Political Science, University of Aarhus, Denmark, 1993).

²⁰ Miles Kahler, "Multilateralism with small and large numbers," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Summer 1992), p. 686.

²¹ Ruggie, "Multilateralism," pp. 572, 574.

as an excuse for inaction.

A purely multilateralist hypothesis would suggest that the acceptance is caused by fear that unilateral French action would damage the WEU permanently.

A third possibility is to view the French acceptance as pragmatic, which reflects the fact that military action was impossible without British participation.

Two factors give credence to the Realpolitik hypothesis. The first is that using the European Political Cooperation (EPC) framework as an excuse for inaction is an established practice among the EC members. In a major study of the EPC, Christopher Hill concludes that:

"the most commonly mentioned of the ways in which member states use EPC has been its function as a "cover" for national positions which otherwise would take some explaining away either at home or abroad."²²

The second factor is more important, namely that the French government, when put under pressure, revealed itself to be almost as reluctant as the British with respect to putting its soldiers in the firing-line. On September 17, two days before the EC was to discuss the peace-keeping proposal, a spokesman from the Quai d'Orsay (French Foreign Ministry), and thus for the first time used the favourite British argument that there were no "judicial foundations" for deploying a peace-keeping force without prior acceptance from all warring parties. He added that France had "no intention of sending troops to be shot at

²² Christopher Hill, "National interests - the insuperable obstacles?," in Hill (ed.) *National Foreign Policies and European Political Cooperation* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 199. For specific examples of such behaviour, see Reinhardt Rummel and Wolfgang Wessels, "Federal Republic of Germany: new responsibilities, old constraints," in Hill (ed.) *Ibid.*, p. 40; Francoise de la Serre, "The scope of national adaption to EPC," in Alfred Pijpers et al. (eds.) *European Political Cooperation in the 1980s: A Common Foreign Policy for Western Europe?*, (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1988), p. 201; William Wallace, "Introduction: cooperation and convergence in European foreign policy," in Hill (ed.) *Ibid.*, p. 10.

by all sides."²³ Since the French knew that Serbian approval would not be forthcoming, this indicates that the French proposal to deploy a peace-keeping force may not have been sincere, and that they may have been counting on a British veto all along.

The interpretation which views the French proposal as a take is not very convincing, however. Account must also be taken of the fact that the conflict in Croatia had not escalated into full-scale fighting at the time when Dumas presented his proposal on July 24. This meant that the risks of deploying the force were considerably lower and the chances of thus success higher than later on in the conflict. Had a substantial WEU force been deployed on the Serbo-Croatian borders before the Yugoslav Federal Army's (YPA) attack on Croatia in late August, the civil war might have been averted. The presence of such a force backed by air and sea power might have induced the Serbs and Croats to negotiate, especially had been such presence been accompanied by a peace plan giving each side a bit more than they expected from negotiations, i.e. by demanding that the Serbian minorities in Croatia be given more autonomy than they would otherwise have been able to achieve. A threat to withdraw the deployed force would probably have been sufficient to obtain Croatian compliance, given their military inferiority vis-à-vis the Serbs.²⁴

This brings us to the second hypothesis that France did not want to endanger the WEU by taking unilateral action. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that France in the run-up to the Maastricht summit was engaged in an intense dispute with the Britain and the US over the shaping of the future defence structure in Europe. France wanted the WEU to function as the military arm of the Community. Britain and the US oppose this as they wanted to retain NATO as the principal security organization in Europe. If the French proposal

²³ *The Times*, September 18 1991.

²⁴ The Serbian dominated YPA has 180.000 troops against the Croat National Guard's 40.000. In addition, the Croat National Guard has been completely disarmed by the YPA during the Spring of 1991. See Christopher Cviic, "Das Ende Jugoslawiens" ("The End of Yugoslavia"), *Europa-Archiv*, Vol. 46, No. 14 (1991), pp. 409-415.

had been implemented, the WEU would have been sent to Yugoslavia with an EC mandate, thus setting a precedent for EC use of the WEU in the future. It would have boosted French plans for merging the two organizations and shown that the EC was capable of acting independently of the US on the international scene.

The fact that the French government attached great importance to WEU suggests that fear of damaging WEU played a role in the French acceptance of the British veto.

The pragmatic hypothesis is the most convincing. For their part, the French were well aware that there could be no WEU peace-keeping operation without British participation. France simply does not have the capability to mount such an operation unilaterally, in addition to which the fact that the French peace-keeping proposal was made contingent upon the establishment of a stable cease-fire and acceptance from all the warring parties. The latter condition made the proposal a non-starter. As has already been mentioned, the French knew very well that Serbia would never accept a WEU force as they perceived the EC and the WEU as dominated by Germany and therefore pro-Croatian. It was for this reason Serbia in November appealed to the UN and not the EC to deploy a peace-keeping force in Croatia.

In sum, multilateralism does not make any real difference in this case as no force would have been deployed even if Britain had accepted it.

*German Alleingang on recognition*²⁵

Two questions need to be addressed here. One is why Germany withheld recognition until December? The other is whether the German defection was voluntary or involuntary? We will start with the latter question as it will help throw some light on the former.

Evidence suggests that the German defection was involuntary, the German government was namely under extreme domestic pressure to recognize the two republics. This pressure built up during the Spring of 1991, and by the

²⁵ The following builds largely on my *Myth-making and Germany's unilateral recognition of Croatia and Slovenia* (under review).

time war broke out in Slovenia, the German government was completely isolated on the issue. All parties in the Bundestag, German Catholic bishops and most editors of the leading German newspapers agreed that recognition was the way forward.²⁶ The outbreak of war in Slovenia, of course, fuelled the criticism of the German government and it was hardly surprising that it began to support recognition at this point.

However, the German defection can only be interpreted as involuntary, if it is plausible that it would not have recognized the republic had there not been domestic pressure to do so. Indeed, such a case can be made. First, the interest taken by the German government in the Yugoslav conflict oscillated according to domestic pressure. The German government remained almost indifferent to the crisis until domestic pressure had built up during the spring of 1991, and once the pressure had weakened due to the recognition in December, the government again adopted a low profile vis-à-vis Yugoslavia.²⁷

Another factor supporting the interpretation of the German recognition as involuntary is the fact that the German government did not use the public pressure as an excuse to implement the recognition policy. Had the government really wanted to recognize the republics, one would have expected it to do so. Yet Chancellor Kohl and Foreign Minister Genscher did precisely the opposite, reiterating time and again that German unilateralism would fuel historically conditioned fears among Germany's neighbours. The statement made by Kohl on September 18 in connection with his meeting with Mitterrand is illustrative in this respect. Kohl warned:

"A unilateral German move would have destructive consequences for the unification of Europe. A policy based on reason must be

²⁶ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* plays a leading role in building public support for recognition. Articles and editorials advocating recognition begin appearing in the paper in March 1991.

²⁷ See John Newhouse, "The Diplomatic Round," *The New Yorker*, Vol. 68, No. 27 (August 24 1992), pp. 61, 66; Patrick Moore, "The Widening Warfare in the Former Yugoslavia", *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (January 1 1993), p. 7.

maintained even in the face of strong domestic opposition."²⁸

Finally, the unilateral recognition is at odds with Germany's post-unification foreign policy. Its principal objectives have been:

- 1) Reassuring neighbours that the united Germany does not threaten their security.
- 2) Promoting further EC integration.²⁹

Forcing the recognition issue put the European project at risk, and Auswärtiges Amt (German Foreign Ministry) officials objected to the unilateral recognition for these reasons. They privately expressed their regret as well as their surprise that the government risked Germany's reputation as "a good team player" in Europe over the Yugoslavia issue.³⁰

Accepting the German defection as involuntary does not mean, however, that the German policy is devoid of opportunistic elements. The principal reason why Kohl, on December 16, announced his intention to push ahead with recognition on December 23, thus breaking his promise to wait until January 15, must lie in his desire to arrive at the CDU congress in Dresden on December 17 with recognition in the bag.³¹ Because of his decision to recognize the republics unilaterally on December 23 the delegates welcomed him with standing ovations.

²⁸ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 19 1991.

²⁹ For an excellent and comprehensive analysis of German foreign policy in the 1989-1991 period see Jeffrey Anderson & John Goodman, "Mars or Minerva? A United Germany in a Post-Cold War Europe," in Robert O. Keohane, Joseph Nye and Stanley Hoffman (eds.) *After the Cold War. International Institutions and State Strategies in Europe, 1989-1991* (Cambridge Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 23-62.

³⁰ William Horsley, "United Germany's Seven Cardinal Sins: A Critique of German Foreign Policy," *Millennium*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1992), p. 339; Newhouse, "The Diplomatic Round," pp. 63-64.

³¹ Newhouse, "The Diplomatic Round," p. 66.

Had he agreed to postpone recognition until January 15, 1992, the welcome undoubtedly would have been very different. However, this does not change the general conclusion that unilateral recognition would not have been granted without the domestic pressure.

To answer the second question why recognition was held back until December, it is necessary to move from the domestic to the international level. Kohl hinted at the key word in the above quotation: the unification of Europe. The principal reason for the German government withholding recognition until December 23 was its interest in a successful Maastricht summit. Recognition was pushed through at the first EC meeting following the conclusion of the Maastricht summit. The German government waited until Maastricht was over because it feared recognition would affect the summit adversely. According to *Le Monde*, Genscher made this clear to the French government, and it is also suggested in his statement of November 14, where he said that Germany intended to recognize the two republics unilaterally, if necessary, after the Maastricht summit.³²

That the German government should attribute more importance to success at Maastricht than recognition is logical, given that construction of a European Union was the principal objective pursued in its Europe policy. Germany is by far the most enthusiastic of the three European great powers when it comes to supporting the movement towards a supranational Community. It would hardly be an exaggeration to characterize the German support for the Union as a "Kohl crusade."³³ He has made it clear that he is striving for the United States of Europe and bargained very hard - alas with limited success - to ensure that a major step was taken in this direction at the Maastricht summit.

In short, it seems most plausible to regard the German defection as involuntary insofar as it is primarily determined by strong domestic pressure.

³² *Le Monde*, December 1-2 1991; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 15 1991.

³³ Anderson & Goodman, "Mars or Minerva?," pp. 32-33, 54.

The principal reason for the German government's delayed recognition until December was fear that unilateral recognition would damage the Maastricht summit and hence its Europe policy irreparably. These findings suggest the paradoxical conclusion that multilateralism, despite the *Alleingang*, do have a strong impact on German policy.

Anglo-French acceptance of recognition on December 16

The interesting question here is whether the Anglo-French concessions on the recognition issue reflect the fear that German unilateralism would damage the EC. If this is the case then multilateralism clearly matters.

The British government gradually changed its position on recognition as the fighting continued. From being strongly opposed in July it came to regard recognition as a matter of time by December. Yet it did insist that recognition any time in the near future would be premature in the run-up to the December 16 meeting.³⁴

This change did not result from fear of German unilateralism, it is more of reflection of the fact that the government's main reasons for opposing recognition had lost most of their relevance by December. They were:³⁵

- 1) The risk that recognition might have a destabilizing spill-over effect in the former Eastern bloc. Fear of general instability in the East is raised time and again by British commentators and politicians.³⁶
- 2) The risk that recognition would pave the way for WEU involvement in Yugoslavia. Major thus opposed recognition on the grounds it "would raise Croatian hopes that Europe would be willing to intervene militari-

³⁴ See comments by British Secretary of the Foreign Office, Hurd, in *The Times* on December 3 1991.

³⁵ The British opposition to recognition is discussed in greater detail in my *EC Great Power Disagreement over Policy vis-à-vis the Wars in Croatia and Slovenia*, pp. 42-46.

³⁶ See for instance, *Financial Times*, July 4 1991.

ly."³⁷

- 3) Concern that recognition would worsen relations between the US and the Community.³⁸
- 4) Concern that recognition would jeopardize the effort led by Lord Carrington to find a negotiated settlement at the EC sponsored peace conference.

By December, the fear of spill-over to the East had been significantly reduced by the disintegration of the Soviet Union and by the cruelty of the civil war. The risk of WEU involvement had been eliminated as it had been agreed that peace-keeping operations would be undertaken by the UN. Acceptance of the recognition compromise on December 16 would have postponed effective recognition of the two republics for a month if the Germans had respected it. This was, according to *The New York Times*, important for the British as they hoped it would help to reduce tension between the Community and the US over this issue.³⁹ Finally, Lord Carrington suspended the peace conference. Thus, the British acceptance of recognition on December 16 could at least in part be explained by the fact that the cost of doing so had been reduced considerably.

Yet, this is only part of the picture. Preserving EC unity and a good

³⁷ "Ein Vampir will uns besiegen," (A vampire will defeat us"), *Der Spiegel*, Vol. 45, No. 37 (September 9, 1991), p. 167.

³⁸ The US remained strongly opposed to recognition throughout the period. US Secretary of State Baker went to Yugoslavia to dissuade Croatia and Slovenia from declaring their independence on June 21 (*The Times*, June 24 1991); he phoned Genscher on July 4 to tell him recognition would be a mistake (*The New York Times*, July 4 1991); and the US put a lot of pressure on Germany to stop it from forcing recognition upon the EC in December (*The New York Times*, December 16 1991). The US did not recognize the independence of Croatia and Slovenia before April 7 1992. (*The New York Times*, April 8 1992).

³⁹ *The New York Times*, December 16 1991.

relationship with Germany were important too. A British official points to EC unity as an important factor and it was supported by Hurd's statements in the House of Commons on December 19. Here he defended the British policy saying:

"There is no prospect of British influence for good in Yugoslavia, if it is in rivalry with other EC powers."⁴⁰

The multilateralism matters thesis thus finds partial support in the explanation of the British acceptance of recognition. It is certainly true to say that Britain would not have recognized the two republics in January 1992 without German pressure.

Like the British, the French position on recognition changed from initial opposition to acceptance, by December 16, that it was inevitable, but still premature.⁴¹ The difference was that fear that German unilateralism might damage the Maastricht process and thus the cornerstone of French European policy was an important factor explaining the French change on recognition. Throughout the crisis, France was applying intense pressure on Germany to prevent it from going alone on recognition. The French strategy can be best described as brinkmanship. The French pressed the Germans to a point where relations were verging on a break-down, but no further.

The meeting between Mitterrand and Kohl on September 18 1991 was evidence of this. It took place amongst French accusations that Germany was striving for hegemony and the German threat of unilateral recognition could have created a danger of causing irreparable damage. Reconciliation was the name of the game and Maastricht had top priority. Mitterrand said after the meeting:

"This was a meeting between good friends. The commentaries

⁴⁰ *The Independent*, December 20 1991.

⁴¹ *Le Monde*, December 1-2 1991.

one occasionally hears really have nothing to do with the reality of our relations. (...) We concentrated on the summit in Maastricht so we can succeed at what we have undertaken."⁴²

The declaration issued after the meeting had compromise written all over it. Germany accepted the French demand that the right of minorities must be protected and promised not to take any unilateral action on Yugoslavia. France, for its part, in principle accepted the right of Croatia and Slovenia to self-determination.⁴³

Another example of French "brinkmanship" is Foreign Minister Dumas' reaction in early October, when Genscher informed him of his intentions to recommend recognition to the German Cabinet. "If you do that, you will set back Franco-German relations twenty years," was his angry response.⁴⁴ But his next move showed that he was bluffing and that France was not prepared to risk its special relationship with Germany over Yugoslavia. In a speech in the French Assemblée Nationale on October 9, he said that "Yugoslavia no longer exists" and that the EC should "draw the logical consequences."⁴⁵ By opening up the door for recognition in this way, he was obviously out to ensure that a major clash between Germany and France could be avoided, if Germany proves to be undeterred.

That France was the architect of the December 16 compromise constructed to maintain EC unity, is yet another indication of the fact the French government regarded its EC project and the partnership with Germany as more important than the Yugoslavia conflict.

Summing up, multilateralism clearly matters to the French as their acceptance of recognition to a large extent stems from concern that German

⁴² *Reuter Newswire* - Western Europe (REUTWE), "Germany and France stress outside arbitration," September 18 1991.

⁴³ The declaration issued after the meeting is printed in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 20 1991.

⁴⁴ *Libération*, October 8 1991.

⁴⁵ *Le Monde*, October 10 1991.

unilateralism would undermine its EC policy. French recognition would not have been forthcoming in January 15 without German pressure. This being said, the French concession cannot be said to signify a hard test of the French commitment to multilateralism, as the French do not perceive prevention of recognition as a vital interest.

Phase two: UN in the driver's seat in Bosnia 1992-April 1994

"A perennial defect of multilateral institutions is their tendency to exhibit timidity and indecision, to dither and delay."⁴⁶

Disagreement over Bosnia began to show in earnest as pressure built for military action over the summer following reports of ethnic cleansing and detention camps with an uncomfortable resemblance of World War II death camps.⁴⁷ The legal obstacles for international military action were cleared by the determination in UN resolution 757 of May 30th, that the situation in Bosnia constituted a threat to international peace and security.⁴⁸ Direct authorization to use force was granted on August 13 with UN resolution 770 calling upon all states to "use all necessary measures" to get the aid through.⁴⁹ Military action did not take place however, because of a universal reluctance intervene militarily on the ground and disagreement among the Western powers over who should provide

⁴⁶ Inis L. JR. Claude, "The tension between principle and pragmatism in international relations," *Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (July 1993), p. 225.

⁴⁷ The US and the EC agreed on recognizing Bosnia as an independent state at the beginning of April and UN resolution 757 imposing sanctions against Serbia/Montenegro on May 30 was generally supported by the international community. China and Zimbabwe abstain but France was the only major power voicing dissent in an attempt to prevent the complete isolation of Serbia. See Annika Savill, "France marches out of step on world sanctions," *The Independent*, June 1, 1992.

⁴⁸ *UN Press Release SC/5414*, May 30 1992.

⁴⁹ *UN Press Release S/24421*, August 13 1992.

the troops.⁵⁰ A minimalist consensus was established as no one was prepared to go beyond supporting the relief effort and undertaking symbolic actions demonstrating that "something is being done." The joint NATO-WEU naval operation monitoring compliance with UN sanctions in the Adriatic was a case in point. Thus, the use of force was not authorized to stop vessels suspected of breaking sanctions.⁵¹

The August 26-28 London Conference, sponsored by Britain in its capacity as President of the EC, cemented the international consensus that diplomacy, economic sanctions and humanitarian relief should be the principal instruments employed in the effort to create peace. The conference resulted in an increased UN presence to ensure the humanitarian operation, a threat to tighten sanctions and an agreement to start peace talks in Geneva led by the UN envoy, Cyrus Vance, and the newly appointed EC negotiator, Lord Owen.⁵²

The international consensus on non-use of force was challenged in the autumn by an American proposal to establish a no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina's air space.⁵³ The proposal was adopted in UN 781 on October 9,

⁵⁰ Britain, after first refusing to participate offered to contribute 1,800 troops on August 19, France offered 1,100 and Italy 1,500. Belgium, Denmark and Netherlands also offered to contribute to the force. The US reiterated its refusal to contribute with other than sea and air power in Yugoslavia. See John Keegan, "Chief's trip laid ground for Army," *The Daily Telegraph*, August 20 1992; Alan Riding, "France Offers More Troops To Back Up Bosnia Aid," *International Herald Tribune*, August 15-16 1992. The total amounts to only a fraction of what military experts considered necessary for the task.

⁵¹ To be fair to the Western powers, it should be noted that Russian opposition was the reason why the UN resolution 757 did not include provisions allowing inspection of vessels suspected of breaking sanctions. On this point see Jean-Baptiste Naudet, "Une politique prend l'eau sur le Danube," *Le Monde*, April 8, 1993.

⁵² Roger Boyes, "Peace on paper will not deter Balkan gunmen," *The Times*, August 29, 1992. The text of the final declaration is printed in *The Independent*, August 28, 1992.

⁵³ Tim Hames, "Foreign Policy and the American Elections of 1992," *International Relations*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (April 1993), p. 317; Simon Tisdall & Hella Pick, "US will join in policing military no-fly zone planned for Bosnia," *The Guardian*, October 3, 1992. Newsweek, August 17, 1992.

but due to Anglo-French resistance the resolution did not contain any provision for enforcement of the zone.⁵⁴ The US wanting to enforce the zone kept up the pressure on its European allies, but Britain and France, fearing for the safety of their troops, refused to give anything but verbal support for enforcement. While the enforcement dispute strained relations among the allies in the remaining part of the year, American unwillingness to go it alone meant that nothing happened.

1993 seemed at first to offer prospects of peace as the Bosnian Serbs on January 20 accepted the new Vance-Owen plan as a basis for negotiations. The Serbian acceptance was clearly an attempt to defuse increasing pressure in the West for military action, as the Serbs were worried that the new US President Clinton would make good his campaign threats to arm the Muslims and to carry out air strikes.⁵⁵

The Serbs were not the only ones to worry, however, as such a policy would have been at odds with EC policy. Especially the British tried particularly hard to persuade the Clinton administration to shelve these proposals. The Europeans, and probably also the Serbs, were therefore relieved when the new administration presents its Yugoslavia policy on February 10.⁵⁶ The main points were:

- 1) Appointment of a special US envoy to Yugoslavia. Reginald Bartholomew is to assist the Vance-Owen negotiations in search of "creative solutions" - meaning that the Vance-Owen plan must be more fair to the Muslims and not reward aggression.
- 2) Any peace plan must be accepted by all parties and not imposed.

⁵⁴ William E. Schmidt, "Britain Questions the Use of Allied Airpower Over Bosnia," *International Herald Tribune*, October 6, 1992; *Liberation*, 11-12 October 1992.

⁵⁵ Tim Judah & Martin Fletcher, "Bosnian Serbs vote in favour of peace plan they despise," *The Times*, January 21, 1993.

⁵⁶ Annika Savill, "UK officials 'convert' US on Bosnia plan," *The Independent*, February 12, 1993.

- 3) Maximal pressure on the Serbs: economic sanctions must be tightened and military threats are repeated.
- 4) Establishment of a war crimes tribunal.
- 5) The no-fly zone must be enforced by a UN resolution.
- 6) Willingness to enforce a "viable" agreement, with force if necessary, together with the UN, NATO and others.⁵⁷

From a multilateral perspective, the important thing to note is that the administration effectively ruled out unilateral action stressing the importance of working through international organizations such as NATO and the UN. Moreover, the administration dropped its proposals to arm the Muslims and bomb Serb positions, which its European allies strongly opposed. It was also a concession to the Europeans that the US, following especially French criticism of the American unwillingness to put troops on the ground, promised to help enforce a peace plan. That the Americans demand a quid pro quo for these concessions was clear from the qualified support for the Vance-Owen plan and the insistence that the no-fly zone had to be enforced.

As the administration signalled a continued American unwillingness to intervene militarily in Bosnia, it was hardly surprising that it failed to intimidate the Serbs who continued their "map" offensives aimed at driving all the Muslims out of North-eastern Bosnia, designated as a Muslim area under the Vance-Owen plan.⁵⁸

The continuing Serbian offensives and stalled Geneva negotiations increased American misgivings about EC policy. In late March, the Clinton administration revived its campaign proposal to arm the Muslims and began to

⁵⁷ *US Department of State Dispatch*, Vol. 4, No. 7 (February 15, 1993), pp. 81-82.

⁵⁸ "The war criminals," *The Economist*, Vol. 326, No. 7799 (February 20, 1993), pp. 28-29.

raise doubts about its commitment to the Vance-Owen plan.⁵⁹ On March 31, the Americans finally got their way on the no-fly zone issue, as the UN adopted resolution 816 allowing NATO aircraft to shoot down planes violating the no-fly zone. Supporting the resolution only reluctantly, Britain and France did their utmost to ensure that the rules of engagement minimized the chances of a clash with the Serbs.⁶⁰

The Serbian rejection of the Geneva peace plan on April 5 brought transatlantic dissonance out in the open. The Americans increased pressure on the Europeans to obtain support for air strikes and for arming the Muslims. Britain and France refused to yield on the issue, however, arguing the American proposals would put their soldiers at risk and prolong the war. Their preferred course of action was to tighten sanctions and since the Americans remained unwilling to mobilize troops themselves, or act unilaterally, they again backed down in the name of multilateralism.

The tightening of the sanctions was delayed by President Yeltsin, who did not want sanctions imposed until after the Russian elections on April 26. This request was respected in UN resolution 820 threatening to impose tighter sanctions on April 26, if the Bosnian Serbs did not sign the Vance-Owen plan.⁶¹ The ensuing Bosnian Serb rejection of the Vance-Owen plan triggered the worst transatlantic crisis over Yugoslavia to date. The tension between the allies built in the first weeks of May as the Europeans rejected Americans calls to arm the Muslims and for air strikes and suggested that the Americans deploy troops in Bosnia instead.⁶² That transatlantic relations had neared an all-time

⁵⁹ Ian Brodie & Michael Binyon, "Britain wary of Clinton plan to arm Bosnia's Muslims," *The Times*, March 26, 1993; Martin Walker & Hella Pick, "Rift with US alarms Britain," *The Guardian*, April 1, 1993.

⁶⁰ *The Financial Times*, April 8, 1993; *International Herald Tribune*, April 13, 1993.

⁶¹ Peter Pringle, "UN tightens screw on Bosnia Serbs," *The Independent*, April 19, 1993.

⁶² Annika Savill, "Inside File: Europe angry at White House's 'simplistic' view of Bosnia," *The Independent*, May 13, 1993; Martin Walker, "Anger at EC's

low was indicated by a British threat to veto the proposal to arm the Muslims at the UN,⁶³ and the fact that the Americans in the end backed down without obtaining any concessions, because they were afraid to cause permanent damage to the alliance.⁶⁴ It must be added that the American bargaining position was weakened by internal disagreement over policy within the Administration and by Clinton's statements ruling out unilateral US action.⁶⁵

The Washington plan emerged as the result of the diplomatic efforts to find common ground on May 22.⁶⁶ The contents of the plan were business as usual, although it entailed a commitment to deploy ground troops to defend the six UN designated safe areas and a US commitment to deploy peace-keeping troops in Macedonia. The plan was given concrete form on June 3, when the UN passed its resolution 836 pledging to use "all necessary measures" to protect the safe areas.⁶⁷ As usual, finding the necessary troops proved difficult. The EC could only come up with an offer of 1,500 troops although the UN estimated that a minimum of 7,500 were needed to carry out the operation. Political will to turn words into action was still in short supply.

Yugoslav policy threatens alliance," *The Guardian*, May 12, 1993.

⁶³ Andrew Marshall, "Consensus on Bosnia eludes EC ministers," *The Independent*, April 26, 1993; Andrew Marr, Colin Brown & David Usborne, "Britain set to break with US over Bosnia," *The Times*, April 29, 1993.

⁶⁴ Joseph Fichett, "Next Step for Allies: Complete Isolation of Serbs in Bosnia," *International Herald Tribune*, May 18, 1993; Daniel Williams, "US., in Reversal, Yields to Europe On Bosnian Crisis," *International Herald Tribune*, May 18, 1993.

⁶⁵ Martin Fletcher, "A growing taste for battlefield," *The Times*, April 20, 1993; George Graham, Lionel Barber and Laura Silber, "US should not intervene alone in Bosnia, says Clinton," *The Financial Times*, April 26, 1993; Joseph Fitchett, "Senate Report Urges Air Strikes on Serbs," *International Herald Tribune*, April 27, 1993; Lionel Barber, Philip Stephens & Laura Silber, "West split over military intervention in Bosnia," *The Financial Times*, April 30, 1993.

⁶⁶ The Washington communique is printed in *The Guardian*, May 24, 1993.

⁶⁷ *UN Press Release SC/5637*, June 4, 1993.

The next row over policy came in late July as the Serbs were closing in on Sarajevo. The American response was predictable: more threats of air strikes, this time in pursuit of the limited objective to prevent Sarajevo from falling into the hands of the Serbs.⁶⁸ The worsening humanitarian situation in Sarajevo and a more assertive American administration persuaded the Europeans to go along with it. "Don't ask, tell" was the way in which an American official described the new US approach towards its European allies.⁶⁹

On August 2, NATO threatened to bomb Serbian artillery around Sarajevo if the Serbs did not stop their "strangulation" of the city, and NATO planners were tasked to draw up plans for air strikes. Disagreement among the Western powers persisted however. The Canadians objected to the use of air power fearing it would endanger their troops on the ground, and command and control procedures also create problems. The Americans wanted NATO to be in control, while Canada and the Europeans wanted to leave the UN in charge.⁷⁰ Yet another compromise was struck, the NATO ultimatum on August 9 reiterated the (American) threat to use air power unless the "Serbs lift without delay the siege of Sarajevo" and to Canadian and European satisfaction the authority to launch air strikes was given to the UN Secretary-General.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Rupert Cornwell, "Saving Sarajevo: Clinton inclining towards greater use of air power," *The Independent*, July 30, 1993.

⁶⁹ Michael R. Gordon, "President, Stung by Critics, Takes Tough Bosnia Lead," *International Herald Tribune*, August 4, 1993.

⁷⁰ Christopher Bellamy, "UN army chief has doubts on air strikes," *The Independent*, August 7, 1993; Barton Gellman and Trevor Rowe, "NATO Sees UN 'Flak' on Campaign In Bosnia," *International Herald Tribune*, August 5, 1993; Paul Lewis, "Owen Blames Stalemate on US Push for Air Strikes," *International Herald Tribune*, August 7-8 1993; Peter Pringle, "Bosnia: US and UN vie for control of air strikes," *The Independent*, August 5, 1993; Gillian Tett, "Serbs inject fresh doubts into NATO," *The Financial Times*, August 10, 1993.

⁷¹ "Decisions taken at the meeting of the North Atlantic council on 9 August 1993," *NATO review*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (August 1993), pp. 26-27.
Given the open disagreement among the Western powers and the weakness of NATO's threat - no dead-line was specified - it would be a mistake to conclude that the ensuing Serb compliance primarily resulted from fear of NATO. It is more likely to result from the fact that the Serbs in this way obtain UN protection

After a period of procrastination, the Serbs complied with NATO's demands and the pressure on them subsided. As 1993 drew to a close, the prospects for peace looked as remote as ever due to a Muslim rejection of the Geneva peace plan. A string of military successes during the autumn convinced them they could get a better deal by fighting on.

The New Year brought new disputes as France pressed for a more forceful approach in Bosnia. Although the NATO countries reiterated their readiness to use air power in the declaration issued after the summit on January 10-11, the French insistence strained relations with the US and drew criticism from UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, who remained opposed to air strikes.⁷² The new French approach was supported by NATO officials worrying about the loss of credibility their organization has suffered and by frustrated UN commanders in Bosnia.⁷³

The February 6 killing of 68 people in a market place in Sarajevo tilted the scales in favour of the proponents of an air strike. NATO responded to the massacre by issuing a strong ultimatum to the Serbs: withdraw your heavy weapons from Sarajevo within 10 days or face air strikes.⁷⁴

The resolution clearly marked a turning point. Concern was raised by the Canadians when the ultimatum was discussed and the Americans had to lean hard on the British,⁷⁵ yet once the resolution had been adopted, it was backed

of their supply routes and artillery positions.

⁷² Roger Cohen, "On Bosnia, Allies Agree Only to Bicker," *International Herald Tribune*, January 22-23, 1994; Thomas W. Lippman, "NATO Airstrikes in Bosnia. The Odds Are Long," *International Herald Tribune*, January 24, 1994; David B. Ottaway, "Butros Ghali Opposes Bosnia Air Strikes," *International Herald Tribune*, January 20, 1994.

⁷³ Ian Traynor, "Bosnian Crisis: UN's generals who were unable to call the shots," *The Guardian*, January 20, 1994; Lionel Barber, "NATO lays to rest its past ambiguity on Bosnia," *The Financial Times*, February 11, 1994.

⁷⁴ The resolution is printed in *The Financial Times*, February 11, 1994.

⁷⁵ Philip Stephens, "Britain backs NATO as US threatens rift," *The Financial Times*, February 11, 1994. The British reluctance was to a large extent determined by strong opposition to the use of force within the Conservative Party.

by everyone. For the first time no one doubted NATO's willingness to act. Equally important was the fact that the US then began to take an active part in the peace talks in Geneva.⁷⁶

The realization that NATO was determined to act set off alarm clocks in the Kremlin. Yeltsin first tried to call a UN Security Council meeting on February 10 to head off air strikes. When this failed, Yeltsin deployed 400 Russian peace-keepers in Sarajevo.⁷⁷ With this diplomatic masterstroke Yeltsin re-established Russia's credibillity as a major power, and reaped most of the credit for the Serbian withdrawal. Russia's new assertiveness created a new situation. Now a Russo-West fault-line and not disagreement among the Western powers has now become the greatest threat to multilateralism. This was clearly reflected by the Goradze crisis in April, when Russian criticism of the two air strikes carried out by Nato reinforced a very visible Western reluctance to escalate the use of air power against the attacking Serbs.⁷⁸ In the end, following an unsuccessful attempt to establish a cease-fire Russia gave its support to a NATO ultimatum which threatened air strikes on April 22.⁷⁹

The Serbs have complied with the ultimatum, but, unfortunately, peace is not in sight. At the time of writing, both the Muslims and the Serbs are reorganizing their forces, and the strong Western fear of military entrapment plus the strained relationship between Russia and the West preclude decisive international action to end the fighting. From a humanitarian perspective the best

⁷⁶ David B. Ottaway, "US Gives New Dynamism to Peace Talks," *International Herald Tribune*, February 12-13, 1994.

⁷⁷ John Lloyd, Robert Mauthner & Judy Dempsey, "Russia opposes air strikes," *The Financial Times*, February 11, 1994; Kerin Hope, "Serbs take heart from Russian intervention," *The Financial Times*, February 19-20, 1994. For an analysis of the factors determining Russia's Yugoslavia policy see Suzanne Crow, "Russia Adopts a More Active Policy," *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 12 (March 19, 1993), pp. 1-12.

⁷⁸ Edward Mortimer, Laura Silber and David White, "NATO raids strain links with Russia," *Financial Times*, April 12, 1994.

⁷⁹ Michael Specter "Yeltsin, Angry, Demands That Serbs Pull Out of Goradze," *International Herald Tribune*, April 20, 1994.

hope in the short run lies in NATO's willingness, if necessary, to honour its pledge to protect refugees and civilians in the safe areas with air power.

The impact of multilateralism during phase two

As was the case during the first phase, policy results from great power cooperation with a multilateralist slant. Multilateralism seems to fare even better during this phase than in the first. Although disagreement over policy is intense at times, all disagreements are resolved by means of negotiation and no great power (officially) breaks commitments made. The exception is of course Russian sanctions busting.⁸⁰ Russia's unilateral deployment of peace-keepers in Sarajevo to pre-empt NATO's threatened air strike in February 1994 cannot be regarded as a violation of the multilateral rules of the game as it aims at accomplishing the same goal as NATO's ultimatum, i.e., to ensure Serbian withdrawal from Sarajevo.

In order to determine whether multilateralism actually made a difference on policy during phase two we now analyze the situations where the consensus rule was inconvenient for one or more of the involved great powers. Four such situations can be identified:

- 1) The American acceptance of European opposition to no-fly zone enforcement during the autumn of 1992.
- 2) The American acceptance of European opposition to air strikes and of arming the Muslims during April-May 1993.
- 3) The British acceptance of the NATO ultimatum in February 1994.

⁸⁰ That Russia violates UN sanctions is a public secret, as several violations have been documented. See for instance Naudet, "Une politique prend l'eau sur le Danube;" Afsané Bassir Pour: "Le meilleur moyen de persuasion," *Le Monde*, April 8, 1993.

- 4) The Western acceptance of Russian resistance to use of air power during the Gorazde crisis in April 1994.

The American acceptance of the European rejection of no-fly-zone enforcement during the autumn of 1992

The administration proposed to establish and enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia at a time when opinion polls showed growing support amongst the American public for launching air strikes against the Serbs and when the Democratic Presidential candidate Bill Clinton skillfully exploited this support to criticize the Bush administration's foreign policy (supposedly Bush's strong point).⁸¹ The proposal was adopted in UN Resolution 781 on October 9, but due to Anglo-French resistance the resolution held no provisions for enforcement of the zone.⁸² With re-election in the balance, the European resistance to the ban surely must have been regarded as inconvenient by the Bush administration. Still it would be wrong to regard the American acceptance as indicating a strong commitment to multilateralism. First of all, it has been clear all along that Yugoslavia is not regarded as an important American interest. The State Department spokeswoman, Margaret Tutweiler, stated in May that she was "not aware of any American strategic interests in Yugoslavia." The administration's interest in Yugoslavia is primarily motivated by electoral considerations and this explains the American unwillingness to undertake any unilateral action on this issue.⁸³ Showing the American public it was "doing something" is likely to

⁸¹ Hames, "Foreign Policy and the American Elections of 1992," p. 317; Tisdall & Pick, "US will join in policing military no-fly zone planned for Bosnia;" Newsweek, August 17, 1992.

⁸² Schmidt, "Britain Questions the Use of Allied Airpower Over Bosnia;" *Liberation*, 11-12, October 1992.

⁸³ That Bush's principal consideration on Yugoslavia is electoral is generally accepted. See Conor Cruise O'Brien, "Why Bush will vote for war," *The Times*, May 27, 1992; Thomas L. Friedman, "War in Yugoslavia: U.S. and Allies Split On Who Does What," *International Herald Tribune*, June 1, 1992; Staff, "U.S. Backs Quick Move To Punish Serbians," *International Herald Tribune*, May 29, 1992; Fritz Wirth, "Bush ändert Taktik und setzt auf Aussenpolitik," *Die Welt*, May 29, 1992.

have been sufficient for Bush given the strong opposition to military intervention on the ground in Yugoslavia in the Pentagon and among the American public at large.⁸⁴

Calling the American acceptance of European opposition to enforcement an excuse for inaction would be unfair, but it would be equally misleading to regard it as evidence of a strong US commitment to multilateralism. The inconvenience is not great enough for that.

The American acceptance of the European rejection of air strikes and of arming the Muslims during April-May 1993

"The US should not intervene alone in Bosnia."⁸⁵

The retreat of the Clinton administration on air strikes and the proposal to arm the Muslims look more promising from a multilateralist perspective.

Two factors suggest that Clinton had to swallow a lot harder than Bush. First of all, Clinton pledged to carry out these proposals during his election campaign, and in January the new administration publicly committed itself to action by making Yugoslavia, in the words of Secretary of State Warren Christopher, "one of our highest priorities."⁸⁶ Secondly, the administration put its prestige on the line to obtain European support. Both the Yugoslav special envoy, Bartholomew, and Secretary of State, Warren, went to Europe to apply pressure on the Europeans, which was unsuccessful. The administration had to back down without a single European concession which was therefore a major blow, and it

⁸⁴ Michael Evans & Jamie Dettmer, "Pentagon chiefs shy away from perils of quagmire operation," *The Times*, July 9, 1992; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, "Don't Send In Troops If Political Goals Are Unclear," *International Herald Tribune*, October 9, 1992.

⁸⁵ US President Bill Clinton cited in Graham, Barber & Silber, "US should not intervene alone in Bosnia, says Clinton."

⁸⁶ *AFP*, January 26, 1993.

served to charge strong domestic criticism over its foreign policy.

Another factor supporting the multilateralist perspective related to the fact that when the administration backed down, it used the multilateralist emergency exit, arguing that further American insistence would have damaged the transatlantic alliance permanently.⁸⁷

Yet, it is also clear that the administration is less committed than appears from its rhetoric. Clinton was first and foremost elected on a domestic platform and compared to domestic issues, Yugoslavia is but a sideshow. Like the Bush administration, Clinton's Yugoslavia policy is primarily driven by domestic considerations and there is a neat correlation between public outrage over atrocities in Bosnia and American initiatives. At the same time the administration is also constrained by the public's opposition to deployment of US troops in Bosnia. Internal disagreement within the administration, caused by the Pentagon's strong resistance to any military involvement completes the picture of faltering commitment. Against this background Clinton's unwillingness to undertake any unilateral action becomes understandable, and given the refusal to deploy ground troops in Bosnia the Europeans hold all the trump cards in their clashes with the US.

The conclusion is therefore similar to the one reached above. It would be even more unfair to call Clinton's reliance on multilateralism an excuse for inaction, as he tried harder than Bush to obtain European support for his policies. Yet his weak commitment to Yugoslavia reduces the value of this situation as a test of the impact multilateralism has on US policy.

The British acceptance of the NATO ultimatum in February 1994

"The British are the biggest brake on any progress."⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Fichett, "Next Step for Allies: Complete Isolation of Serbs in Bosnia;" Williams, "US., in Reversal, Yields to Europe On Bosnian Crisis."

⁸⁸ Cited in Jane M. O. Sharp, "Bankrupt in the Balkans," *Sounding Off Paper*, (London: Institute For Public Policy Research, 1993), p. 1. She strongly criticizes the British opposition to military intervention.

The above statement made by Bosnia's President Izetbegovic in early December 1992 reflects what is also clear from this analysis that Britain has opposed military involvement in Yugoslavia ever since fighting began in 1991. Troops have been deployed only reluctantly and the government has made clear on numerous occasions its intention to withdraw all its troops if the situation becomes too dangerous.⁸⁹ Concern that Yugoslavia might turn into another Northern Ireland has been a recurring theme in British statements. The government's position has been reinforced by strong opposition to any British military involvement from the Conservative Party. Conservative Members of Parliament have thus reacted to NATO's ultimatum stating that they would push for a withdrawal of all British troops from Yugoslavia if it resulted in an escalation of the fighting.⁹⁰

This manifest fear of military entrapment in Yugoslavia and reports that British acceptance of NATO's ultimatum only followed an American warning that a British veto would damage the alliance permanently,⁹¹ make it reasonable to conclude that multilateralism has had a significant impact on the British Yugoslavia policy. It seems highly unlikely that any British troops would have been deployed in Bosnia, if Britain had not been subjected to strong pressure through the EC/EU, the UN and NATO.

Western acceptance of Russian resistance against use of air power during the Gorazde crisis in April 1994

⁸⁹ See for instance Defense Secretary Rifkind's statement in the House of Commons on April 17 1994 cited in David Owen, "Britain backs UN warning on troops pull-out," *The Financial Times*, April 18, 1994.

⁹⁰ Stephens, "Britain backs NATO as US threatens rift."

⁹¹ Stephens, "Britain backs NATO as US threatens rift."

"Diplomacy without armaments is like music without instruments."⁹²

This situation approximates to an excuse for Western inaction after NATO's two attacks, each employing only two jets, have failed to stop the Serbian attacks on Gorazde. At this point, it seems to be clear that Western policy fears military entrapment. NATO has failed to step up attacks to defend Gorazde designated as a safe area by the UN although UN resolution 836 permits use of all necessary measures to protect the safe areas; no retaliatory action has been taken following the downing of a British Sea Harrier jet, and nothing happened when the Serbs began taking hostages and retaking heavy weapons handed over to the UN. The EU's reaction was to call for a united diplomatic effort to stop the fighting and suggest that UN sanctions against Serbia progressively could be lifted.⁹³ The signs from Washington were identical, Clinton explicitly ruled out military action: "I don't want to have a wider war."⁹⁴

The above suggests that the Russian objections to NATO's two attacks are welcome, as they came at a time when the Serbs were calling the NATO countries' bluff. While concern that more air strikes might have damaged relations with Russia undoubtedly did play a role for Western governments, it was hardly decisive. The Russian objectives merely reinforced a very manifest unwillingness to escalate the use of force.

To the West's credit it must be said that it has acted where the Russian attempt to mediate has failed, but concerted Western action, or deployment of the troops requested by UN commander Michael Rose, could have prevented the crisis from ever arising.

⁹² Frederick the Great cited by Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), p. 108.

⁹³ Laura Silber, Jurek Martin & Lionel Barber, "West strives for credibility after Bosnia Debacle," *The Financial Times*, April 19, 1994.

⁹⁴ Paul F. Horvitz, "U.S. Renews Call for Diplomacy in Bosnia," *International Herald Tribune*, April 19, 1994.

Conclusion

Overall, this analysis supports Ruggie's two claims that multilateralism matters and that the durability of multilateralist arrangements depends on domestic environments.⁹⁵ However, it also shows that multilateralism does not necessarily make a change for the better. On the contrary, it may easily become an excuse for inaction.

The analysis shows that the existence of the various international organizations involved have had a substantive impact on policy. During 1991, interest in preserving EC unity and the Maastricht process prevented Germany and France from siding militarily with their traditional allies in the conflict. German *Alleingang* was contained to the diplomatic level and the analysis indicated that the violation of the multilateralist consensus rule was involuntary as it was determined by strong domestic pressure. Multilateralism also made a difference on British policy, as the timing of the British recognition was determined by interest in preserving EC unity.

During the period 1992-April 1994, the impact of multilateralism was most profound on British policy, as its membership of EC/EU and its permanent member status in the UN Security Council made it impossible to turn down requests for deployment of British troops in Bosnia. Without these organizations this deployment would not have occurred. It also made a difference to US policy insofar as its interest in preserving NATO as the principal security organization in Europe caused the Americans to advocate NATO air strikes. In this way, the existence of the UN and NATO has ensured a greater US involvement than would otherwise have been the case. However, lack of direct security interests meant that the Americans were unwilling to take the lead on Yugoslavia and multilateralism served as the emergency exit whenever it proved impossible to obtain allied support for air strikes.

Despite the differences among the Western super-powers during the second period the multilateralist consensus principle was never in danger of

⁹⁵ Ruggie, "Multilateralism," p. 595.

being violated, as a universal fear of military entrapment precluded unilateral military action.

Differences usually resulted from incompatible domestic environments. German *Alleingang* was driven by a strong domestic pressure, as were the American proposals to launch air strikes and to arm the Muslims. The British opposition to military involvement was also in part determined domestic political constraints in the form of opposition in the Conservative Party.

While this analysis shows that multilateralism matters, the break-up of Yugoslavia might just as well be used to support the realist argument that this impact is limited and that states remain unwilling to let international multilateral organizations decide policy on issues they deem vital to their interests. The Yugoslav case does not contest this argument as no great power perceived the war in Yugoslavia as a threat to their vital interests.

This analysis also underlines the (realist) argument that multilateralism easily may become an excuse for inaction. The analysis suggests that Claude be correct in arguing that:

"Effective multilateralism begins with the initiative of a state that is willing to accept the risk of having to do more than its share and the certainty of being criticized for excessive unilateralism or for manipulating the international agency to support its own purposes."⁹⁶

As no state has found a vital interest in stopping the war in Yugoslavia, and given that no state is willing to take a lead, until now policy has consequently reflected the lowest common denominator.

⁹⁶ Claude, "The tension between principle and pragmatism in international relations," p. 225. Another critic of multilateralism is Michael Brenner, "Multilateralism and European Security," *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Summer, 1993), pp. 138-155.

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