

facilitate the overall normalization processes in the region more easily.

Croatia is seeking active participation in the process of European integration because it feels it can contribute to the overall development of the European society. For Croatia, Europe is a symbol of a stable system, of a regulated framework of societal relations, market economy and progressive development and growth.

It is true that Croatia has been somewhat hindered in its development by the aggression which it suffered. That is all behind us now and Croatia is focusing its efforts to join other countries in transition.

Croatian support of the Dayton peace process and the successful reintegration of the Croatian Danubian and full implementation of the April Agreement concluded by the Croatian Government, UNTAES and UNHCR regarding the return of refugees, are crucial for boosting Croatia's reputation as a stabilizing force in the region and a country that stands for the values of Europe.

In saying this it is important to reiterate that the interests of the European Union and Croatia in this part of the world must coincide, because only through agreement and understanding will we achieve positive mutually beneficial results. ■

A Real Player “International Community”

Charles Redman

A general question that often came to me as I worked on the Bosnian negotiations: is there really such a thing as an “international community” which can be a real player on the international scene? One would certainly think so, as often as we appeal to the values and virtues of this mysterious entity. In theory, at least, this “community” would seem to exercise considerable influence, not so much by its acts, but mainly through the invocation of its name and its “will”.

Throughout the Balkan crisis, there were numerous appeals, threats and promises from this “international community”. Many believed that a solution to the conflict could be achieved if only this community, in the form of the major powers, would pull together in bringing sufficient pressure to bear on the warring parties. The idea seemed to be that these smaller actors in the Balkans could be coerced

by the combined moral and political pressures of a group of outside states. And indeed, there is some basis in international politics for this belief in the persuasive powers of the international community. Unfortunately, the success stories are usually in cases where the parties to the conflict are exhausted and ready for any solution whatsoever, or in cases where something less than vital national interests are at stake. In the Balkans, neither condition was present.

To the contrary, the Balkan case would seem to be a classic example of conflict resolution where diplomatic and political tools must be supplemented by a dose of military muscle. This is not a new lesson, but it is almost always a hard lesson to apply. The military component requires resources which are not at the disposal of every mediator, as well as a level of commitment to put lives on the line that few nations or organizations are willing to make.

In Bosnia, a great deal of time and effort was invested in trying to impose a solution through diplomacy alone, through the moral persuasion of the international community, without the need for military measures which would put additional lives at risk. At times, it appeared that such an approach might work. Diplomatic negotiations seemed time and again on the verge of production of a solution, only to flounder on intransigence and indecision. But the fighting went on and on, while the parties to the conflict became adept at playing the diplomatic game, always willing to come to the table, but never prepared to cut a serious deal. In the end, diplomacy alone was not enough. Only when a measure of military muscle was added to the equation in 1995 through the Croatian-Bosniac offensive and through NATO air strikes did the conditions necessary for a settlement finally come together.

In the same way, we also learned — or relearned — some important lessons concerning the capabilities and limitations of the United Nations as an effective mediator of complex international disputes. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, UN successes in the Iran-Iraq war, Cambodia and El Salvador encouraged us to believe that the UN might be the ideal vehicle for dealing with these kinds of conflict. But after failures in Afghanistan, Angola, Haiti, Somalia and Bosnia, we have again come face to face with the limitations of a multinational organization in a mediating role.

Limitations of the UN

The UN did not fail for lack of talented, dedicated and experienced negotiators. Rather, it has been much more the victim of its own, and I would argue, inherent limitations. As an international body, we know that it has little real political leverage. There is insufficient credibility to its threats or promises. With its many masters, it's very difficult to pursue a coherent negotiating strategy, which must also be flexible enough to cope with a dynamic political and military environment.

It's also true that the problems that come to the United Nations are most often those problems which national governments are either unable or unwilling to resolve. The UN becomes the negotiator of last resort for these most difficult conflicts. By their very nature, they are among the most intractable disputes, often among the most costly in

terms of lives and human suffering. It is usually not the UN itself that asks to take on these cases. Rather, the member states normally decide whether or not they themselves will make an effort to settle a conflict. If it's a tough one, they're more likely to toss it to the United Nations.

That's an understandable reaction, because there are important costs to consider for any state and for any political leader. Self-interest, obviously, must be an important factor in whether or not an outside state chooses to attempt mediation. A potential mediator must determine if the negotiating process is worth the possible expenditure of blood, treasure and prestige. This decision is even more difficult if the dispute in question does not directly threaten the mediator's own security. These considerations were powerful deterrents to possible mediation efforts in the Balkans.

To succeed, a mediator needs leverage — the ability to influence the disputants to modify their positions. Leverage is difficult for a fully sovereign nation-state. It is even more difficult for an international organization such as the UN, which has no readily accessible military or economic resources of its own. To obtain agreement on such issues and mobilize resources from among the member states makes for a slow and cumbersome process. As a consequence, we should not be surprised if the parties to the dispute are likely to doubt UN promises of assistance or threats of punishment.

This was certainly the case in former Yugoslavia. The UN was not really equipped to pursue a dynamic negotiation, reacting to events quickly and having the flexibility to adjust its positions as the situation unfolded. An agreed position usually requires long and difficult negotiations among the member states. To modify that position can take even longer. In the case of the Vance-Owen plan, for example, the UN and the EU were both committed. Once the Serbs rejected it, however, in the summer of 1993, it was difficult for the mediators to rapidly adapt to the new conditions.

The Vance-Owen plan also demonstrates another problem for the United Nations — the danger that the UN will not be fully backed by the member states. In that case, when the US indicated that it did not support the plan, the mediators' leverage was very much reduced.

The lesson here is to be realistic concerning the capabilities of the UN: it should not be charged

with responsibilities that it is ill-equipped to perform. In most intractable disputes, it's far more likely that individual states will be able to successfully mediate. These states, however, must be motivated by the self-interest to do the job, willing to take the risks and they must possess the resources and the credibility for effective negotiation. As we learned in Bosnia, those can be difficult conditions to fulfil.

Lessons form Bosnia

We also learned in Bosnia that there can never be complacency about war and peace. Without constant attention, there is always the risk that the fragile peace can be rapidly undone. In Bosnia, ignorance can never be bliss. Are we today running the risk again that the Bosnian solution will come apart? And since I wrote this, I have read that Secretary of State Albright seems to be asking this same question. This is obviously an issue of great importance for Croatia, Europe and the United States.

Where do we stand in Bosnia? Most observers would probably judge that the military component of the Dayton Agreement has been an unqualified success. The NATO presence in Bosnia stopped the hostilities, stabilized the zones of separation and helped to implement some degree of demilitarization and arms control.

We should not ignore, however, that the military mission was designed in such a way as to minimize the risk of failure. Its objectives were highly realistic and pragmatic; they matched closely with the capabilities of the NATO force. If we look at some of the issues left out of the military mission, such as dealing with war criminals or the return of refugees, we get a better idea of how the mission was crafted to virtually guarantee success.

All that is fair enough. But in comparing it with the civilian mission, we should recognize that the latter was neither so narrowly circumscribed nor was it endowed with the richness of resources to match the complexity of the problems. The military mission operated on the basis of a relatively strong consensus among the major international players and the parties on the ground that the hostilities should cease. Unfortunately, there was not a similar consensus with regard to executing many key elements of the civilian component of the Dayton Agreement.

As result, serious problems continue to exist on the civilian side at both the local and national

level. The federal institutions were never expected to be especially strong or effective and they have not been. They are divided by the competing interests of three ethnically-based parties and have been rendered largely ineffective in the day-to-day governance of the country. Progress on most important issues requires considerable pulling and tugging by outside agents. Even the most simple tasks can require extensive micro-management by these outside forces, especially the United States.

Nor have the civilian institutions been able to draw on the kind of post-war reconstruction resources which had been expected. Without these voluntary incentives, and absent the powers of compulsion which exist on the military side, the parties have more often than not been able to go their own way, rather than comply with the Dayton requirements. These reluctant tendencies must surely be reinforced by the knowledge that the military mission will wind down in 1998.

On the international scene, Bosnia-Herzegovina suffers from the same paralysis of effective decision-making. With the institutions and attitudes that prevail today, it's difficult to imagine how the country can move toward further integration in the political, economic and security arrangements of the international or European arenas.

So where are we heading? What are the prospects for actually implementing the structures of governance and power sharing that would offer long-term political stability and economic prosperity? And if these structures cannot be developed, what are the alternatives?

I certainly don't have the answers to these questions. But I do believe that they are questions which must be asked before it's too late. The stakes are high for Bosnia itself, for its neighbours, for Europe and the United States. No one wants to re-open unnecessarily the Pandora's box of problems which is Bosnia. But if our current answers are not sufficient, if the Dayton solution needs fixing, then it seems to me it would be preferable to face up to the issues now, while we still have a measure of stability and influence, and some time on our side. ■