

German Shadows in the Balkan Wilderness: International Reactions to the Recognition of Croatia and Slovenia*¹

DANIELE CONVERSI
Central European University, Budapest
e-mail: conversi@ceu.hu

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The central myth which accompanied the incapacity of the West to tackle the crisis and subsequent war in former Yugoslavia was that Germany's recognition of Slovenia and Croatia made all international efforts to negotiate peace impossible. The "German conspiracy thesis" was actually following the legend of Germany's attempt to extend influence to the Mediterranean, which would secure its domination. This mainstream political interpretation, embraced also by certain sectors of the academia and parts of public opinion, was accompanied by intense German-bashing, especially in British tabloids. Tracing its roots, the author points out three major elements: (a) re-emergence of anti-European trends, especially in Britain and the US, (b) the threat posed by German reunification, felt by various European countries, and (c) the lack of Western expertise in Balkan security questions, which was recognized and used by Belgrade's diplomatic circles. In the concluding part, the author argues that German recognition had no discernible negative impact on the crisis; by recognizing Slovenia and Croatia as international partners, Germany did indeed dissuade further Serbian aggression.

Key words: DISSOLUTION OF YUGOSLAVIA, GERMANY, CROATIA, SLOVENIA, INTERNATIONAL POLITICS, MEDIA

One of the vexed questions stirred up by the events which led to the war in former Yugoslavia concerns the ensuing international paraphernalia of rationalizations which served to condone, absolve, and acquit the West's abysmal failure in the area. The unveiling of this curtain of deception will probably summon a long labour of exposing and debunking those myths, untruths, falsifications, and even open forgery, which accompanied the West's abnegation of responsibility. This task will indubitably require decades of deepened and attentive research.

A central myth which accompanied the West's incapacity to tackle the crisis was the legend of Germany's attempt to "gain a warm port" in the Mediterranean via the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia. Although some will recognize here the distortions of Belgrade's nationalist propaganda, much of these stereotypes were bought wholesale by leading Western political and academic circles. Even though the criticism against German foreign policy was mostly veiled and did not envision imaginary threats of a new *Lebensraum*, the mainstream interpretations remains to this day a kind of exculpation for the general Western failure by putting the entire blame on a single country whose decisions were nevertheless marginal to the development of the crisis.

* Uredništvo se ispričava čitateljima što format ovoga rada ne odgovara uobičajenom standardu revije. Na tu iznimku smo se odlučili zbog vremenskog ograničenja vezanog uz tiskanje ovog broja te zbog aktualnosti teme i kvalitete samoga rada.

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As the European Union (EU) recognized Slovenia's and Croatia's independence on 16 December 1991, this act was submitted to a barrage of international criticism. Critics charged that the step was premature, precipitating the ensuing dramatic developments - even though recognition occurred well after the JNA (*Jugoslavenska Narodna Armija*) embarked on a ten-days conflict with Slovenia and subsequently engaged in a much longer war leading to the occupation and "ethnic cleansing" of nearly one third of Croatia.

It must be said that this theme has not yet been systematically addressed in the academic literature - with the exception of a recent book by Michael Libal, Ambassador and Head of Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to Georgia.² Other research remains at a more dispersed level, while recent work on the topic is relatively limited.³ In most of the literature, the idea that the Germany's policy of recognition was erroneous, misguided and even that it was one of the causes of the war, remains implicitly or explicitly uncontested. This is the approach adopted, for instance, by the former Yugoslav Ambassador to the European community Mihailo Crnobrnja;⁴ by the former US ambassador in Belgrade (until 1992), Warren Zimmermann;⁵ by Britain's "peace mediator" and EU representative to the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, Lord Owen;⁶ and, most notably, by Susan Woodward, senior adviser to the UN's special representative in former Yugoslavia, Yashuki Akashi.⁷

Most, though not all, of this literature is far from being scholarly or academic, so none should be surprised about precipitate conclusions relying on shallow and cursory analysis. What is most meaningful is that all of the above personalities were directly involved in the crisis as international mediators, advisers or diplomats. Since they could be held accountable for at least part of the accompanying events, there is an understandable urge of self-disculpation with a view to whipping imaginary culprits.

However, the same trend has also appeared in academic works, for instance in a tightly argued article by Beverly Crawford published in the mainstream International Relations journal "*World Politics*".⁸ The article's guiding assumption is that there existed a sort of tacit international understanding on the issue of non-recognizing Slovenia and Croatia (and the other republics), and that, with its "unilateral" move, German "defection" constituted a form of breach, double-crossing and infringement of such unsaid accord.

In virtue of its political and economic weight, Germany's role in influencing the EU decision was certainly greater than that played by several other states which simultaneously pushed for recognition - a pressure started at least since 27 June 1991 (beginning of the

² Michael Libal. *Limits of Persuasion: Germany and the Yugoslav Crisis, 1991-1992*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997.

³ See Heinz Jürgen-Axt. "Did Genscher Disunite Yugoslavia? Myths and facts about the foreign policy of united Germany", in zdogan, Günay Göksu and Saybasili, Kemâli (eds). *Balkans: A Mirror of the New International Order*. Istanbul: EREN, 1995 [for Marmara University, Department of International Relations]. For a comprehensive legal analysis, see the Proceedings of the Symposium on "Recent Developments in the Practice of State Recognition", *European Journal of International Law*, vol. 4, no. 1, Summer 1993, pp. 36-91 and 142-3.

⁴ Mihailo Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama*. London: Taurus, 1994.

⁵ Warren Zimmermann, "Origins of a catastrophe. Memoirs of the Last American Ambassador to Yugoslavia", *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 1995, Vol. 74, n° 2, pp. 2-20

⁶ David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1996.

⁷ Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995.

⁸ Beverly Crawford's "Explaining defection from international cooperation: Germany's unilateral recognition of Croatia", *World Politics*, vol. 48, no 4, July 1996, pp. 482-521.

war).⁹ However, for a series of reasons which will be analysed in this article, it was Germany's initiative which incited the most hotly contested response from the international community, beginning from the five members of the UN Security Council (Britain, China, France, the United States and the former Soviet Union). Despite the war's chronological unfolding and all the empirical evidence proclaiming that events precipitated independently from recognition, the myth of German responsibility for the war has remained. And despite the fact that Germany's role was greatly circumscribed, and that indeed international recognition strongly limited the human suffering brought about by the war, the accusations even increased as the war worsened while the incapacity of Western governments to deal with the problem became more and more evident.

Why has this "German-bashing" attitude and ideology been so readily and widely accepted by leading international politicians, by sectors of the academia, and even by part of the public opinion? This paper will try to find an answer to this bewildering question by identifying three main ingredients of the German-bashing syndrome. First, it will pinpoint the re-emergence of anti-European trends, particularly in Britain. Second, it will analyse the perverse effects of German reunification, which created a remarkable sense of threat among several European countries, reviving far-fetched memories of a renewed German expansionism. Third, it will focus on the lack of Western expertise in Balkan security and the supplanting and usurping role exercised in this sector by Belgrade's diplomatic circles, as well as by Serbian and other diaspora.

Before embarking on such a task, the article will start with a definition of German-bashing /with the identification of one of its sources in a persistent Anglo-Saxon isolationist and elitist tradition - as particularly evinced by analysing the British tabloid press's "anti-Hun" rhetoric. The two most extreme forms of this angst/panic manifested themselves as veritable conspiracy theories: the vagary of the purported re-emergence of a Fourth Reich, and the ancillary conjecture of a Papist plot versus the non-Catholic world. It is argued that the manufacturing of such a political atmosphere inhibited and conditioned the debate over ongoing developments in the Balkans.

In this context, the term "German-bashing" refers exclusively to international reactions to the breakup of Yugoslavia. I will not imply that it refers to other dimensions of Germany's foreign or internal politics - even though I will mention the "anti-Kraut" hysteria pervading the British tabloid press and government milieu. This essay fully endorses the principle that the sense of guilt commonly associated with postwar Germany in the wake of the Shoah helped to shape and give direction to Western politics since the end of World War II. This sense of German guilt is central to the entire postwar effort of pan-European unification, and, indeed, of world peace. On the contrary, by chastening Germany for an excessive concern over human rights in the Balkans, as happened during the pre- and post-recognition debates, German-bashers have played into the hands of neo-revisionists and, in general, of those who argue that Germany has been unjustly framed for past misdeeds. What characterizes contemporary attacks likening post-Germany unification to a new Reich is the extreme unscrupulousness of the attackers. Neo-revisionists have been only too happy to use the cynicism of German-bashers against the bountiful evidence that points to the relative success of Germany's early initiative in the Balkans - as opposed to that of other Western partners - to extrapolate more generic self-victimizing sequiturs. In other words, the attacks have risked rekindling a kind of petty wounded pride supposedly been laid to rest.

⁹ Belgium, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Austria, Iceland and other Scandinavian states and several East European countries were voicing their approval for recognition before Germany and other countries could even act.

The revival of Britain's German-bashing tradition

As Britain was the key international protagonist during the early phase of the war, its role remains crucial in explaining the ensuing attack on Germany. Since the initial phase of the negotiation process, Lord Carrington's accusations against Germany were widely disseminated as soon as they became public domain. Moreover, because at that time "Germany" really meant "Europe" for large sectors of the British elites, these attitudes blended well with a vigorous Euro-skeptic undercurrent.

In a study rich of insights, the American sociologist Randall Collins has noted that German-bashing represents a long-standing tradition among Anglo-Saxon intellectuals and ruling classes. Within the most conservative strands of British and American academic circles, it hinged on unfounded claims of "retarded modernization": that is, Germany was conventionally seen as backward and lagging behind Britain and France in terms of intellectual and cultural development.¹⁰ Such sentiment was often asserted against all evidence to the contrary, and disregarded the fact that several German scholars had anticipated their British counterparts in their respective fields and achievements.

German-bashing has traditionally struck a popular chord amongst the British public. As a fictional argument, it ideally stretches back to the times of the Huns and the Teutonic Hordes. This public attitude was dramatically exploited by newspaper magnates in the 1910s, who, in order to increase their sales, emphasized their anti-German interventionist propaganda. "The demand of the *Daily Mail* on 26 October 1914 to expel from the country people with German names, or its revengeful tone since the aftermath of the war up to the 1922 Versailles Treaty are classic examples".¹¹ Paradoxically, "Kraut-bashing" was not so prevalent in Britain during the Third Reich's expansion and Hitler's preparations for World War II.¹² The politics of appeasement were then reflected in a popular indifference to the fate of the Nazi victims. Several studies exist on the history of British appeasement in the face of Nazi aggression.¹³

More recently, Germanophobia has staged a massive comeback in British politics. For instance, a survey carried out in June 1996 by the communication system company Gestetner - which paradoxically runs a project to encourage British children to make friends with their European counterparts - has revealed that "when Germany is mentioned, children immediately think of war - and a dictator with black moustache".¹⁴ All occasions, from football matches to the ban on British beef, are taken advantage of by the tabloid press to rise the

¹⁰ Randal Collins, "German-bashing and the theory of democratic modernization", *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, Jg. 24, Heft 1, February 1995, S. 3-21

¹¹ On Britain's "jingoistic" and "warmongering" press, see Jean-Karim Chalaby, "Nationalism as a discursive strategy", *The ASEN Bulletin*, n° 6, Winter 1993-94, pp. 19-25. On present-day Kraut-bashing tabloid hysteria, see Nick Cohen, "And you thought the war was over", *Independent on Sunday*, 5 May 1996, p. 16.

¹² "The British press was much more nationalist before World War I than World War II, ferociously anti-German in 1914 and forgiving in 1939, whereas the behavior of Germany and the outcome of the interplay of alliances was much more predictable in the 1930s than the 1910s". Jean-Karim Chalaby, "Nationalism as a discursive strategy", p. 21.

¹³ See Keith Robbins, *Appeasement*. Oxford/ New York: B. Blackwell, 1988; M. Gilbert, 'The roots of appeasement' and J. Wheeler-Bennett, 'The road to appeasement', both in Kleine-Ahlbrandt, W. Laird (ed.) *Appeasement of the Dictators: Crisis Diplomacy?* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970.

¹⁴ "Ve haf vays of making you hate ze Germans", *Evening News*, June 12, 1996, p. 23. When British children were asked what they most associated with other European countries, most replied "frog legs and snails" for France, "pizza and spaghetti" for Italy, "sun and beaches" for Spain, "kilts" for Scotland, "dragons" for Wales, "the Queen" for England, "chocolate" for Belgium and "IRA violence" for Ireland (John Carvel, "Young Brits still bashing the Boche", *The Guardian*, June 10, 1996, p. 2).

level of Germanophobia and hence anti-Brussels rhetoric. "Brick by brick, a European superstate is being created in which Germany and France wield the power and the rest of us are told what to do".¹⁵ This attitude leads to comic paroxysm, such as claims by the Conservative MP Christopher Gill that "it is Britain's historic destiny to champion the cause of freedom and guide our European partners away from the totalitarianism that threatens to engulf them".¹⁶ Was Serbia's campaign of ethnic cleansing a preferable vehicle for such a crusading task?

A new climax of anti-Germanism was reached when the top figures of the Tory establishment, including Prime Minister John Major and Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind, raised the argument of the European ban on British beef to provoke "the biggest crisis in Anglo-European relations since Britain joined the European Union in 1973".¹⁷ Interestingly, this new jingoistic posture erupted only two days after the same Tory establishment was plagued by one of the greatest scandals in recent British history, the donation of at least 100,000 pounds - that is the amount so far identified - from Serbian ultra-nationalists faithful to the war criminal Radovan Karadzic.¹⁸ The atmosphere amongst top Tory ranks became so vitiated that Sir Bryan Nicholson, President of the CBI (Confederation of British Industry), expressed his deep concern in the following terms: "In this pungent atmosphere of romantic nationalism and churlish xenophobia, I sometimes wonder if there are some among us who have failed to notice that the war with Germany has ended".¹⁹ Germany - and Europe - could function as a useful lightning-rod to externalize the internal tensions of the Tory regime at a moment when it was facing one of the greatest challenges in its recent history over the Serbian corruption scandal - a scandal which, for all its implications, was immediately silenced. An important clue of this Anglo-Serbian entente was already evident in the May 1995 parliamentary debate over Bosnia, when, following a trend common to the two major British parties, Germany served as an *explicans* for the war and a diversion for the unwillingness of the British establishment to protect Bosnia. Indeed, the British conflict with Germany seems to have been revived through the *interposta persona* of Serbian ultra-nationalists. As Cambridge historian Brendan Simms has pointed out, British academic and media elites seem to mirror their government's persuasion: "Among British - and not only British - intellectuals, commentators and journalists, there is a tenacious myth which runs something like this: the war in Bosnia and Croatia is the more or less direct continuation of the second world war in Yugoslavia".²⁰

During the Cold War - and within the framework of NATO, the EC, and other supra-national organizations - xenophobic trends had been considerably restrained. In the public arena at least, dislike for Germany emerged only under particular circumstances. A notorious case was that of British former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Nicholas Ridley, who in 1990 remarked that Germany was planning to "take over Europe". These remarks were widely reported, created a huge scandal, and cost Ridley his cabinet post. At a time of relatively benign polemics and timid concern for British sovereignty, Margaret

¹⁵ **The Sun** (London), 23 April 1996, cited by Nick Cohen, "And you thought the war was over", **Independent on Sunday**, 5 May 1996, p. 16.

¹⁶ *Idem*.

¹⁷ Patrick Wintour, "Major goes to war with Europe", **The Guardian**, 22 May 1996, pp. 1, 4, 8 and 9.

¹⁸ On the financial scandal involving top British Conservative leaders, see Tim Kelsey and David Leppard, "Serbs gave Tories £ 100,000", **The Sunday Times**, n° 8/960, 19 May 1996, pp. 1 and 24; "The thief, the Serbian link and the financing of Britain's ruling party", **The Independent**, n° 2,990, 20 May 1996, pp. 1 and 13; "Tories probe Serb links to funding", **The Guardian**, 20 May 1996, pp. 1-2 and 8.

¹⁹ Patrick Wintour, "Major goes to war with Europe", **The Guardian**, 22 May 1996, page 1.

²⁰ Brendan Simms, "The unknown accomplices in the Holocaust", **The Times Higher Education Supplement**, October 4, 1996, p. 25.

Thatcher was often accused by rival Tory MPs of instigating Germanophobia. Yet, without Thatcher, by the mid-1990s unbridled anti-German hysteria has become daily routine and nobody was forced to resign.

Britain's attitudes and behaviour during most of the Yugoslav war have been subjected to increasing scrutiny.²¹ Accusations of British connivance with Serbia have been recurrent in Eastern Europe, as well as in Germany, Islamic countries, and several Third World countries.²² The pro-Serbian line in British politics had remained broadly uninterrupted since at least World War I.²³ It became stronger still after World War II, and, again, after the demise of Communism. The Serbophiles were able to reabsorb lost elements of anti-fascist, Titoist, and otherwise Leftist discourse, through an anti-Croat, more precisely anti-Tudjman, rhetoric.²⁴ The bottom line of this argument was that, rightly or wrongly, the Serbs were seen as the traditional allies against the Germans in two world wars.

During the House of Commons' emergency debates on Bosnia in May 1995, Germany's recognition of Slovenia and Croatia was high on the target list. The entire parliamentary discussion was diverted into rapping Germany for virtually all misdeeds in the Balkans - an argument aped and parodied from Serbian propaganda.²⁵ Even the leader of the opposition Labour Party, Tony Blair, could claim: "Undoubtedly, there have been errors of judgement. The early recognition of Croatia without thinking through its evident impact on Bosnia is one example."²⁶ Blair's more moderate approach nevertheless reflected a view which is far from being commonly accepted outside Britain. From the opposite end of the political spectrum, Ulster Unionist MP John D. Taylor echoed with sterner vigour: "If the recognition of Croatia, Bosnia and the other states of the former Yugoslavia was wrong - if we were bounced into it - why is that now the basis on which we foresee a settlement being made? Recognition was wrong then and it is still wrong today."²⁷ Similar analyses could be heard in the House of Lords special debate that same day.²⁸

The fact that both Labour and the Conservatives shared a common language in which Germany's role was heightened as a root cause of the war also points to the fact that both

²¹ See Daniele Conversi, "Moral relativism and Equidistance: British attitudes to the war in former Yugoslavia", in Tom Cushman and Stipe Mestrovic (eds) **This Time We Knew. Western Responses to the War in Bosnia**. New York: New York University Press, 1996, pp. 255-62; Brendan Simms, "Bosnia: The Lessons of History?", in Tom Cushman and Stipe Mestrovic (eds) **This Time We Knew**, pp. 65-68; and Mark Almond, **Europe's Backyard War: The War in the Balkans**. London: Heinemann, 1994, pp. xv-xvii, 31-57, 91-103, 143-147, 240-262, and 289-326.

²² In the Islamic world, the officialdom's muted reactions contrasted with widespread solidarity felt among ordinary Muslims, who "tend to identify the fate of Bosnia with their own, and to see this war as a symbol of their destiny." (Tetsuya Sahara, "The Islamic World and the Bosnian Crisis", **Current History**, November 1994, vol. 93, no. 586, pp. 386-9).

²³ On Dame Rebecca West (1892-1983), the most famous English Germanophobe and Serbophile, see Brian Hall, "Rebecca West's war", **The New Yorker**, April 15, 1996, pp. 74-83. Her selective xenophobia targeted Germans and Turks as main responsible for all evils in the Balkans.

²⁴ Milosevic's able use and abuse of past memories, including the Holocaust, has proved to be highly effective in Serbia, and even abroad.

²⁵ A mention of Germany in England customarily evokes the ghosts of the past. When this anti-German sentiment joins the anti-Europeanist strand, then the explosive mixture is translated into blaming everything on the Croats. This might explain why the idea of a German conspiracy is not correspondingly popular in Scotland, Ireland and Wales - except amongst Ulster Unionists.

²⁶ Great Britain, Parliament, **House of Commons. Official Report. Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)**. London: HMSO [daily], vol. 260, n° 112, Wednesday 31 May 1995, col. 999-1102-(col. 1008)

²⁷ Great Britain, Parliament, **House of Commons...** (col. 1043).

²⁸ Great Britain, Parliament, **House of Lords. Official Report. Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)**. London: HMSO, vol. 564, n° 96, Wednesday 31 May 1995, col. 1117-1172.

parties lacked competent advisors on the area. But there were more practical reasons: German-bashing was used to stave off any idea of firmer British commitment to Bosnia, particularly in the form of more decisive military intervention and lifting of the arms embargo. Hence, it assumed a crucial function in the British, and as a corollary European, management of the conflict. Indeed, most MPs who fought against further British commitment in Bosnia, found in Germany's recognition a convenient scapegoat for upholding their line.

"As sponsors of the South Slav state, Western politicians overlooked Serbian repression of other ethnic groups. When EC efforts to keep the country together foundered, Genscher vigorously pushed for diplomatic recognition... Though Brussels and Washington eventually followed [Genscher's] lead, they were annoyed that he had forced their hand".²⁹

"The clash between new expectations of responsibility and old fears of hegemony placed the German government in a no-win situation. If it took the lead as in the recognition of Croatia, it was criticized as overbearing. If it held back as in the Persian Gulf war, it was attacked for shirking its duties".³⁰

Germany's Foreign Minister at the time of the crisis, Hans D. Genscher led the diplomatic initiative among his European partners.³¹ Ominously, Kraut-bashing is a more popular sport amongst British and French élites than among the populations of these countries at large, which is a probable indicator that, rightly or wrongly, these élites see their dominant position challenged, at least after German unification. For instance, French élites were so anxious about their prospective loss of leadership in Europe, that political scientist Alfred Grosser protested that "the French élite lags forty years behind the mood of the population".³² The French newspaper *Le Monde* also lamented that "some politicians have lost all sense; the German colors wave on the title pages of magazines like on military command-posts; caricatures of the fat Mr. Kohl fill newspaper pages".³³ Italian foreign policy analyst Barbara Spinelli remarked that:

"once national interests are defined in mere economic terms, age-old anti-capitalist ideas and gloomy fantasies about anonymous cosmopolitan machinations re-appear in times of crisis. Yesterday, Jewish and Masonic conspiracies menaced the sane marrow of nations. Today, these have been superseded by German bankers or international financiers... It is a strange disease, because France has always fought German threats with a typically German ideology ('the true substance of the nation', 'the call of the soil'). This is the German *maladie* of the French thought ...".³⁴

In the next section, I will analyse the most extreme form of German-bashing, namely the idea of a Fourth Reich conspiracy to carve up the Balkans and dominate the world. I will then associate the latter with kindred conspiracy theories which see a plot from the Vatican

²⁹ In Konrad H. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 206

³⁰ Konrad H. Jarausch and Volker Gransow "The New Germany. Myths and Realities", in Konrad H. Jarausch and Volker Gransow (eds), *Uniting Germany. Documents and Debates, 1944-1993*. Providence/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1994, p. xxix.

³¹ For Genscher's version of events, see his memoirs: Hans-Dietrich Genscher. *Rebuilding a House Divided: A Memoir by the Architect of Germany's Reunification*. New York: Broadway Books, 1997 [Transl. of *Erinnerungen* (Memoirs). Berlin: Siedler, 1995, 1st ed.].

³² T. Klau, "Angst vor dem bösen 'Boche' geht in Frankreich wieder um", *Bonner Rundschau*, 28 March 1990. Reprinted in Konrad H. Jarausch and Volker Gransow (eds), *Uniting Germany. Documents and Debates, 1944-1993*. Providence/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1994, pp. 131-2.

³³ *idem*, pp. 131-2.

³⁴ For an excellent critique of anti-German xenophobia in France, see Barbara Spinelli, "Riappare il fantasma della Marna", *La Stampa*, August 9, 1993, p. 1.

to embrace its Catholic cohorts against followers of other creeds - often in secret alliance with Bonn. Both kinds of conspiracy theories were often travesties of Serbian propaganda, aped and mimicked by top Western leaders and commentators as they fit their own agenda.

A new Fourth Reich?

The most extreme form of anti-Germanism turned into the belief in a "Fourth Reich conspiracy" to dominate Europe and the world.³⁵ Is it possible to say that a new unified Germany was "much more likely than its disunited parts to aspire to the hegemonic status it was denied in the past"?³⁶ This was the view that the conflict was premeditatedly planned by German political elites prodded by the experience of unification. A typical comment argues that "Germany was *already preparing to orchestrate* full media support for Croatia if the JNA were drawn deeper into the conflict."³⁷ Germany was now accused of trying to "gain access to a warm Mediterranean port". Parallels between pre-unification Germany and the Weimar Republic suddenly emerged.³⁸

As John Agnew and Stuart Colbridge point out, "if the federal, liberal, and restrained West Germany could be cast in the role of the Weimar Republic, then reunification and its aftermath can be read as a re-play of the rise of Hitler and the Nazis. Only the new Hitler is missing so far".³⁹ Yet, the same authors argue that "the analogy to Weimar is misleading, not simply because of Germany's new role in the global economy, but also for the radically different administrative structure emerged in post-war Germany: "The political system is decentralized in many important respects and loyalties have been built to localities and regions as much as to the state as a whole".⁴⁰ Moreover, as we all know, the capitalist-democratic institutions of the *Bundesrepublik* (Federal Republic) are deeply rooted.⁴¹ Is this Germany likely to look for a new "*lebensraum*"? *In the existing world order the race for space is no longer paramount - although a race for space may still be used for propping up dictatorial regimes in "rogue" states such as Serbia, and Iraq.*⁴²

Rather the contrary was true in the early stages of German unification: instead of aggrandizing Germany's self-image, unification was widely regretted as soon as Bonn had to face the task of dismantling a fossilized bureaucracy in the Eastern part of the country. After

³⁵ A typical example of this view which blends radical Germanophobia, anti-Islamism, and elements of anti-American discourse, can be found in C. J. Jacobsen, "Washington's Balkan strategy. Aberation or herald?", *The South Slav Journal*, vol. 17, n° 1/2, Spring/Summer 1996, pp. 67-70. Other pro-Serbian propaganda by the same author has been published by **European Security and Mediterranean Quarterly**. Though with much more sophisticated nuances, the Fourth Reich conspiracy is quoted uncritically in Crawford's article (Beverly Crawford's "Explaining defection from international cooperation" ...).

³⁶ For a critique of this view, see John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, **Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy**. London/New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 152-ff.

³⁷ Crnobrnja, **The Yugoslav Drama**, p. 167-8 [my emphasis].

³⁸ Western foreign policy commentators, their gaze firmly fixed on the past, failed to look at what was happening in the real world around them. They often disregarded the fact that Russia in the early- and mid-1990s could much more appropriately have been cast in the role of the Weimar Republic, and that Russia's emerging xenophobic élites were much more tempted to assume the Hitler uniform - this time with thousands of atomic warheads.

³⁹ John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, **Mastering Space**, p. 152.

⁴⁰ John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, **Mastering Space**, p. 152-3.

⁴¹ William E. Paterson and David Southern, **Governing Germany**. London/New York: W. W. Norton, 1991, p. o.

⁴² John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, **Mastering Space**, p. 152.

the initial enthusiasm, unification has come under hefty attack among West Germans. Popular perceptions of German unity have become adverse, while negative "ethnic" stereotypes of East Germans have emerged.⁴³ The popular dichotomy between *Ossies* (East Germans) and *Wessies* (West Germans) has correspondingly increased.⁴⁴ The rift was evident even in Berlin, the proposed capital of united Germany. According to the City Registry, only 562 of the 16,383 marriages in Berlin occurred between West and East Berliners: 22% of all marriages were between Berliners and foreigners, and only 4% between East and West Berliners. Typically, "Berliners find more in common with Slavs, Africans, Turks..."⁴⁵ On the other side, Eastern intellectuals accused the West German establishment of cultural colonialism.⁴⁶

Germany's predicament is also linked to the peaceful nature of its foreign policy. In both the two main post-Cold War conflicts, the wars in the Gulf and in former Yugoslavia, German foreign politics -in contrast to that of the 1930s- has been shown to be "neither belliscose nor effective"⁴⁷

Many political observers claim that no independent foreign policy is feasible without military muscle. Accordingly, Germany's policy of recognition was ineffective precisely because it could not be backed up by military support. For instance, Treverton has observed that a united Germany in the post-Cold War world tried to launch its first bold international diplomatic initiative by recognizing Croatia and Slovenia, "but it did not have the military capability to back up its decisions".⁴⁸ These analysts would seem to prefer a militarized Germany with its own power of committing troops in war zones, rather than a peaceful Germany where public decisions in foreign policy matters are taken openly without contemplating coercive measures. Thus, a foreign policy based on consensus was paradoxically rejected in favor of one based on coercion. Negative comments about Germany's lack of commitment during the Gulf War can also be included amongst these pro-militarist exhortations.

It is also important to consider that German relationships with the rest of Europe are crucial to its own socio-economic development. Being so dependent on the continent's stability and security, it is unrealistic to assume that Germany would have taken an adventurist route in the Balkans. This is less the case for Britain, which has a powerful reservoir of economic incomes and surplus labor in its former colonial Commonwealth satellites.⁴⁹ Thus, Germany's choice reflected a considered balance between economic interests and political realism, as particularly manifested in the firm commitment to quickly re-establish democratic regimes in the region. Indeed, the defense of Germany's economic interests and the respect

⁴³ See Hanna Behrend, [ed.] **German Unification. The Destruction of an Economy**. London: Pluto Press, 1995. See in particular the chapters by Hanna Behrend, "Inglorious German unification"; Christel Panzig, "Changing the East German countryside"; and Manfred Behrend, "Right-wing extremism in East Germany before and after the *Anschluß* to the Federal Republic".

⁴⁴ Allen Buchanan points out that German unification can only succeed if West Germans perceive the enormous transfer of wealth to the Eastern part as redistribution among one people, rather than redistribution to another people: "The greater the identification of the benefactors with the recipients, the less likely the benefactors are to see themselves as suffering the injustice of discriminatory redistribution" (Allen Buchanan. **Secession. The Morality of Political Divorce from Fort Sumter to Lithuania and Quebec**. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991, p. 51).

⁴⁵ See **The Guardian**, 22 July 1996, p. 7.

⁴⁶ Erhard Blankenburg, "The colonisation of East Germany: imposition of law and cultural identity", in Keebet von Benda-Beckman and Maykel Verkuyten (eds) **Nationalism, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in Europe**. Utrecht: University of Utrecht/European Research Centre on Migration and Ethnic Relations (ERCOMER), Comparative Studies in Migration and Ethnic Relations, n° 1, 1995.

⁴⁷ David Marsh, **Germany and Europe. The Crisis of Unity**. London: Mandarin, 1994, p. 170.

⁴⁸ Gregory F. Treverton, "The New Europe", **Foreign Affairs**, vol. 71, no. 1, 1992, pp. 94-112.

⁴⁹ The same may apply to a lesser extent to France.

of human rights are certainly not contradictory options, as German-bashers often seem to assume.

Finally, the idea that the German attitude expressed a deliberate will to “dismember Yugoslavia” can be easily invalidated for the same reasons we have exposed above. First, we have seen that the German government acted in response to public pressure. Secondly, we noticed that this was shared by other European countries. Third, Germany acted only after initial hesitancy and considerable distress. These three factors alone can dispel the idea of a “deliberate plan to dismember Yugoslavia”.

Yet, the “German conspiracy” theory has become a popular myth in a Europe increasingly beleaguered by national frictions. In turn, it has heavily contributed to fostering intra-European antagonisms. This idea bears close resemblance with Samuel Huntington’s cogent theory of civilizational fault lines.⁵⁰ Indeed, it is part and parcel of it: instead of presenting a clash between Islam, Western Civilization and Eastern Christianity, it alleges an atavistic collision between the Teutonic world and the anti-Barbarian West.⁵¹ It stretches back through the centuries to long lasting rivalries between Britain [and France], and the Austro-Hungarian empire and its predecessors. Nazi Germany is but the last reincarnation of this enmity and the most fresh and useful in terms of offending memories.

The traditional enmity with Roman Catholicism has to be added up in most Anglo-Saxon countries. This will be analyzed in the next section.

The Vaticanist plot

Another variety of “conspiratorist” theory identifies Germany as lying decidedly within the Catholic orbit. Conjuring up civilizational fault lines between Popists and anti-Popists, this analysis speculates that, by favoring recognition, Chancellor Helmut Kohl wanted to avoid trouble with the Catholic-dominated Christian Social Union. These rumors brushed aside the fact that the most articulate proponent of the German decision was former Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher from the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP), rather than Kohl and his Christian Democratic Union (CDU). Both parties, moreover, represent the Protestant vote as well - although the CDU is particularly strong in Germany’s Catholic heartland, Bavaria, where most immigrants from former Yugoslavia are also concentrated.⁵² For instance, on 13 July 1991 the Bavarian partner of the CDU, the Christian Social Union (CSU), “issued a call to the German Federal government to recognize Croatia and Slovenia, partially out of solidarity with fellow Catholics and partially out of indignation at the ‘brutal actions of the Yugoslav army which are unconstitutional and against the international law’”.⁵³

The popularity of Croatian resistance in Italy also allowed for similar comparisons. In Catholic countries, the Church provided some backing for a spontaneous movement of hu-

⁵⁰ Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?”, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 21-49.

⁵¹ This attitude has become widespread in the US, but even more so in the UK, where it has been championed by both Ulster Unionists and the far Left (Conversi, “Moral relativism and Equidistance...”, pp. 255-62).

⁵² Protestants represent 45% of Germany’s population and it is inaccurate and deceptive to claim that the Catholics (37%) could influence Genscher’s decisions more than the former, although they were generally more vocal on the issue.

⁵³ “Possible recognition of Croatia, Slovenia urged”, *Deutsche Presse Agentur* (DPA), 12 July 1991, trans. in *Foreign Broadcast Service* (FBIS), *Daily Report* (WEU, Western Europe), 13 July 1991, p. 15. See also Jonathan Bach, “One step forward, three steps back? Germany, the European Community, and the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia”, paper presented at the German Studies Association Conference, Washington, DC, October 8-10, 1993.

manitarian support. This was based on a Christian vocation of social solidarity with the downtrodden, who in the case of Slovenia and Croatia happened to be fellow Catholics. However, the Pope's appeal to peace and condemnation of Belgrade even increased once the Muslims, rather than fellow Catholics, became the new victims.⁵⁴ Bosnia turned into the epicenter of a new febrile humanitarian activity. This was in line with ecumenical principles that have emerged in the Church over the last thirty years - since at least Vatican Council II. These principles showed their most remarkable visage when John-Paul II condemned the Allies' bombing of Iraq during the Gulf War. Paradoxically, this "neutral" attitude during the Gulf War earned the Pope accusations of lack of "loyalty" to the Allies' war effort, at a moment when the need for international cohesion was paramount. These accusations were moved even more vigorously against Germany, whose apparently non-responsive and "pacifist" attitude was taken by German-bashers as a proof of Germany's weak commitment to common Western ideals - ignoring the fact that France played a much more decisive role in supporting Saddam Hussein until the last moment and tried to re-establish contacts with Baghdad even before the UN embargo could be called off.

Pope John-Paul II proposed to Kohl that Slovenia and Croatia be recognized simultaneously by Germany and the Vatican. Eventually, the Vatican recognized them two days before the European Community. As the death toll mounted, France and the UK procrastinated over the recognition, while Germany deemed it urgent. The movement of support for Croatia and Slovenia, was particularly strong in Italy and Bavaria. This is often erroneously interpreted as a form of far-right support for Croatian nationalism and a revival of the wartime "alliance" which the Axis power had established with Croat ultranationalists.

Two major oversights can be observed in this analysis.

First, this movement was basically humanitarian and the sense of solidarity grew because the Croats were being ethnically cleansed by the Serbian paramilitary and the JNA. Croatian independence was supported because it was perceived as a way of salvaging the Croats from the massacres being perpetrated in the name of Yugoslav unity, rather than because of strategic alliances between extreme nationalists.

Secondly, the far right in many countries, notably in Italy, is traditionally anti-Croat - as I have previously mentioned. Rather than respecting traditional World War II alliances, the neo-fascists have developed a strong anti-Croat rhetoric, often in the framework of an overall Germanophobia - from which their far right German comrades are often exempted.

Thirdly, the most convinced supporters of Croatia's recognition were dispersed along the entire political spectrum, with strong representatives in the moderate and secular left. For instance, among Italy's political groups, the militantly secular Radical Party was perhaps the strongest supporter of Croatia's recognition.

The Pope's appeals for peace in the Balkans and his reprobation of the Serbian treatment of minorities have been regarded with suspicion in some Protestant countries, as well as in England. Here, a tradition of sodality between the Anglican Communion and the Serbian Orthodox Church has unexpectedly been revived.⁵⁵ For Conservative British elites, the "Papist conspiracy" had a remarkable aspect: the perceived similarity between the cases of Ireland and Croatia. The Serbs in Krajina were seen as replicas and copycats of Ulster's Protestants, Knin was imagined as a southern version of Londonderry, while a "solidarity" movement between extreme Unionists and Serbian paramilitary took shape. By digging up the Hansard debates, it is easy to find that in every single debate at the House of Commons the

⁵⁴ Barbara Spinelli, "Gli ipocriti mea culpa dell' Ovest. La fine della Bosnia", *La Stampa*, June 30, 1993, p. 1.

⁵⁵ Conversi, "Moral relativism...", particularly pp. 250-1.

Protestant Unionist MPs were among the staunchest Serbophiles (with the possible exception of fringe Labour MP Tony Benn)⁵⁶. Serbophile propagandists like Richard West seized upon these perceived similarities to press the case against recognition. West defined the Croatia's Ustashe regime during World War II as "similar to an IRA terrorist regime".⁵⁷ Yet, as if to disprove the weakness of the idea, the pro-Croatian movement was surprisingly feeble in Ireland. Parts of the Irish intelligentsia, traditionally influenced by their British counterparts, have failed to take any serious action, or to draw salient comparisons between Croatia and Ireland.⁵⁸

Finally, the proximity of Germany and Italy to the northern Balkans also relied on ties fostered by international organizations and economic links, such as the *Alpe-Adria* association.⁵⁹ The latter was formed as an instrument of regional economic co-operation between Slovenia, Croatia, Austria, Hungary, parts of Northern Italy and Bavaria. Hence, strong ties had already been established between these neighboring regions much before the trouble began.

The anti-European drift

Germany's interests at stake in Eastern Europe - both in term of economic development and political stability - are known to be greater than Britain's.⁶⁰ The Cold War policy of *Ostpolitik* had simply prepared Germany for the post-1989 events.⁶¹ Moreover, unification has endowed Germany with a longer frontier with the Slavic world, including 646 kms of land boundaries with the Czech Republic and 456 kms with Poland. Let us not forget that Britain is one of the most aloof partners of the European union and one of the countries which has demonstrated less interest in the deepening of the Union.⁶² British elites from the entire political spectrum are historically more concerned with events occurring in Southern Africa than in the Balkans. Yet, amazingly, Britain has been allowed to play a key role in the latter area. Indeed, the Yugoslav crisis has provided the most dramatic background for reviving Britain's antagonism against the European Union. Attacks on Germany were often meant to be attacks on Europe at a time when the latter was perceived to be economically dominated by Germany.

A good example of the blending of Germanophobia and anti-Europeanism is given by statements such as the following: "In 1992 Germany was to withdraw from the European Fighter Aircraft program, thereby threatening the jobs of 40,000 British workers, while in the field of foreign policy it forced Britain and the rest of the Twelve in December 1991 to recognize the independence of various former provinces [*sic*] of Yugoslavia, thereby at worst pre-

⁵⁶ Great Britain. Parliament. **House of Commons. Official Report. Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)**. London: HMSO [daily], vol. 260, n° 112, Wednesday 31 May 1995, col. 999-1102.

⁵⁷ Richard West, "Yugoslavia really is one nation", **The Sunday Telegraph**, June 30, 1991, p. 20.

⁵⁸ This, notwithstanding the fact that historians like R. W. Seton-Watson had traced parallels between Croatia and Ireland as early as 1912 (Robert William Seton-Watson. **Absolutism in Croatia**. London: Constable & Co., 1912).

⁵⁹ On Alpe-Adria, see Liviana Poropat. **Alpe-Adria e Iniziativa Centro-Europea: Cooperazione nell'Alpe-Adria e nell'area danubiana**. Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1993.

⁶⁰ On the triangular relationship between East/West Germany and Yugoslavia, see Sabrina Petra Ramet, "Yugoslavia and the two Germanys", in Dirk Verheyen and Christian S e (eds) **The Germans and their Neighbors**. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1993.

⁶¹ For instance, see William E. Griffith, **The Ostpolitik of the Federal Republic of Germany**. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978.

⁶² Opinion polls consistently put Britain at the bottom in the list of EC countries in term of support for European unity.

precipitating a series of bloody wars and at best undermining the peace process in the Balkans".⁶³ First, we can note the author's anti-chronological bent, tracing the roots of the outbreak of war (June 1991) to the EC's recognition (December 1991). Secondly, the authors reveal the widespread adoption of two typical "diversionist" strategies in one: 1. the shifting of blame from Britain, which played a leading role in the languid "peace" process which saw the peak of ethnic cleansing, to Germany, which was excluded from the "peace" initiative; 2. Germany was accused simultaneously for the loss of 40,000 British jobs, a convenient target for the workers' rage at a time of rising unemployment. These academics thus associate Europe's and Germany's alleged responsibilities in the war to Britain's internal problems. This is accompanied by silence about London's complicity with Belgrade and connivance in ethnic cleansing, through its support for the arms embargo on the losing side. There is no will to recognize Britain's leading role in the bankrupted "peace" process which shielded Serbia's expansion. As Adrian Hastings points out:

"Britain's attitude blended a *customary British obsession with the maintenance of international borders' status quo, with an anti-European, particularly anti-German, slant. British mistrust and uneasiness over the process of European unification intervened to frame a high-handed pro-Serbian foreign politics.* The belief that a strong centralized Yugoslavia, - or Serbia in its place - could restrain Germany's strength has been the pivotal concept of this fateful inclination. The British government "wished to maintain a large, Serb-dominated, Yugoslavia. When that collapsed, it fell back instead on supporting a 'Greater Serbia' because it saw a powerful enlarged Serbia, achieved with a good deal of underhand British support, as a counterweight to German influence in the Balkans... The Foreign Office remains farcically preoccupied with maintaining a 'balance of power' in central Europe and 'containing' Germany".⁶⁴

This confirms that the Yugoslav tragedy was used by leading British politicians and intellectuals as an arena for reviving old anti-European rivalries. Europe's fragmentation and incapacity to deal with the crisis stemmed precisely from the revival of these antagonisms and from a lack of commitment to Europe on the part of some of its partners. The Serbophile author Richard West blends a typically British Croatophobia with a ferocious anti-European slant. For him, "the failure of the federation in one small country whose people are ethnically and linguistically almost indistinguishable [Yugoslavia] should serve as a warning against the present mania for building a huge European federation. Already Euromania has largely contributed to the troubles of Yugoslavia and the rash, disastrous declaration of independence by Slovenia and Croatia... If the Irish and the British have not been able to live with each other for 800 years, why is this going to change under the rule of Brussels and Strasbourg? ... then we should support the unity and sovereignty of Yugoslavia in the same way as we should support the unity and sovereignty of the United Kingdom".⁶⁵

Among the factors which led Germany to an "early" recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, was Germany's more resolved and unequivocal pro-European commitment - at least until the mid-1990s. The rise of nationalism in former Yugoslavia posed a real threat to the fabric of European unity. Not only did it reveal a split over the way to deal with the conflict, but it also threatened to escalate outside Yugoslavia, by drawing in Greece and Turkey. German diplomacy thus had to display far greater concern for, and sensitivity to, events occurring in the Balkans than did other European diplomacies.

⁶³ Alan Sked and Chris Cook. **Post-War Britain. A Political History. 1945-1992.** Penguin, 1993, p. 561.

⁶⁴ Adrian Hastings, **SOS Bosnia** (London: United Kingdom Citizens' Committee for Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1993 [pamphlet]), p. 8, my italics.

⁶⁵ Richard West, "Yugoslavia really is one nation", **The Sunday Telegraph**, June 30, 1991, p. 20.

Normally, the pro-Europeans would have sought to minimize any tensions with Germany, both over German unification, as well as over their recognition of Croatia and Slovenia. However, the weapons provided by Serbian propaganda played very effectively into the hands of those for whom a united Europe was a gloomy and somber nightmare. In the past, this group had actively tried to promote the view that the European Community was merely a German *palaestra*. Anti-European discourse was framed via the rationale of avoiding a German-dominated Europe.

This abnegation of responsibility has resulted in the immediate disruption of many of the efforts which the founding fathers of the European ideal made over the last 50 years. Although the full impact of the Bosnian war on European unity is still far from having been properly assessed, the verdict has been unanimous and beyond appeal:

“The war in former Yugoslavia emphasized the gulf between the EC’s objectives and its capacities. At the very moment that it provided itself with pretensions to a joint defense and security policy, the EC was confronted with an intractable conflict on its doorstep. Failure to stop the killings in Bosnia did not simply lower the credibility of attempts to forge a joint defense and security policy; it weakened faith in the EC’s ability to carry out any policy at all.”⁶⁶

“The performance of the Community, and now the Union, in relation to former Yugoslavia has caused widespread disillusion. The Community did provide a framework within which the divergences between member states’ policies could be contained, making a repeat of the disaster of 1914 inconceivable. But it failed to form an effective common policy; and it is doubtful whether the new procedures of the CFSP are strong enough to enable the Union to do much better in such intractable situations.”⁶⁷

“There were acute differences of opinions among the member states before and during the 1991 Gulf War, and from 1992 onwards, over what to do about the consequences of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. These examples seemed to indicate that when a major crisis occurred which closely affected the European Community, it could do little but follow a minimalist collective line dictated by a mix of political expediency and an awareness of its lack of effective political and military muscle.”⁶⁸

In turn, the fall in the EC’s credibility translated itself into a weakened allegiance on the part of Germany.

“In 1992-93 this had a far-reaching effect on the electorate in Germany, closer to the Yugoslavia fighting than any other EC member apart from Italy, more affected by flows of refugees from the war zone, and increasingly skeptical about the Maastricht blueprint for a united Europe, particularly the plan for a monetary union. The conflict in the former Yugoslavia lowered further the German electorate’s support for *Bundeswehr* peace-keeping operation outside NATO”.⁶⁹

In short, the contradictory stance assumed within all the major Western bloc since the recognition, revealed a strong ideological conflict between the main EC actors and consequently defined the limits of the European co-operation on security and foreign matters.

⁶⁶ David Marsh, *Germany and Europe*, p. o.

⁶⁷ John Pinder, *European Community. The Building of a Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 220.

⁶⁸ Derek W. Urwin, *The Community of Europe: A History Of European Integration since 1945*. London/New York: Longman, 1995, 2nd ed [1st ed., 1991], p. 261.

⁶⁹ David Marsh, *Germany and Europe*, p. o.

German unification: ancient ghosts in a new bottle

The process of German unification was inarguably the main catalyst of this new fear of Germany, which disproportionately influenced British and French perceptions of the Yugoslav crisis. A parallel and deeply interconnected factor lies in the end of the Cold War. As it has been time and again observed, the end of the bipolar world allowed for hitherto suppressed tensions to re-surface, while the glue provided by the common battle against Communism and Soviet expansionism was melting down. In particular, German unification re-awakened dormant ghosts. This section will be dedicated to analyzing the relationship between this historical event and the rise of German-bashing.

German-bashers also claim that German unification is the single international event which most influenced Yugoslavia's break-up. Post-1989 Germany was the first country to apply the principle of self-determination for itself. It is claimed, often arbitrarily, that its example directly or indirectly inspired nationalists in other parts of the world, from the Baltic's to Moldova and even Saddam's Hussein ill-fated invasion of Kuwait. The apologists of greater Serbia themselves often cite German reunification as a precedent, omitting to consider that it was achieved without a single shot. Yet, in international relations and political science, the "domino effect" paradigm is far from being considered a real thing.⁷⁰ The idea of Germany's "original sin" is an important tool in the armour of the perfect German-basher. However, there are two perhaps more important sources of inspiration, and they are both related to unification. First, even though the principle of self-determination is associated with democracy and human rights, it does not automatically lead to secession.⁷¹ But, if the worst come to worst, secession (state contraction) is ultimately an option preferable to unification (state expansion) from the viewpoint of other international actors - especially from the vantage point of the neighbors of the expanding country.⁷² Secondly, German unification dramatically disrupted the balance of power within the European Union by at least creating the impression of an imminent German "domination" of the continent.

Popular mutterings about Germany's secret ambitions in the Balkans were voiced particularly in Britain - as well as in other European countries - in the aftermath of German reunification. German unification took everybody by surprise. On the one hand, there was a genuine enthusiasm for the break-down of a barrier which had divided Europe's core for over 40 years. On the other hand, the very idea that Germany could be *one* revived the ghosts of the past. People suddenly realized that, at least in terms of land mass (349,520 kmq) and number of inhabitants (80,767,591),⁷³ Germany was now the dominant member of the EC. This added to previous fears of economic domination, expressed particularly by Britain and other North European countries. In short, a united Germany induced instinctive fears. Hence, a widespread tendency to 'castigate' it at its weakest point, namely foreign politics.

In other words, although it was never verbally opposed, German reunification created a sense of apprehension amongst other European partners. This is particularly true for Britain, where a strong anti-European lobby found new legitimacy for its anti-federalist stance. Likewise, Germany's chief neighbor, France, feared it could be treated as a smaller partner in the EU.

⁷⁰ For a critical assessment of the "domino effect" paradigm as applied to nationalist movements, see Daniele Conversi, "Domino effect or internal developments? The influences of international events and political ideologies on Catalan and Basque nationalism", *West European Politics*, vol. 16, n° 3, July 1993, pp. 245-270.

⁷¹ For a discussion of this issue, see Alexis Heraclides. *The Self-Determination of Minorities in International Politics*. London/Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass, 1991.

⁷² On secession, see Allen Buchanan. *Secession...*

⁷³ July 1993 estimate.

It took a long time for these fears to dissipate. In the popular domain, they had been reinforced by massive media focus on racist attacks against asylum seekers and *gastarbeiter* in Germany.⁷⁴ Indeed, the sudden upsurge of attacks on foreigners by neo-Nazi gangs since 1990 contributed a great deal to spread an unprecedented sense of alarm. More distressingly, these attacks occurred in the wake of German unification and were mostly the work of East German youth socialized under Socialist internationalism and receiving the apparent benefits of the fulfillment of the long time dream of democracy and unification. Similar attacks in France and other countries before the crisis attracted less public attention. It is possible that foreign policy analysis has been affected by the simultaneous occurrence of German unification and the rise of xenophobia in the country. But this linkage ostensibly ignores the fact that Croatian refugees and Bosnians *gastarbeiter* were among those attacked, and even murdered, by skin-heads and vigilante groups. Yet, the democratic strength of the German fabric could be noticed in the huge candlelight demonstrations and mass mobilizations against xenophobic attacks which have impregnated German political life more than that of any other European country.⁷⁵

In line with other Western powers, Britain had been advocating German unification as a matter of principle since at least 1949. Nevertheless, the speed at which unification occurred outpaced Britain's intellectual and institutional abilities to absorb and adapt to it. The major fault line of the Cold War ran through the Berlin Wall: the wall sealed the fate of the two Germanies, as well as that of the two blocs. In other words, the Cold War itself "centered upon the division of Germany. The war plans of both sides saw Germany as the first battlefield in World War III".⁷⁶

When Western governments encouraged German unification, they emphasized that it should take place within the framework of the European Community and NATO, and, in particular, that it should uphold existing international borders. A concern for the maintenance of the Cold War *status quo* was thus evident even before the break-up of Eastern multinational polities.

The strongest concerns were expressed by France and Britain, which felt that, confronted with a unified Germany, they risked losing their central position and seeing their influence rapidly diminished: The two "played worried spectators in the fast-moving drama", conjuring up the image of a single Germany "gradually nudging them off the center stage of European politics".⁷⁷ Despite their cautious approach to German reunification, neither Paris nor London appear to have "designed a long-term strategy to deal with the new challenge, ... as if they [were] counting on their status as Western Europe's only nuclear powers in order to maintain their political influence".⁷⁸

This may explain British tactical support for French nuclear tests in the Pacific in 1996: the use of the atomic bomb is seen by both London and Paris as a remaining symbol of su-

⁷⁴ On the rise of neo-racism in unified Germany, see Sabrina Petra Ramet, "The radical Right in Germany", *In Depth*, Winter 1994, vol. 4, no 1, pp. 43-68.

⁷⁵ On the candlelight demonstrations against xenophobic violence which gradually changed the public mood, see Stephen Kinzer, "Demonstrations for tolerance", *New York Times*, 13 January 1993, reprinted in Jarausch, Konrad H. and Volker Gransow (eds) *Uniting Germany. Documents and Debates, 1944-1993*. Providence/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1994, pp. 267-9. On foreign reactions to xenophobia, see Angelo Bolaffi, "Foreign reactions to xenophobia", *Der Spiegel*, 14 December 1992, n° 51, 28f, reprinted in Jarausch, Konrad H. and Volker Gransow (eds) *Uniting Germany*, pp. 263-5.

⁷⁶ John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy*. London/New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 152.

⁷⁷ A. Riding, "On Germany, not all is joy", *New York Times*, 15 February 1990, reprinted in Jarausch, Konrad H. and Volker Gransow (eds) *Uniting Germany. Documents and Debates, 1944-1993*. Providence/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1994, pp. 115-6

⁷⁸ *idem*, pp. 115-6.

premac *vis-à-vis* the economic and political power of a nuclear-free Germany, even if the ultimate price will be paid by the Polynesians and other inhabitants of the Pacific.

As is known, the Berlin wall fell on 9 November 1989.⁷⁹ A few months before-hand, on 17 June, Western speeches still “continued to invoke the goal of eventual reunification. Allied governments had professed to go along, certain that their bluff would never be called. But in practice, almost everyone had sanctioned the division and tried to manage its consequences. Progressive opinion considered the existence of two German states to be the foundation for peace in Europe. Therefore the sudden East German awakening in the fall of 1989 caught virtually all actors and commentators unprepared”.⁸⁰ This is the more surprising if we consider that the division of the two Germanies was never officially accepted by either of the two German states. Hence, Paragraph 23 of GDR’s Basic Law (Constitution) mandated for “accession”, which meant in practice unification.

But how was Germany’s politics of recognition related to the country’s unification? And why was Germany less inhibited than other European countries in dealing with momentous changes in Eastern Europe? Not bound to any neo-colonial empire, Germany did not share the same apprehensions as other Western powers. Moreover, Germany was a relatively “homogeneous” country, which did not include territorial minorities posing a tangible threat to its own integrity - apart from the Danish speaking community in Schleswig-Holstein, a small Slavic minority of Lusatian Sorbs, and an even smaller one of North Frisians.⁸¹ This perception of a threat to the internal borders of Britain and France will be discussed later, but it should be noted that this concern extended to virtually all non-homogeneous countries, from China, Burma and Iraq to Italy, Spain and Canada.

Finally, German unification was carried out according to much acclaimed principles of self-determination. For some, the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia was a logical extension of the same principles applied to other countries which, like former East Germany, were moving through the birth-pangs of democracy. Thus, as soon as the conflict erupted in Slovenia, Helmut Kohl declared that it was “unacceptable that suddenly the right of self-determination should no longer play a role”.⁸² Indeed, for many political commentators, democracy and self-determination were inseparable concepts.

The West’s misreading of Yugoslav politics: between naivete and cynicism

A particularly detrimental Western weakness was the lack of knowledge of internal dynamics and cleavages in the former Yugoslavia. This concerned particularly the misunderstanding of the sequel of events leading to the break-up: while most early analyses identified its main causes in Slovenian and Croatian nationalism, it is now increasingly recognized that ethnic separatism was rather generated and bred in Belgrade by duping the international community and deceiving the JNA’s initial task of defending the country’s unity.

The break-up of Yugoslavia had been anticipated at least since the early 1980s, when the economic dire straits of the country and the lack of a central leadership had awoken international apprehensions. In the early 1980s, the political historian A. Ross Johnson had

⁷⁹ The unification between the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, and Berlin was formally declared on 3 October 1990 (hence proclaimed national holiday as German Unity Day).

⁸⁰ Jarausch, Konrad H. and Volker Gransow “The New Germany. Myths and Realities”, in Jarausch, Konrad H. and Volker Gransow (eds) **Uniting Germany. Documents and Debates, 1944-1993**. Providence/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1994, p. xvii.

⁸¹ On the Lusatian Sorbs, see Martin Kasper (ed.) **Language and Culture of the Lusatian Sorbs throughout their History**. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1987.

⁸² **International Herald Tribune**, 1 July 1991.

warned: "Yugoslav political rhetoric sustains the notion that 'all nationalism's are dangerous at the same level'. In reality, Serbian nationalism is by far the most dangerous. Being the only instrument of centralism, it is the only nationalism that can solicit disintegrative reactions in the whole country".⁸³ In 1985, George Schöpflin anticipated the difficulties of holding the Republics together.⁸⁴ By June 1988, Branka Magas envisaged that a major explosion might be brewing.⁸⁵ In 1989, the same author warned about the dangers of "Balkanization".⁸⁶ Thus, a few international analysts did foresee forthcoming events at a very early stage. Yet, the media started to worry belatedly, and, when it did, it could barely avoid trivializing the entire issue with Eurocentric notions such as "tribalism".⁸⁷

In particular, there was widespread knowledge of the anti-Albanian repression in the early 1980s. A few words of condemnation were then uttered by isolated politicians and human rights observers. Yet, beside human rights rhetoric, a clear signal was sent to Belgrade - as well as to its victims. In the Yugoslav mind-set of the time, this signal was interpreted as one of due and appropriate non-interference in the country's internal affairs. Such idea of non-interference was a central hinge of the non-aligned ideology of Titoism. In this way, the West decided to uphold Tito's postulates about Yugoslavia's inviolable sovereignty -but this time, without Tito. Western élites chose to overlook the most powerful and all-pervasive form of nationalism, that is, state nationalism. In the eyes of many onlookers it simply did not exist. Nationalism was purely a disease of recalcitrant minorities, not a problem of the Yugoslav state.

If the break-up of Yugoslavia was a predictable event, why did some Western countries try to prevent it as long as they could? Why was not the goal of Greater Serbia, within or without Yugoslavia, promptly diagnosed? In this section, I will explore a crucial international facet of the Yugoslav war, namely the peculiar condition of acquaintance, but at the same time unfamiliarity, with Yugoslavia as determined by the Cold War.

The main argument of this section is that every major event within Yugoslavia reached Western diplomacies after being screened and sifted either by Belgrade's propagandist machine or by pro-Yugoslav elements abroad. In Britain, the latter included pro-Chetnik lobbies as well as Marxist intellectuals.⁸⁸ In short, events in Yugoslavia were long perceived through a Serbian lens. Equally, in academic circles the only reality which was often adumbrated was that of their Serbian colleagues. The role of the Serbian intelligentsia in shaping current ideals of ethnic cleansing and suppressing dissent has been widely noted.⁸⁹

⁸³ A. Ross Johnson, *Impressions of Post-Tito Yugoslavia: A Trip Report*. Santa Monica, CA.: Rand, January 1982, p. 10 ["A Rand Note"; n° 1813].

⁸⁴ George Schöpflin, "Political decay in one-party systems in Eastern Europe: Yugoslav Patterns", in Pedro Ramet (ed.) *Yugoslavia in the 1980s*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1985, pp. 307-324.

⁸⁵ Branka Magas, "Brief notes on a visit to Yugoslavia, 18 May to 1 June 1988", in Branka Magas. *The Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracing the Break-up 1980-92*. London/New York: Verso, 1993, pp. 122-36.

⁸⁶ Branka Magas, "Yugoslavia: The spectre of Balkanization", *New Left Review*, n° 173, March 1989, pp. 3-31 [reprinted in Magas. *The Destruction of Yugoslavia*, pp. 187-217].

⁸⁷ "Perilous tribalism in the Balkans", Editorial, *New York Times*, June 25, 1989, p. 26E. The article referred to Yugoslavia, as well as Turkey, Britain, Spain, and various East European countries.

⁸⁸ On pro-Serbian groups in Britain, see Conversi, "Moral relativism...", pp. 255-ff.

⁸⁹ The blueprint for ethnic cleansing had indeed been drawn up by Belgrade intellectuals at least four years before recognition. See Norman L. Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy Of "Ethnic Cleansing"*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995, pp. 22-37; and Magas. *The Destruction of Yugoslavia*, pp. 49-73. Beverly Allen argues that ethnic cleansing started even earlier, in 1986, when non-Serbs cadets and recruits in the JNA were systematically murdered under obscure circumstances. See Beverly Allen, *Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia*. Minneapolis:

In such an astonishing vacuum of information, the media played a critical role by disseminating images of the tragedy which Serbian propaganda had tried to minimize or demolish altogether. Significant attempts to silence the media by claiming that they offered a one-sided or distorted view of the conflict took place at the most crucial moments of the war, just when the West most needed to get its act together. The philosophy opposed to media reporting was that of "moral relativism".⁹⁰

However, this trend has spared a few countries. In Germany, an academic tradition less oriented towards Serbia already prevailed - even though a pro-Serbian heritage also existed.⁹¹ Germany had less pronounced diplomatic ties with Serbia at least since World War I.

Contrary to the case of the former Soviet Union, there has rarely been a veritable Western scholarship on Yugoslavia.⁹² From US government agencies enormous funds were channeled during the Cold War toward the development of Soviet Studies in America, and an entire area discipline emerged under the name of *Sovietology* or *Kremlinology*. Unfortunately, no "Yugoslavology" was ever instituted. Why this disinterest? The main reason was that Yugoslavia was not a key protagonist of the Cold War, it was not an enemy or a threat to Western interests, and was on the contrary accorded several strategic advantages.⁹³

Yugoslavia was often perceived in the West as a potential ally in the Cold War. Tito's regime received enormous benefits by playing the role of bridge between East and West. With its enlightened politics of non-alignment, Belgrade provided no serious reason for concern for the Western bloc and, as we have already observed, post-war British politics were staunchly pro-Titoist beyond ideological cleavages. As with Enver Hoxa's Albania, Yugoslavia remained at the margin of NATO's and the West's strategic interests.

For this reason, no serious funding was invested into studying the fabric and history of Yugoslav societies in English-speaking countries: most of the West's "expertise" on the area revolved around a few Belgrade-centered diplomats and lobbyists. Given this deficiency in Western expertise, it is not surprising that, when the crisis erupted in the late 1980s, Western governments were unable to interpret it, even though - as we have seen - the demise of Yugoslavia had been anticipated by some lone scholars.

University of Minnesota Press, 1996, pp. 50-53. She identifies this practice as the pre-1990 "genocidal murders in the armed forces and the elimination of non-Serbs from position of authority in that and other institutions. Now - now that it is too late, that is - it is easy to see how the spittle-coated moniker 'ethnic cleansing' was taking on meaning long before it was to hit the international media and give the 'international community' something to shake its collective head over at news time" (Allen, **Rape Warfare**, p. 53).

⁹⁰ See Conversi, "Moral relativism...", pp. 244-6. See also Thomas Cushman, **Critical Theory and the War in Croatia and Bosnia**. Seattle: The Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies/University of Washington, August 1997 ("The Donald W. Treadgold Papers in Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies", no. 13).

⁹¹ A Romantic tradition exemplified by the Grimm Brothers and the historian Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) exalted the deeds of the Serbs in pursuit of their freedom against the Ottomans. See Leopold von Ranke, **A History of Serbia and the Servian Revolution**. London: John Murray, 1848, pp. 435-ff. [reprinted in New York: Da Capo Press, 1973] [German original ed.: Leopold von Ranke, **Die Serbische Revolution. Aus Serbischen Papieren und Mitteilungen**. 2. Ausg. Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 1844]. See also Leopold von Ranke, **Serbien und die Türkei im neunzehnten Jahrhundert**. Leipzig: Duncker & Humboldt, 1879.

⁹² At a more general level, I might still agree with Christopher Cviic's statement that "Of all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that had come under Communist rule in 1944-5, Yugoslavia was the most diligently and closely studied right up to its bloody demise in 1991". Christopher Cviic, "Perceptions of former Yugoslavia: an interpretative reflection", **International Affairs**, vol. 71, no. 4, 1995, pp. 819-26.

⁹³ On wartime alliances and the West's privileged relations with the Titoist regime, see Walter R. Roberts, **Tito, Mihailovic, and the Allies**.

Another factor which put Germany in a strong position for anticipating developments in Yugoslavia was its large numbers of Albanian, Croatian, and other *Gastarbeiter* from the poorest areas of Yugoslavia.⁹⁴ Their presence made more difficult than elsewhere to hide the truth. It also made the Germans more receptive to their plight and dreams: "Hosting 600,000 Slovenian and Croatian workers, Germany sympathized with their aspiration to self-determination. But the bloody legacy of Nazi abuse in World War II tied FRG hands"⁹⁵ John Ardagh claims that, of all immigrant groups, "the Yugoslavs tend to be the best liked, and are much appreciated by their employers for their intelligence, politeness, and hard work".⁹⁶ Yet, the role of the Croatian diaspora in shaping German foreign policy has never been properly documented. Some authors have hinted at an unidentified "Croatian lobby" in Germany generating a black veil of deceit and propaganda.⁹⁷ No evidence is normally provided to sustain such hypotheses. Moreover, the same authors barely mention the crucial impact of the much better organized Serbian diaspora in other Western countries, particularly in Britain, France and the US, where it acted in concert with the even more powerful Greek lobby. By contrast with the hypothetical "Croatian lobby", the role of the Serbian lobby in the Yugoslav war has been thoroughly documented.⁹⁸ The role of the lobbies is an indispensable angle from which to analyze the conflict. By analyzing the data which the lobbies disseminated to government agencies and academic institutions, it may be possible to clarify the international dimension of the war and the basis of its legitimacy and support. Yet, in Britain the lobbying was often carried out by British citizens of "pure English" stock who had scarce ethnic relationship with the Balkans whatsoever.⁹⁹

Germany's vicinity to Yugoslavia was also reflected in a particularly favorable disposition towards refugees from the area. During the Cold War, as well as during the war in Bosnia, Germany adopted an open-door policy towards refugees in general, which was in sharp contrast with Britain's tight border controls. In Britain, these controls prevented the consolidation of a significant Yugoslav presence, apart from the influential Serbian nationalist diaspora which we have already mentioned. Border controls have consistently discriminated against Bosnian refugees, and there have been cases of British citizens imprisoned for facilitating the entry and providing humanitarian help to Bosnian Muslims.¹⁰⁰

After 1989, Germany became Europe's prime country for immigration. Over 600,000 refugees arrived by 1992. Of the 425,000 refugees who by 1992 managed to leave the borders of Yugoslavia, Germany accepted more than 200,000, a percentage which is much larger than that of any other West European country.¹⁰¹ Moreover, Germany had the most liberal policy

⁹⁴ See Institut für Zukunftsforschung (Hrsg.). **Ausländer oder Deutsche: Integrationsprobleme griechischer, jugoslawischer und türkischer Bevölkerungsgruppen**. Köln: Bund-Verlag, 1981; Donata Elschenboich and Otto Schweitzer (Hrsg.) **Die Heimat des Nachbarn: Herkunftsländer, Italien, Jugoslawien, Griechenland, Türkei**. Gelnhausen: Burkhardtthaus-Verlag, 1982; Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft. **Das Gastarbeiterproblem: Rotation? Integration? Arbeitsplatzverlagerung?: Jugoslawien, Griechenland, Türkei: Ergebnisse einer Fachtagung**. München: Eigenverlag der Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft, 1975.

⁹⁵ In Konrad H. Jarausch, **The Rush to German Unity**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 206

⁹⁶ John Ardagh, **Germany and the Germans: The United Germany in the Mid-1990s**. Penguin, 1995, Third Ed., p. 278

⁹⁷ Lenard J. Cohen, **Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia's Disintegration and Balkan Politics in Transition**. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995 [1st ed., 1993], pp. 238-ff.

⁹⁸ See Blitz, "Serbia's War Lobby..."

⁹⁹ The diaspora fulfilled the role of giving a semblance of legitimacy to the plan for a Greater Serbia. It conferred on the frightful slaughter an aspect of dignified presentability and thus helped to cloud its genocidal nature.

¹⁰⁰ Patricia Wynn Davies, "Briton jailed after reuniting Bosnians", **The Independent**, 20 May 1996.

¹⁰¹ "Germany chides Europe about Balkan refugees", **New York Times**, July 29, 1992

in terms of supplying haven for asylum seekers: Before recent changes, article 162.2.2 of the Federal Republic of Germany's Basic Law stated: "[all] persons persecuted on political grounds shall enjoy the right of asylum".¹⁰²

Conclusion

Within the EC, there has been unanimous support for the preservation of a united Yugoslavia. As we have seen, even Germany was initially opposed to the disintegration of the country

In the foregoing investigation I have shown that the idea that Germany caused the break-up of Yugoslavia, and even that it caused the war, is largely a myth. Like all myths, it had its functions. For Western leaders, particularly in Britain, it served to justify their *impasse* and belated awareness of the causes of the conflict. For Belgrade's élites, it represented a conscious attempt to divert attention from their crucial responsibility in the war. The punctuality and timeliness of attacks against Germany reflected a typical diversion strategy. The idea of a German responsibility was disseminated in particular moments of international debacle to shed the West from its incapacity to co-ordinate a common policy on the war. The crucial turning points were chiefly the failure of Lord Carrington's peace plan, the beginning of hostilities in Bosnia, the Anglo-French opposition to lifting arms embargo on Bosnia and the failure of the Vance-Owen plan. At the same time, Germany has been made accountable for breaking a *taboo* by recognizing new states and acknowledging new international border changes.

In analytical terms, the German-centered explanation is also flawed, as it builds on another misguided interpretation, the idea that the conflict is basically a tug-of-war between Serbia and Croatia. This has turned out to be a major distracting "decoy".¹⁰³ As the ensuing war in Bosnia has shown, it was folly to try and solve the Croatian conflict in isolation from Bosnia and from all other preys of the Serbian offensive.

The recent dramatic cooling of relations between Croatia and Germany further disproves the simplistic story of a revival of World War II's alliances. Since at least 1992, Germany has incremented its ties with all former Yugoslav Republics except Croatia, and German intellectuals have been highly vocal in condemning human right abuses in Croatia, particularly the role of Croatian extremists in Bosnia. Metaphorically, it can be said that the destruction of the bridge of Mostar represented the severing of all preferential ties between Germany and Croatia. Likewise, Croatia has tried to eschew Germany's embrace, by diversifying its economic and political partners and expanding relations with other Western countries, particularly the USA, Italy, and its northern neighbors.

It was originally the attempt to re-centralize the Yugoslav state, and in particular the abolition of the provincial autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina in 1989 [the former overwhelmingly inhabited by Albanians, the latter inhabited by Serbs, Hungarians, Slovaks, Croats, and other minorities] that, by revealing the regime's intentions, induced most Slovenes, hitherto staunch supporters of Yugoslav unity, to discuss openly the possibility of secession.¹⁰⁴ Croatian nationalists simply adjusted to the evolving *Zeitgeist*, seeing the unfold-

¹⁰² The Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*). was the "provisional" Constitution adopted on 23 May 1949.

¹⁰³ Among the staunchest proponents of this view is Misha Glenny, **The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War**. New York: Penguin Books, 1994 [Rev. and updated ed]. Glenny's book, which inspired Lord Owen's mission, was one of the first to focus on Germany's alleged responsibility. For a more condensed example of the author's attitudes, see Misha Glenny, "Germany fans the flames of war", **New Statesman and Society**, 27 December 1991, pp. 145-ff.

¹⁰⁴ On this, there is now a general accord amongst most scholars of former Yugoslavia. In particular, Magas. **The Destruction of Yugoslavia**, pp. 6-13, argues that Milosevic's "wrong turn in Kosovo" igni-

ing of Belgrade's authority as an historical and unrepeatable opportunity.¹⁰⁵ Branka Magas notes how "little attention has been paid to the political and constitutional changes that took place in Yugoslavia before 1989" and that these changes "predate the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe".¹⁰⁶ The attack on Tito's 1974 Constitution was conducted under the banner of radical centralism: the abolition of provincial autonomies within Serbia precluded to an era when non-Serbs would be treated as second-class citizens. It also "destroyed the ideological and constitutional settlement forged in World War II".¹⁰⁷ Nobody in the West dared to forecast that radical centralization would lead to ethnic cleansing. Indeed, the most ominous sign of the time was the West's indifference to the fate of Kosovo, and ever since Serbian politics consisted in "testing the will of the other to resist, be they other Yugoslav nations or the West".¹⁰⁸

Yet, the conflict was commonly painted as Serbo-Croat at core. Such a view has been repeated *ad infinitum* in several derivative interpretations of the conflict, but especially by British and American mainstream politicians.¹⁰⁹ Until well after the siege of Sarajevo began, this *cliché* has been the daily staple of the US government's official interpretive efforts of the war.

Since Belgrade's élites had abounding connections with the West, both in mainstream political and in academic circles, it was not easy to attack them. Instead, against all evidence, the Slovenes and the Croats - and the other minorities as a corollary - were presented as "the problem".

After being censured and marginalized for recognizing Croatia and Slovenia, Germany's pressure was more muted in respect of the need to recognize Bosnia. It was the United States which, after refusing for a long time to recognize Croatia and Slovenia, took the lead in recognizing Bosnia. But the US' original indecision was a forewarning of the coming tragedy...

As soon as Lord Carrington pointed the finger at Germany's initiative for seriously wrecking the leverage power of his plan, a kind of fever spread across Europe, chiefly in Britain.¹¹⁰ Accusations of Germany "maneuvering behind the scenes" and images of an EC "prodded by Germany" promptly circulated from Anglo-French chancelleries to the world media, feeding ancient prejudices and contributing to what has been cogently defined as the "Balkanization of the West".¹¹¹

ted the fires of war. See also Christopher Bennett, **Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course and Consequences**. New York: New York University Press/London: Hurst, 1994., p. 11; Cigar, **Genocide in Bosnia**, pp. 33-ff; Alain Finkielkraut. **Comment peut-on être Croate?** Paris: Gallimard, 1992; Paul Gardé. **Vie et mort de la Yougoslavie**. Paris: Fayard, 1994. See also Valerie P. Gagnon, Jr. "Ethnic nationalism and international conflict: The case of Serbia", **International Security**, Winter 1994, vol. 19 no. 3, pp. 130-166.

¹⁰⁵ On the concept of "opportunism" as applied to Croatian nationalism, see Ivo Banac, "Croatianism. Franjo Tudjman's brutal opportunism", **The New Republic**, October 25, 1993, vol. 209, n° 17, pp. 20-ff.

¹⁰⁶ Branka Magas, note to the author.

¹⁰⁷ *idem*.

¹⁰⁸ *idem*.

¹⁰⁹ For instance, the entire British political spectrum, and influential quarters of US policy makers (US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, his predecessor Secretary of State, and former Secretary of the Treasury, James A. Baker III, ambassador Warren Zimmermann, and so on)

¹¹⁰ John Newhouse, "The diplomatic round: Dodging the problem", **New Yorker**, August 24, 1992, p. 66. For Germany's "crucial" influence see Nenad Ivankovic **Bonn: Druga Hrvatska Fronta**. Zagreb Mladost, 1993. See also **FBIS-EEU-94-080**, April 26, 1994, p. 44., speech by Josip Manolic, former Tudjman's associate.

¹¹¹ Stjepan G. Mestrovic. **The Balkanization of the West: The Confluence of Postmodernism and Postcommunism**. London/New York: Routledge, 1994

Among all countries, non-interventionism and German-bashing reached the greatest extremes in Britain and the US. Relying on popular memories dating back from the time of Bismarck's competing colonialism till the Nazis, Anglo-Saxon elites constructed a framework in which all otherwise unaccountable events in former Yugoslavia could be conveniently placed. Germany's unification prompted a first muted reaction which emerged in the open once the new German state took unprecedented initiative in foreign policy.

Another fact that emerges is the historical depth of distrust of Germany: "Our basic perception of Germans related to a period of German history running from Bismarck until 1945. This was the phase of imperial Germany, characterized by neurotic self-assertiveness, high birth-rate, a closed economy, a chauvinist culture... Apprehension about Germany did not relate just to the Nazi period but to the whole post-Bismarckian era, and inevitably caused deep distrust".¹¹² Hence, events in Yugoslavia were more likely to be read in the light of World War I developments, than World War II's anti-Fascist struggle.

By blaming Germany, the US and Britain were indeed blaming Europe. Accordingly, Germany had been "allowed" to "steamroll" its European partners with an "overhasty" recognition of Croatia and Slovenia. For years, the adjective "hasty" has bounced around in the media like an uncontrollable squash-ball whose momentum was unexpected even by its launcher. It was in turn reflected in popular perceptions, particularly in Britain. When international responsibilities risked being identified, Germany provided an ideal target to divert all potential criticism away from the West's mismanagement of the conflict.

The main argument of this article is that the policy of apportioning blame on Germany for the Balkan crisis has been a fallout from German re-unification. The latter not only came as a surprise, but many Westerners reacted to it with alarm. Criticism was held back for a while, only to explode once Germany ventured into the taboo area of foreign policy, anticipating a move which most Western states frowned upon: the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia. It is known that autonomous initiatives in foreign policy matters are seen with suspicion. They are bound to be especially alarming if they involve an alteration of existing boundaries. Obviously, Germany did not act without the official support of other governments, but several leaders who accepted recognition subsequently claimed *post-facto* that they had not intended to do so, and that they had acted under German pressure.

As we said, amongst the most powerful legitimizing principles of the Serbophile line was the conviction that the Serbs were acting on behalf of the entire Yugoslavia. Milosevic and JNA army commanders used to validate their behavior in front of the international arena by adducing the imperative to protect Yugoslavia's sovereignty. In practical terms, that meant that the responsibility totally fell back on the shoulders of "seceding" republics: the Serbs were seen as upholders of the principle of national sovereignty against anarchic secessionist trends. They were also desecrated as upholders of civilized unitary principles versus the new "tribal anarchism" of their antagonists.

Moreover, the secession of Croatia and Slovenia was misconceived as a purely egotistic move in defiance of principles of alleged solidarity and "national" unity. The Croatian and Slovene far-right also supported secession. But egotistic elements lacking all solidarity are built into all nationalist movements. Yet, it is impossible to underestimate that all non-Serbian minorities were facing a sense of impending menace. With hindsight, it is clear now from what sort of extreme atrocities non-Serbian minorities were trying to escape. The threats were far from imaginary.

¹¹² Charles Powell on the Chequers Meeting, 24 March 1990, convened by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in her residence, with the participation of Douglas Hurd, Gordon Craig, Timothy Garton Ash and others, quoted in Harold James and Marla Stone (eds), **When the Wall Came Down: Reactions to German Unification**. London/New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 233-ff.

Another major mistake was to confuse secession with instability. Events have shown that instability was rather spurred by persistent counter-efforts to uphold state integrity and the untouchability of frontiers inherited by the Cold War. Such principle can only work with the agreement of both governments involved and their subjects, but we have seen how Belgrade itself had a separatist agenda which had nothing to do with the international community's wishful-thinking.

Finally, there was the persisting mistake of conceiving the current war as having derived from secession and Balkanization' - an old Western nightmare. Far from it, the tragic evolution of the events was most likely dictated by the major international powers' relentless attempts to keep Yugoslavia together.

In their futile effort to maintain the unity of the country against powerful centrifugal trends, most Western governments *de facto* adopted a *pro-Serbian line*. Moreover, implying that the conflict was basically a Serbian-Croatian one meant that one was forced to play down the harassment and persecution suffered by the other minorities.

The Croat and Slovene move did put Western governments under unprecedented pressure, a pressure which they were unprepared to tackle. This may be the only *alibi* for the West's politicians vacillations and shilly-shallies. All their subsequent moves do not absolve them.

In brief, I wish to conclude by stressing that German recognition had no discernible negative impact on the crisis. By recognizing Slovenia and Croatia as international partners, Germany did indeed dissuade further Serbian aggression. The EC decision of 16 December 1991 to recognize Croatia and Slovenia was in fact followed by a Serb decision to stop the war in Croatia. If the same did not occur in Bosnia, that was mostly due to the contrasting signals sent by the West to Belgrade and the *de facto* non-recognition of Bosnia as a single entity. Again, the tragedy of Bosnia had often been attributed to Germany's politics of recognition. The "German conspiracy thesis" hence represented one of the cardinal myths supporting Western abnegation of responsibility. It also represented an easily available interpretation for those Western elites which, particularly in Britain, lacked substantial information on the background of the conflict, or decided to rely on information filtered by Belgrade-centered sources - even to the point of ignoring events as reported by the media.

NJEMAČKE SJENE U BALKANSKOJ DIVLJINI: MEĐUNARODNE REAKCIJE NA PRIZNANJE HRVATSKE I SLOVENIJE

DANIELE CONVERSI

Central European University, Budapest

Teza prema kojoj je njemačko priznanje Slovenije i Hrvatske onemogućilo izvanjsko rješavanje krize u bivšoj Jugoslaviji jest središnji mit kojim se Zapad poslužio kao racionalizacijom vlastite nesposobnosti. Mit o "njemačkoj uroti" nastavak je legende o njemačkom nastojanju da prodorom na Mediteran ostvari dominaciju nad ostatkom Europe. Takva je interpretacija, prihvaćena u međunarodnim političkim krugovima, dijelu javnog mnijenja i znanstvene zajednice, bila popraćenja kampanjom "blaćenja Njemačke" u kojoj su vodeću ulogu imali Britanski tabloidi. Analizirajući uzroke takvog razvoja događaja, autor upućuje na tri važna elementa: (a) obnavljanje anti-europskih tendencija, osobito u Velikoj Britaniji i SAD, (b) strah izazvan nje-

mačkim ujedinjenjem i (c) nedostatak ekspertnog znanja o Balkanu, što je iskoristila beogradska diplomacija i srpski lobby. Autor zaključuje kako nje-mačko priznanje nije imalo negativnog utjecaja na krizu u bivšoj Jugoslaviji, već je, dapače, obeshrabilo srpsku agresiju na Hrvatsku.