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Sarajevo, February 1994: the first Russia-NATO crisis of the post-Cold War era

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Abstract. This article analyses the Russian reaction to the Sarajevo crisis of February 1994 when NATO threatened air strikes in response to the market-place mortar explosion. I argue that Russia's shift to a realist great-power policy led to a crisis with the West as Russia sought to demonstrate its great power credentials, protect what it saw as specific Russian interests in the Balkans, and limit the role of NATO in conflict resolution, while Western leaders aimed to demonstrate NATO credibility and its new post-Cold War role as peace-keeper/peace-maker. This was the first major East-West crisis since the end of the Cold War, and Russian responses and actions foreshadowed its reactions to the Kosovo crisis.

In February 1994, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) issued an ultimatum to all forces fighting within 20 kilometres of Sarajevo to hand over their heavy weapons and to refrain from attacks within the area; if they failed to do so within 10 days, heavy weapons of any of the parties found within the exclusion zone would, along with their military support facilities, be subject to NATO air strikes. This was the first time during the conflicts in former Yugoslavia that NATO had issued an explicit threat to use air strikes attached to specific conditions and without clear authorisation from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). It sparked the first significant crisis in relations between the West and Russia after the end of the Cold War. Russia had not been consulted, and it opposed the use of force and the threat of use of force, particularly by NATO. Although the crisis was resolved without resort to air strikes, it prefigured subsequent NATO actions in former Yugoslavia: the bombing campaign against the Bosnian Serbs in summer 1995 and the Kosovo war. Russian reactions to these events in many ways echoed those of February 1994, and analysis of the Russian response to that crisis reveals features of Russian foreign policy calculation and action that remained constant throughout the remainder of the decade. Russian policymakers' role in resolving the crisis – and Russian evaluations of their role – also bear striking resemblance to June 1999 in Kosovo.

I shall look first at Russia's policy towards the conflicts from 1992–94, then focus on the circumstances leading to the crisis; after evaluating the Russian response I will examine the implications of the crisis for Russian-Western relations and its significance in the evolving Russian foreign policy.[1]

[1] I would like to thank Peter Duncan and James Gow for their comments on a first draft of this article.

Background to the crisis

Evolution of Russian policy in former Yugoslavia from 1992

By 1994, Russian policy towards the Bosnian conflict had undergone a major shift which reflected a general change of direction in overall Russian foreign policy.[2] In 1992, there had been deep divisions over foreign policy within the Russian political élite, including disputes between different branches of the government. However, outside the area of the former Soviet Union, official foreign policy was set primarily by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) under Andrei Kozyrev. Kozyrev espoused what can be labelled a 'liberal internationalist' approach comprising two main tenets: the belief that liberal, democratic states share common interests and are natural allies, and the institutionalist view that international institutions have a key role to play in regulating international relations, over and above the interests of individual states. Applied to Russia, this approach was based on the ideological assumption that as a liberal, democratic state, Russia shared interests with the West, making them natural partners. Cooperation with the West would demonstrate Russia's democratic credentials, showing Russia now to be a responsible partner which was concerned with protecting human rights and upholding international law.

Hence, Kozyrev identified Russia's first foreign policy priority to be

> entering as a great power in the family of the most advanced democratic states with market economies, so-called Western society. These are very much the natural allies of democratic Russia, as they are the sworn enemies of a totalitarian system, be it under red, red-brown, or simply brown banners.[3]

As a great power, Russia had a *duty* or *responsibility* to work with other great powers through international institutions such as the United Nations and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) to deal with threats to international stability and serious violations of human rights. Kozyrev argued that these international institutions had a key role to play in resolving such issues, and acknowledged that the international community might need to resort to coercion to achieve its goals.[4] There were also other, pragmatic, calculations in Russia's new

[2] For a concise overview of the evolution of Russian foreign policy since 1991, see A. Lynch, 'The Realism of Russia's Foreign Policy', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 53:1 (2001), pp. 7–31; a useful earlier article is H. Adomeit, 'Russia as a "Great Power" in World Affairs: Images and Reality', *International Affairs* (London), 71:1 (1995), pp. 35–68; for longer surveys, see N. Malcolm, A. Pravda, R. Allison, and M. Light, *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press/RIIA), 1996; C. Wallander (ed.), *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy after the Cold War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); A. Arbatov, K. Kaiser, and R. Legvold (eds.), *Russia and the West: The 21st Century Security Environment* (EastWest Institute, New York and London: M.E.Sharpe, 1999); M. Bowker, *Russian Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Aldershot: Darmouth, 1996); M. Webber, *The International Politics of Russia and the Successor States* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996); N. Petro, and A. Rubinstein, *Russian Foreign Policy: From Empire to Nation-State* (New York: Longman, 1997). For a clear survey of Russian policy to the Yugoslav conflicts in the 1990s, see M. Anderson, 'Russia and the Former Yugoslavia', ch. 8 in M. Webber (ed.), *Russia and Europe: Conflict or Cooperation?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).

[3] A. Kozyrev, 'Preobrazhenie ili kafkianskaia metamorfoza: Demokraticheskaia vneshniaia politika Rossii i ee prioritety', *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 20 August 1992.

[4] See A. Kozyrev, 'Russia and Human Rights', *Slavic Review*, 51:2 (1992), pp. 287–293.

Western-orientated foreign policy: the Russian reformers expected to receive substantial support in terms of aid and trade from the West if they demonstrated Russia's 'responsible' attitude, and a cooperative international environment would also provide the stability needed during the reform period. Overall, Kozyrev genuinely believed that the liberal internationalist tenets were both morally right and in Russia's best interests.

The Yugoslav conflicts presented an ideal opportunity for the new Russian leadership to display the changed nature of Russian policy. Resisting opposition pressure, Kozyrev declined to view the Balkans as an arena for superpower rivalry or for a 'clash of civilizations' where Russia should compete with the West for power and influence or support fellow Orthodox Slavs. Instead, he supported the claims of the secessionist republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia) to self-determination, viewing their struggle against old-guard federalists and nationalist proponents of a Greater Serbia through the prism of events in the Soviet Union the previous year (then, Russian President Yeltsin's leadership circle had struggled against the Soviet government and those seeking to maintain a communist Union – the *putschists* of August 1991 – and had opted for independence for Russia and radical change). Kozyrev shared also the predominant Western interpretation of events in Bosnia: that Serb expansionism and aggressive ethnic nationalism was directed against the legitimate government of a sovereign and independent state. The Yeltsin leadership, in contrast, had always advocated an inclusive, civic nationalism for the Russian Federation and respect for the sovereignty of the former Soviet republics.[5]

Kozyrev believed that Russia should cooperate with the other major powers – particularly the Western powers – in resolving the Yugoslav conflicts through the UNSC and the CSCE; that these institutions were responsible for resolving the conflicts and achieving a just peace as well as preventing massive violations of human rights. Russia should take an active role in formulating an international response:

> I am convinced . . . that Russia must not go back to a policy of obstruction, but must go forward – so that resolutions in the Security Council about measures relating to breaches of the peace and infringements of human rights are proposed not as they are now by three powers – the USA, Britain, and France – but by four great democratic powers.[6]

This was why Russia voted on 30 May 1992 in the UNSC for Resolution 757 imposing sanctions on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Nevertheless, Russia was unwilling to support military intervention even at the height of the 'liberal internationalist' phase in mid-1992. Kozyrev believed that conflicts should be resolved by peaceful means, that force should be only the very last resort. Similarly, Russia was also opposed to lifting the arms embargo on Bosnia. Kozyrev feared that such measures would exacerbate the conflict and increase tensions between the major powers. However erroneous, this belief was shared by his Western 'partners'.

By 1994, Russian policy towards the conflicts had changed. This was due to factors connected with the Yugoslav crisis but – more importantly – also to factors

[5] See especially ibid.
[6] Kozyrev, 'Preobrazhenie ili kafkianskaia metamorfoza'.

external to it. In broad terms, by 1994 policy reflected a more realist outlook in contrast to the early liberal internationalism. In other words, Russian policy no longer proceeded from the belief that Russia had shared common interests with Western powers because it was a liberal democracy; instead, it was built on the assumption that Russia had its own interests, defined independently of the West and regardless of its political/economic system. Those interests did not necessarily coincide with those of Western states; on the contrary, it was assumed that as a great power, Russia would have to compete with other great powers to protect its perceived interests and assert its power. In practice, this meant that Russia would now be more assertive in defending its perceived interests in the priority area, the former Soviet space. Outside that area, policymakers sought to demonstrate Russia's great-power status and to protect Russian economic and security interests, often distinguished from Western interests and assumed to be in rivalry with them. This did not mean that cooperation in areas where interests and/or outlook coincided was precluded; and this cooperation would still occur through international organisations of which Russia was a member. But it did mean that Russian policymakers would no longer assume that Russian and Western interests coincided automatically, and that they would make sure that the other powers recognised Russia's status.

Applied to Yugoslavia, the new approach can be summarised as an insistence on Russia's *right* (as opposed to duty) as a great power to be involved in mediation, thus protecting both its general prestige and its specific perceived interests in the Balkans. For example, Yeltsin's special envoy to former Yugoslavia, Vitalii Churkin, argued in a Russian newspaper interview that if an international peace-keeping force was deployed in Bosnia following a peace agreement, Russia must contribute troops: 'the question is about the need to confirm our role as a great state. If we want our voice to resound loudly in the Balkans, we simply cannot afford to shun this participation.'[7]

One significant factor in the shift was disillusion with the West. Many members of the elite felt that Russia had not received the benefits that were expected from its almost subservient relationship with the West; that Russia had not received the expected amount of aid, the West had not opened its markets to Russian goods, and in advising Russia on transition to a market economy, Western powers were actually making Russia weaker and aiming in reality to transform it into a source of raw materials rather than a developed industrial nation. Kozyrev never went that far, but he did feel that Western states and institutions had failed to treat Russia as an equal economic and political partner. Hence, he called for the closing of institutional gaps between Russia and the West: for example, the transformation of the G7 group of industrial nations into the G8. In diplomatic relations, too, the West seemed incapable of treating Russia as an equal: rather, it assumed Russian support for any policy but was not prepared to take into account Russian objections or advice.[8] The most important issue was NATO expansion which was now being considered despite Russian opposition.[9] Here, Kozyrev argued that recognition of Russia as an equal partner required institutional adjustments in

[7] A. Pushkov, 'Golos Rossii dolzhen zvuchat' na Balkanakh' [interview with Churkin], *Moskovskie novosti*, 21 March 1993.

[8] See A. Kozyrev, 'The Lagging Partnership', *Foreign Affairs*, 73:3, May/June 1994.

[9] See Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, 'Russia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization', ch. 3 in Webber, *Russia and Europe*.

political relations: rather than NATO expansion, the upgrading of the CSCE into a 'broader and more universal organization'.[10]

Domestic political factors also contributed to the shift. During 1992 there had been serious disputes over foreign policy which served partly as an arena for institutional competition (an opportunity for the Supreme Soviet to attack the President's administration) but was also the subject of genuine ideological differences. Opposition to the liberal internationalist approach had come not only from the 'red-brown coalition' of nationalists and communists – who espoused a revival of the Soviet Union, support for Soviet-era allies, and continued rivalry with the West – but also centrists who argued that the MFA had been acting against Russia's national interests, viewed in traditional realist terms of security and economic/political power. The primary accusation was that Russia had abandoned its interests in the 'near abroad' – the region of the former Soviet Union – whereas it should be acting as the leading regional power. But centrists argued also that Russia had not protected its interests further afield: while Kozyrev had been talking ideologically of strategic alliance, Western states had continued to maximise their power/influence at Russia's expense, taking advantage of Russian weakness and concessions to drive it from regions where it had traditional interests. The fact that NATO expansion into Eastern Europe was now on the agenda was proof of this. Instead, policymakers should recognise that Russia's interests were *not* always the same as those of the West and that they needed to protect those interests more actively, particularly in areas of traditional Russian influence.

Kozyrev always pointedly refused to concede to the red-brown forces in Moscow, often attacking them in speeches and interviews. But the second group were more congenial to Yeltsin's domestic agenda, and he needed their support, particularly as relations with the Supreme Soviet/Congress of People's Deputies soured during 1993. And even the first group continued to be a political threat, as shown in the December 1993 elections when extreme nationalist and communist parties gained two-fifths of the seats in the State Duma. While Kozyrev continued to declare that he would not adopt their agenda, policy did become more explicitly realist after these elections.

The shift in Kozyrev's rhetoric resulted also from developments in the foreign policymaking process. On several occasions, Yeltsin attacked Kozyrev for failing to protect Russian interests, and from mid-1992 himself became more involved in foreign policy issues. It has been argued also that the Defence Ministry increased its influence after Yeltsin relied on its loyalty to defeat the parliament in October 1993. In addition, the intelligence apparatus became more influential. These institutions were more likely to promote a realist agenda than Kozyrev's MFA. Individuals such as Evgenii Primakov (then the director of the Foreign Intelligence Service, SVR) and Sergei Filatov (the head of the presidential staff) exerted considerable influence on Yeltsin to adopt an assertive great-power foreign policy. The MFA's primacy in foreign policymaking was also challenged by the Russian Security Council which brought together representatives of the key ministries and services involved in foreign and defence affairs.

Russia's Yugoslav policy was undoubtedly affected by such domestic considerations and developments. The vote for sanctions against the FRY had provoked

[10] Kozyrev, 'The Lagging Partnership', p. 65.

outcry in the Supreme Soviet (from centrists and the red-brown alliance) and in the press. From August 1992, the MFA placed more emphasis on protecting Russian interests, at least in rhetoric, and leading parliamentarians were now consulted more regularly on foreign policy issues including Bosnia, while ministers often attended relevant parliamentary debates. Yeltsin was increasingly unwilling to support any international action in Bosnia that would be unpopular in Russia. This did not mean that he had yielded to opposition pressure to adopt a pro-Serb policy; but he encouraged Russian assertiveness in international diplomacy to the conflicts and was not prepared to endorse military action that would be perceived in Russia as anti-Serb and would be used by the nationalist opposition to whip up anti-Western hysteria.

Change in Bosnian policy resulted also from developments in the wider context of Russian-Western relations, and developments in Bosnia itself. After the Vance-Owen Peace Plan (VOPP) had been rejected by the Bosnian Serbs in May 1993, and Russia's suggestion of 'progressive implementation' of the plan had been snubbed by the Americans, international policy was centred on the 'safe areas' concept.[11] The UNSC (including Russia) had voted for resolutions establishing six 'safe areas' in which the civilian population would be protected from attack: Srebrenica, Sarajevo, Tuzla, Žepa, Goražde, and Bihać. One important consequence of the collapse of the VOPP and the establishment of the 'safe areas' was the increasing prominence of the issue of the use of force by the international community. The relevant UNSC resolutions did not unambiguously define the circumstances in which force could be used, but they certainly authorised the provision of close air support to provide air cover for the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the 'safe areas', and also probably the use of strategic air strikes to deter an attack on the 'safe areas'. This certainly appears to have been the Russian view at the time; for example, the Russian representative on the UN Security Council, Iulii Vorontsov, stated immediately after sponsoring and voting on 4 June 1993 for Resolution 836 (which strengthened the 'safe areas'):

> The Russian delegation is firmly convinced that the implementation of this resolution will be an important practical step by the world community genuinely to curb the violence and to stop the shooting on the long-suffering land of the Bosnians. Henceforth, any attempted military attacks, shooting and shelling of safe areas, any armed incursions into those areas, and any hindrance to the delivery of humanitarian assistance will be stopped by using all necessary measures, including the use of armed force. This will be an important factor for stabilizing the situation in these areas and for lessening the suffering of the civilian population.[12]

By early the following year, the Russians were much more reluctant to countenance the use of force by the international community. Despite some inconsistencies

[11] For details of international diplomacy and the peace plans for Bosnia, see J. Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War* (London: Hurst, 1997); D. Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (London: Indigo, 1996); L. Silber and A. Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia*, revised edn. (London: Penguin/BBC, 1996); and the documentary *The Death of Yugoslavia*, directed and produced by Angus MacQueen and Paul Mitchell, Brian Lapping Associates/BBC, 1995/6. For a 'Slavophile' (i.e. pro-Serb) Russian perspective, see E. Gus'kova, *Uregulirovanie na Balkanakh: ot Brioni do Deitona (mirnye plany 1991–1995 gg.)* (Moscow: Institut nauchnoi informatsii po obshchestvennym naukam, 1998).

[12] United Nations Security Council, *Provisional Verbatim Record of the Three Thousand Two Hundred and Twenty-Eighth Meeting*, S/PV.3228 (4 June 1993), p. 46.

over time and between various members of the foreign policy establishment, the Russian position was fairly well defined by 1994. Firstly, force could not be used to impose a settlement. For example, in August 1993, Kozyrev personally contacted the Yugoslav and American leaderships to convey 'Moscow's firm position in favour of a swift political settlement to the Yugoslav crisis and against gambling on strong-arm methods of solving it'.[13] Secondly, the threat and use of force must be impartial. Russian diplomats began to accuse Western diplomats of being one-sided (anti-Serb) while presenting themselves as possessing a balanced policy. They argued that threats to use force were directed only against the Serb side.[14] This was in fact hardly surprising since it was the Serb side that was besieging the 'safe areas'; but the Russians also pointed out that the 'safe areas' were increasingly being used by the government forces to launch attacks and the international community was failing to respond. Russia therefore proposed strengthening the areas by carrying out full demilitarisation.[15]

Thirdly, force could be used only as legitimised by existing UNSC resolutions. The Russians now interpreted these resolutions as allowing force only in the event of an attack on a convoy delivering humanitarian aid, a violation of the no-fly zone, or 'direct obstruction of the UN peace-keeping forces in carrying out their mandate' for the maintenance of the safe areas. And a special procedure was required for force then to be used, as Sergei Lavrov told the Duma:

> In all the enumerated decisions the question is only about a threat of the use of force against a violator. Its actual use requires a special additional procedure – consultations between the secretary general and the members of the Security Council. Our position in the course of such consultations, if they begin, will be negative.[16]

This would seem to indicate a predetermined rejection of the use of air strikes in any circumstances. Whether this was true or not (Lavrov's comments were designed for his specific audience), Russia demanded consultation (and implicitly a right of veto) on any use of force.

There was one important additional factor entering Russian calculations: the role of NATO in any military action in Bosnia. Although Russia had allowed NATO to police the no-fly zone, it was reluctant to allow it a wider role. The Russians believed that NATO was looking for excuses to demonstrate its continued relevance after the Cold War. It was seeking to flex its muscles as part of its newly conceived mission to undertake peace-keeping/peace-making activities 'out of area'. And the more NATO became involved in former Yugoslavia and dominated the peace-keeping programme, then the more it would appear as *de facto* NATO expansion into the former communist world and an area of traditional Russian interests. Hence, the issue of

[13] *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, SU/1764 i, 11 August 1993.

[14] For example, comments by Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, 'Informatsiia zamestitelia ministra inostrannykh del Rossiiskoi Federatsii Lavrova S. V. o krizisnoi situatsii na territorii byvshei Iugoslavii' (21 January 1994), in Federal'noe Sobranie – parlament Rossiiskoi Federatsii. *Gosudarstvennaia Duma: Stenogramma zasedanii, Vesenniaia sessiia, Tom 1, 11–21 ianvaria 1994 goda.* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Respublika", 1994), p. 655.

[15] 'Rossiia i problema iugoslavskogo uregulirovaniia: iz brifinga spetsial'nogo predstavitelia Prezidenta RF, zamestitelia ministra inostrannykh del RF V. I. Churkina', *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, nos. 3–4, February 1994, p. 38.

[16] *Gosudarstvennaia Duma: Stenogramma zasedanii* (1994), p. 654.

Bosnia – and particularly the use of force and the peace-keeping agenda – became increasingly entangled in the wider issue of NATO expansion and Russia's and NATO's positions in the post-Cold War European security system.

This meant that both Russian and NATO governments perceived their wider interests to be at stake in Bosnia. Western governments feared that NATO's credibility was being brought into question, while NATO did indeed seek to prove its relevance in the post-Cold War world. For example, Clinton told the NATO summit in Brussels in January 1994: 'What is at stake is not only the safety of the people in Sarajevo and any possibility of bringing this terrible conflict to an end, but the credibility of the Alliance itself'.[17] And it was not only the Americans. In fact, at this summit, European states were more concerned than the US with addressing the issue of Bosnia, particularly after the collapse of the Geneva negotiations on Bosnia in December 1993. Despite US reluctance, they succeeded in including in the NATO *communiqué* a reaffirmation of their readiness to carry out air strikes (first declared in August 1993) 'in order to prevent the strangulation of Sarajevo, the safe areas and other threatened areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina'.[18] French policymakers in particular believed that the credibility of the United Nations and NATO were at stake; the French President Jacques Chirac argued that 'Western democracies are being ridiculed' and that the war in Bosnia was slowly becoming 'not just a war of conscience but a war of self-interest too'.[19] Western leaders were coming round to the view that the international community must pursue 'diplomacy backed by a willingness to use force'.[20]

It was clear that NATO was prepared to undertake more vigorous action if a crisis situation developed, while Russia was becoming more firmly opposed to any such action. If NATO credibility made action over Bosnia a perceived national interest for Western powers, then it made NATO *inaction* a perceived national interest for Russia. After all, if NATO was intent on expansion into Eastern Europe and the Baltic, and sought a peace-keeping/peace-making role that might bring it into other parts of the former Soviet Union, then Russian diplomats wanted it to fail at the first attempt. From a realist perspective, NATO action in Bosnia might result in Russia being pushed aside and its great-power aspirations being thwarted, such that its presence in a region of traditional Russian interests would be threatened. Thus, the overall security environment and the specifics of the Yugoslav conflict combined to encourage Russian policymakers to consider the Yugoslav conflict to have strategic significance, and the issue of the use of force was central.

The Sarajevo crisis

On 5 February 1994, a mortar shell was fired into the Markale market-place in Sarajevo, killing 68 people and wounding a further 200. This was clearly an event

[17] D. Leurdijk, *The United Nations and NATO in Former Yugoslavia, 1991–1996: Limits to Diplomacy and Force* (The Hague: Netherlands Atlantic Commission/Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', 1996), p. 40; see also E. Sloan, *Bosnia and the New Collective Security* (Westport and London: Praeger, 1998), p. 57.
[18] Leurdijk, *The United Nations and NATO*, p. 40.
[19] Sloan, *Bosnia and the New Collective Security*, pp. 56–7.
[20] US Ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright, quoted ibid., p. 57.

that in the existing climate would push NATO into action. On 6 February, Boutros-Ghali wrote to the NATO Secretary-General, Manfred Wörner, asking the North Atlantic Council (NAC) to authorise its military command to launch air strikes on request from the UN.[21]

The Russian MFA expressed outrage at the market-place massacre, stating that 'those guilty of this atrocity, whoever they are, must be severely punished', and urging that a 'swift and objective investigation' be carried out to determine the guilty party.[22] Nevertheless, Kozyrev warned against turning the incident into a repeat of Sarajevo in 1914, and urged the world community to be guided by a 'cold, political mind, and not by emotions'.[23] Russian diplomats questioned the decision-making process for the use of force. As the NAC met to discuss its response to the massacre and Boutros-Ghali's request, one senior Russian diplomat stated: 'We do not accept Boutros-Ghali's arguments, and we do not believe that this case falls under previous Security Council resolutions. Consultations with the members of the Security Council are necessary.' At the very least, the international community should take no steps until responsibility for the massacre had been proven.[24]

Initial UNPROFOR investigations of the incident reached contradictory conclusions.[25] The final investigation by a team of UNPROFOR artillery specialists, including a Russian lieutenant-colonel, concluded that the shell could have come from anywhere in a cone of 2.5 square kilometres north to north-east of the market-place overlapping each side of the confrontation line by 2,000 metres. Although this conclusion might have seemed unsatisfactory, it was politically welcome because it enabled action to be taken without appearing to be partial.[26] As has often been pointed out, shelling incidents occurred daily, perpetrated by both sides (although predominantly by Serb forces besieging the city).[27] In Russia, however, it was assumed both that actual air strikes by NATO would be directed only against the Serb side and also that the 'ultimatum' itself was addressed only to the Serb side.[28] Certainly, NATO was unwilling to launch air strikes against government forces' positions, but it deliberately directed the declaration concerning demilitarisation of Sarajevo to both sides.[29] The declaration stated that the North Atlantic Council:

(6) condemns the continuing of the siege of Sarajevo, and with a view to ending it calls for the withdrawal, or regrouping and placing under UNPROFOR control within ten days,

[21] F. Watson, *Bosnia, the UN and the NATO Ultimatum*. House of Commons Library Research Paper no. 94/33 (1994), p. 1.
[22] *SWB*, SU/1916 B/12, 8 February 1994.
[23] *SWB*, SU/1917 B/8, 9 February 1994.
[24] M. Iusin, 'Posle tragedii v Saraevo NATO skloniaetsia k reshitel'nym deistviiam protiv serbov. Moskva prizyvaet k sderzhannosti', *Izvestiia*, 8 February 1994.
[25] For a detailed account, see D. Binder, 'Anatomy of a Massacre', *Foreign Policy*, no. 97 (Winter 1994–95), pp. 70–78.
[26] For example, Binder suggests that UNPROFOR commanders were 'greatly relieved'; ibid., p. 77.
[27] See, for example, comments by the Czech representative to the UNSC, quoted in Leurdijk, *The United Nations and NATO*, p. 41; also, comments by David Owen in 'A Peace Without Honour', *Panorama,* 30 October 1995, directed by Jane Corbin, BBC1.
[28] See, for instance, S. Sidorov, 'Vzryv v Saraevo – provokatsiia musul'manskikh ekstremistov', *Krasnaia zvezda*, 10 February 1994.
[29] Nor did they call it an 'ultimatum', although this was the first time that the demand for withdrawal of weaponry had been tied to a specific deadline, and the first time that NATO had committed itself to using force according to a clearly defined set of criteria; Watson, *Bosnia, the UN and the NATO Ultimatum*, p. 3.

of heavy weapons (including tanks, artillery pieces, mortars, multiple rocket launchers, missiles and anti-aircraft weapons) of the Bosnian Serb forces located in an area within 20 kilometres of the centre of Sarajevo, and excluding an area within two kilometres of the centre of Pale.

(7) calls upon the Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, within the same period, to place the heavy weapons in its possession within the Sarajevo exclusion zone described above under UNPROFOR control, and to refrain from attacks launched from within the current confrontation lines in the city.

(10) decides that, ten days from 2400 GMT February 10, 1994, heavy weapons of any of the parties found within the Sarajevo exclusion zone, unless controlled by UNPROFOR, will, along with their direct and essential military support facilities, be subject to NATO air strikes which will be conducted in close co-ordination with the UN Secretary General and will be consistent with the North Atlantic Council's decisions of 2nd and 9th August, 1993.

(11) accepts, effective today, the request of the UN Secretary General of 6th February and accordingly authorizes the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces Southern Europe to launch air strikes, at the request of the United Nations, against artillery or mortar positions in or around Sarajevo (including any outside the exclusion zone) which are determined by UNPROFOR to be responsible for attacks against civilian targets in that city.[30]

Russian diplomats broadly supported the aims of the declaration; after all, they had been calling for full demilitarisation of the 'safe areas' since they had been established, and now they made a point of regretting the fact that the UNSC had failed to react to a Russian initiative two weeks previously to strengthen (demilitarise) the 'safe areas', as this might have prevented the market-place massacre. Their criticism concentrated instead on means used to achieve the aims, and also the process by which a decision had been reached.[31] One of the primary objections was the fact that Russia had been sidelined in taking the decision. For example, Yeltsin told the visiting British Prime Minister, John Major, on 15 February: 'We will not allow this problem to be resolved without Russia's participation. We will work towards having this conflict resolved at the negotiating table.'[32]

According to Russian diplomats, it was the United Nations – in particular, the Security Council – that should deal with these issues, not NATO. This was expressed plainly by Churkin during a one-day visit to Sarajevo on 15 February, when he was asked of his views on possible air strikes:

> Regardless of what they are telling us, I believe that NATO's decision goes beyond what UN Security Council resolutions stipulate. We should have taken it to the UN Security Council and then we would have had total unanimity in the international community's stance. This was feasible, since basically we are talking about the same views. We would have the UN Security Council's authority behind us. I believe that this method would have been far better.[33]

[30] Reproduced on D. Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, CD-ROM, Academic Edition, 'the electric company', 1995.

[31] See, for example, 'Zaiavlenie NATO po bosniiskomu krizisu' [briefing by Grigorii Karasin, 10 February 1994], *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, no. 5–6, March 1994, pp. 64–5.

[32] V. Kononenko, 'V Moskve Meidzhoru prishlos' opravdyvat'sia za neterpenie Zapada v bosniiskom konflikte', *Izvestiia*, 16 February 1994.

[33] *SWB*, SU/1924 B/11–12, 17 February 1994; see also comments by Kozyrev, *SWB*, SU/1921 B/1–2, 14 February 1994.

This assertion that there would be unanimity is misleading, however. The views were not the same, at least concerning the means required to achieve the ends. Russia rejected any declaration of an 'ultimatum' backed by the threat of force. For example, Vorontsov told the Security Council:

> In the present circumstances, we believe that it is extremely important to concentrate our efforts on preventing further bloodshed, to refrain from any action that might fan the flames of war, and, at last, make the breakthrough to a settlement to the conflict, guided first and foremost by the logic of peace.[34]

The Russian view was that the threat of force undermined the peace process for Sarajevo and for Bosnia as a whole; as a result of the tendency of NATO countries to interpret the NAC declaration as an ultimatum to the Serbs, the Bosnian government side would be encouraged to continue fighting.[35]

Defusion of the crisis

On 14 February 1994, UNPROFOR command ordered the Russian battalion (RUSSBAT) in Sector East (Croatia) to send 400 troops to Bosnia; this caused a 'storm of indignation' in the MFA and the Defence Ministry, and the commander of RUSSBAT received a categorical directive not to implement any orders from the UN command to redeploy his forces. Churkin remarked pointedly on 16 February that as long as the West took decisions on Bosnia without Russian participation, there could be absolutely no question of using the Russian army on the territory of the conflict.[36] The following day, Churkin delivered Slobodan Milošević (President of Serbia) and Radovan Karadžić (leader of the Bosnian Serbs) a proposal by Yeltsin which they accepted.[37] Thus, Karadžić gave assurances that the Bosnian Serbs would withdraw their heavy weapons to positions twenty kilometres from Sarajevo within the time limit set in the NAC statement, while 400 Russian peace-keepers would be transferred to Sarajevo from Sector East in Croatia.[38] Despite some concern over interpretation of the NATO demand that weapons be put under UN 'control' if not withdrawn,[39] this agreement allowed the crisis to be resolved without resort to air strikes. The daily shelling of Sarajevo ceased.

[34] United Nations Security Council, *Provisional Verbatim Record of the Three Thousand Three Hundred and Thirty-Sixth Meeting*, S/PV.3336, 14 February 1994, p. 42.

[35] See, for example, comments by First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Anatolii Adamishin, in V. Abarinov, 'Moskva namerena dobivat'sia sozyva Soveta Bezopasnosti', *Segodnia*, 11 February 1994.

[36] P. Fel'gengauer, 'Komandovanie OON popytalos' poslat' rossiiskie "golubye kaski" v Bosniiu', *Segodnia*, 16 February 1994.

[37] *SWB*, SU/1926 B/7, 19 February 1994.

[38] S. Sidorov, 'Pozitsiia Rossii iasna: ne dopustit' aviaudarov NATO po bosniiskim serbam', *Krasnaia zvezda*, 19 February 1994. Yeltsin asked and received permission from the UN Secretary-General and the UNPROFOR commander for this redeployment; *SWB*, SU/1926 B/7, 19 February 1994. Consequently, it is not strictly comparable to Russia's Priština gambit of June 1999 when Russia moved 200 of its peace-keepers from Bosnia to Kosovo without consulting the commander of the Kosovo peace-keeping operation.

[39] Leurdijk, *The United Nations and NATO*, pp. 43–4.

Interpretations of the crisis

As the crisis abated, conflicting interpretations of its resolution were expressed in Western capitals and in Moscow. Western leaders recognised the positive role played by Russia in securing the agreement of the Bosnian Serbs; nevertheless, they argued that it was the NATO threat to use force that had been decisive. For instance, Manfred Wörner, asserted: 'We have shown that diplomacy can succeed where it is backed by credible actions'.[40]

Russian diplomats argued that Russia had gained agreement by respecting and trusting the Serbs. Churkin explained the success of the Russian proposal in contrast to the NATO 'ultimatum' as follows:

> Firstly, it mentioned a request from Russia. That … phrase, 'a request from Russia', had a powerful psychological effect . . .
>
> Secondly, the letter was signed by the Russian president.
>
> And, thirdly, it is extremely significant . . . that that request was backed by the undertaking by Russia, to deploy its own contingent, within the framework of the UN's peace-keeping operation, in Sarajevo.[41]

This opinion echoed Yeltsin's view that, 'unlike the NATO bloc, which gave the Serbs an ultimatum, Russia had asked the Serbs to withdraw their heavy weapons… This was in psychological terms a subtly calculated move that worked.'[42]

While Western leaders believed that the threat of force had succeeded and might be used to achieve agreement in other areas, Russian diplomats drew the opposite conclusion that the threat of force had jeopardised negotiations and must under no circumstances be used again. For instance, on 25 February the President's press secretary issued a statement sharply critical of NATO countries for, among other reasons, suggesting that 'a NATO ultimatum must be used to "impose order" at other points of the conflict' and for attempting to obscure Russia's role 'in initiating a diplomatic resolution of the conflict':

> one cannot help but be alarmed by the price in human lives, the degree of risk, that the NATO command is prepared to accept in order to maintain its status . . .
>
> Russia rejects the language of military ultimata and welcomes the language of diplomacy… The Russian President is convinced that the arguments of peace in Europe are more compelling than the arguments of war, and he invites the leaders of Europe and the US to end the Bosnian conflict at the negotiating table.[43]

But would the Russian initiative have worked without the coercive threat of air strikes? The Russian view was that the threat of force could have damaged diplomatic efforts towards achieving demilitarisation of Sarajevo that were *already* well advanced. UN and EU negotiators had been working on a 'Sarajevo First' initiative for some months, proposing to put Sarajevo under UN administration for two years and to establish complete demilitarisation.[44] A few hours before the NAC decision of 9 February, an oral agreement had been brokered for a complete cease-fire to

[40] Ibid., pp. 44–5.
[41] *SWB*, SU/1935 B/9–10, 2 March 1994.
[42] *SWB*, SU/1931 B/9, 25 February 1994.
[43] 'Iazyk diktata – nepriemlem', *Pravda*, 25 February 1994.
[44] Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, chs 6 and 7.

commence on 10 February, the withdrawal of all weapons and artillery, and the positioning of UNPROFOR troops at sensitive and key positions. This agreement was due to be put in writing the following day.

In their detailed analysis of the establishment of the heavy weapons exclusion zone of Sarajevo,[45] Barbara Ekwall-Uebelhart and Andrei Raevsky highlight the importance of this local cease-fire agreement of 9 February:

> At that time, already on 9 February, even *before* the North Atlantic Council decision, there was a willingness on the side of the Bosnian Serbs to remove heavy artillery from the Sarajevo area. There was no fundamental difference in the contents of this local agreement compared with the NATO ultimatum.[46]

Ekwall-Uebelhart and Raevsky also concur with the Russian view that Russia's initiative contributed to the success of the initiative by allowing the Bosnian Serbs to fulfil the terms of the agreement and the NAC statement without appearing to lose face. Nevertheless, they argue that the threat of force was an important element in the equation:

> it is important to stress that the Bosnian Serbs were acting according to the agreement reached between them and the Bosnian Muslims, and not in response to the NATO decision when they withdrew their heavy weapons. Undoubtedly, however, the threat of air strikes helped to ensure the parties' compliance to the creation of the weapons exclusion zone.[47]

It was, of course, a risky strategy. Although the NAC declaration was directed at both sides, air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs would have compromised UNPROFOR's impartiality, with implications for the peace-keepers on the ground and the delivery of humanitarian aid, which relied on this impartiality.[48] Furthermore, the threat of air strikes might be a useful tool of coercion, but the actual implementation of the threat would not necessarily promote the aim of demilitarisation.[49] Nevertheless, it may have been crucial in getting this agreement to stick where so many others had failed. Ekwall-Uebelhart and Raevsky conclude that 'most importantly, the disarmament operation was based upon an agreement which met the parties' mutual interests and was backed by the credible use of force'.[50]

If a credible threat of force was a necessary if not sufficient condition for creating the exclusion zone, and bearing in mind Churkin's view that there would have been 'total unanimity' if the UNSC had discussed responses to the Sarajevo market massacre, would Russia have supported the use of a credible threat of force if the decision had been adopted through the United Nations Security Council instead of the NAC? This was the opinion of some commentators, who suggest that Russia's main objection was that it was not informed of the decision.[51] However, Russian diplomats gave every indication even before the 'ultimatum' that they would not

[45] B. Ekwall-Uebelhart and A. Raevsky, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Disarmament and Conflict Resolution Project, UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), New York and Geneva: UN, 1996, ch. 6.
[46] Ibid., p. 141.
[47] Ibid., p. 143.
[48] Ibid., p. 148.
[49] Ibid., p. 144.
[50] Ibid., p. 149.
[51] V. Abarinov, 'Russia: Bosnia Policy Shifts', *War Report* (May 1994), pp. 21–2.

countenance 'punitive' strikes or strikes aimed at coercing the sides to accept a settlement; at most, they would allow air strikes for the protection of UNPROFOR personnel. Hence, their position was that Russia should have been consulted about the NATO decision; but had Russia been consulted, they would have refused to support the declaration.

Russian objections derived partly from residual liberal opposition to the use of force in international diplomacy, and especially from resistance to the dominant role that NATO would play in such military action. Domestic considerations also meant that Russian diplomats would never vote in the UNSC for a clear statement of intent to use force that might lead to bombing of the Bosnian Serbs. This would be the case even if, like the NATO statement, the decision was neutral, that is if impartial conditions were set for all sides to meet. Unlike in May 1992, when Russia voted for sanctions and the MFA strongly defended the decision, the administration lacked the will to expose itself to the accusations and outrage that would follow such a vote. For example, when David Owen (the EU lead negotiator) explained to Churkin after the 'ultimatum' that air power was being used 'in an impartial way to protect UN personnel and enforce the UN's role', the latter argued, according to Owen, that air strikes would 'damage Yeltsin' and there would be 'Russian volunteers and a great deal of emotion'.[52]

Implications of the crisis

The Sarajevo initiative was interpreted within the Russian elite and press as a turning point when Russia had demonstrated its status as a great power on the European and the world stage. Churkin claimed that the transitional period of foreign policy was over, that the line was drawn under it in Bosnia. Russia was recovering its status as a great power, and the Sarajevo initiative heralded a 'qualitatively new stage when we are not on the sidelines'.[53] In his speech to the Federal Assembly on 24 February, Yeltsin hoped that the lessons would be applied to other areas of foreign policy:

> Up to now, our foreign policy has been lacking in initiative and creativity. Russia's brilliant peace-keeping initiative in the Bosnian conflict is, unfortunately, only an exception so far… We are fond of repeating that [Russia] is a great country. And that is indeed the case. So then, in our foreign-policy thinking let us always meet this high standard.[54]

There were three aspects to the concept of Russian great-power interests in relation to the Yugoslav conflict that were revealed by Russian reactions to the Sarajevo crisis. Firstly, Russia had specific interests in the Balkans. This meant that the Yugoslav crisis could not be resolved without Russian participation. Hence, Kozyrev wrote:

[52] D. Owen, 'Bosnia: NATO 10–Day Immovable Deadline', 10 February 1994, on *Balkan Odyssey* (CD-ROM).

[53] D. Molchanovyi, 'Sostoialsia li proryv rossiiskoi diplomatii?' [interview with Churkin], *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 16 March 1994; L. Cohen, 'Russia and the Balkans: Pan-Slavism, Partnership, and Power', *International Journal*, 49:4 (Autumn 1994), pp. 814–45 (at 841).

[54] 'Strategicheskaia tsel' – sozdat' protsvetaiushchuiu stranu. Vystuplenie Prezidenta Rossii v Federal'nom Sobranii', *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 25 February 1994.

NATO's threat to bomb Bosnian Serb positions if the siege was not lifted by a certain date was made without Russian participation. It immediately became apparent that Russia could not and should not be excluded from the common efforts to regulate the conflict in the Balkans, a region where Russia has long term interests and influence.[55]

Nevertheless, it was still not clear what those direct long-term interests were, although there were hints that they resided in links with traditional allies. For example, Yeltsin's press secretary, Viacheslav Kostikov, claimed that the Sarajevo initiative showed to a domestic audience that Yeltsin was unarguably the leader of Russia and the protector of its national interests: 'Russians [*rossiiane*] can be fully confident that their national interests and the interests of Russia's traditional allies will be reliably defended'.[56]

The second aspect was perhaps more coherent. Russia was a major *European* power. The Yugoslav conflicts were occurring within this region. As Churkin put it: 'we are not only a world power but also a European country and naturally it is in our interests that there should be peace in Europe'.[57] International diplomacy towards the conflicts was also shaping the evolving European security structure, with implications for the position of Russia, NATO, and the CSCE within it.

Thirdly, Russia would use the Yugoslav conflict to demonstrate Russia's status as a great *world* power. The point was that no *global* problem could be solved without Russia. For example, Sergei Filatov, called the initiative a 'major victory of Russian diplomacy' which clearly showed that 'the adoption without Russia of major decisions on the security of the world community does not work'.[58] And Kostikov argued that Russia had won a vital battle for its global status, and called it a 'major Russian diplomatic victory not only on the European stage but on the world stage as well'.[59] In a similar vein, Churkin stated:

the world community is interested in our participation, because a wide base is needed for the settlement of a crisis that is, in essence, global from the point of view of its political ramifications. And a wide base is impossible without Russia.[60]

As a global power, Russia should have a role in conflict resolution throughout the world. Russian policymakers and commentators used the Sarajevo crisis to prove that Russia must be involved in the handling of other major crises, that this was its right as a great power. As Kostikov put it, 'President Yeltsin believes that Russia should and will participate in the resolution of all major international problems. It will not allow itself to be discriminated against.'[61] One immediate example was renewed activity by Russian diplomats in the Middle East peace process, culminating in the visit by Kozyrev to the region in March 1994. Kozyrev insisted that Russian participation was essential for the success of the Arab-Israeli peace process.[62]

[55] A. Kozyrev, 'The Lagging Partnership', pp. 65–6.
[56] A. Burmistenko, 'Sil'nyi khod prezidenta' [interview with Kostikov], *Trud*, 22 February 1994.
[57] *SWB*, SU/1940 B/6, 8 March 1994.
[58] *SWB*, SU/1929 B/3, 23 February 1994.
[59] Burmistenko, 'Sil'nyi khod prezidenta'.
[60] 'Iz brifinga spetsial'nogo predstavitelia Prezidenta RF, zamestitelia ministra inostrannykh del RF V. I. Churkina' (24 March 1994), *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, no. 7–8 (April 1994), p. 27.
[61] 'Iazyk diktata – nepriemlem', *Pravda*, 25 February 1994.
[62] *SWB*, SU/1937 B/14–15, 4 March 1994.

While Sarajevo was taken as a demonstration that Russia was not prepared to be sidelined and would act to protect its interests, this did not mean that the government considered Russian and Western interests in former Yugoslavia to be irreconcilable. In fact, it was not prepared to adopt the kind of openly pro-Serb and anti-Western policy that some opposition politicians and press demanded. Policymakers did not want the development of a situation in which the great powers supported their various 'proxies' in the conflict. And it was still hoped that Russia could cooperate with the West as partners. Kozyrev claimed in relation to the Sarajevo crisis:

> Ultimately the advantages of partnership were illustrated when Russia and the West co-ordinated their efforts to persuade the warring parties to make peace. But the initial lack of consultation and co-ordination meant that first both sides had to run the risk of returning to the old benefactor-client relationship that had played such a pernicious role in the regional conflicts of the Cold War era.[63]

Hence, although Russia still sought 'partnership' with the West, it had to be an *equal* partnership based on real cooperation, rather than a *diktat* in which Russia was merely the junior partner:

> The majority of Russian political forces wants a strong, independent and prosperous Russia. From this fundamental fact it follows that the only policy with any chance of success is one that recognizes the equal rights and mutual benefit of partnership for both Russia and the West, as well as the status and significance of Russia as a world power.

Kozyrev applied this specifically to the Bosnia conflict:

> If a partnership is built on mutual trust, then it is natural to recognize other rules as well: the need not only to inform one another of decisions made, but also to agree on approaches beforehand. It would be hard to accept an interpretation of partnership in which one side demands that the other co-ordinate its every step with it while the former retains complete freedom for itself. Partners must have mutual respect for each other's interests and concerns.
>
> This is a key lesson from the decision-making process that led to the lifting of the siege in Sarajevo in February.[64]

In order to develop such a partnership, decisions had to be taken not by NATO, but by institutions in which Russia played a leading role. These institutions should be strengthened or created in order to reduce NATO's ability to act independently. Hence, the crisis was placed in the context of the evolving European security architecture, and Russia's and NATO's roles within it. On the one hand, Russia pushed for the CSCE to be transformed into the leading European institution with the role of coordinator of the efforts of NATO, the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Western European Union, and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in the areas of strengthening security and stability, peace-keeping, and protecting the rights of national minorities in Europe.[65] Russia would of course play a leading part, as permanent member of a newly-formed 'security council'. At the same time, Russian policymakers continued to stress the importance of the United

[63] Kozyrev, 'The Lagging Partnership', p. 66.
[64] Ibid., pp. 65–6.
[65] I. Grudinina, 'Rossiia predlagaet svoi variant kontseptsii evropeiskoi bezopasnosti', *Segodnia*, 25 February 1994.

Nations Security Council. According to Yeltsin, 'attempts by a number of leaders to keep Russia out of addressing issues of international security are discrimination against Russia, which should and will take part in all major international events as a member of the Security Council'.[66] As well as using the UNSC, Yeltsin proposed that the leaders of Russia, the USA, Britain, France, and Germany 'sign a document which would be of historic importance and would put an end to the bloodshed in Yugoslavia'.[67]

The last proposal evolved into the Contact Group on former Yugoslavia which was created in late April 1994 and consisted precisely of those five countries (the major European powers plus the United States).[68] This provided a forum for great power cooperation which would prevent differences between the powers from evolving into serious international conflict. It was therefore a response to the Sarajevo crisis and was welcomed by Russia, not least because Russia would therefore be accorded recognition of its importance. Western powers, while insisting on the importance of the NATO declaration in establishing the Sarajevo exclusion zone, recognised the dangers of excluding Russia from decision-making and agreed that closer great power cooperation was desirable. For Russian policymakers, participation in the Contact Group was not merely a reflection of Russia's status, but also enabled them to avert any actions that they deemed to be against Russia's interests or that might be considered anti-Serb and that would be attacked by domestic political forces.

Conclusions

In February 1994, Western leaders decided that Western and NATO credibility was at stake in Bosnia and that they had to act. They believed that the use of a credible threat of force had achieved their objectives. Nevertheless, they were wary of alienating Russia. For the Clinton administration, the success of reform in Russia remained a policy priority, and they were unwilling to risk it for the sake of the 'Balkans quagmire'. To a certain extent, then, Western Balkan policy was passed through a Russian filter (although this was balanced by the credibility question). Yeltsin and his colleagues played on this, warning of the implications that NATO action in Bosnia would have for the position of the Russian 'reformers' at home.

This meant that Western policymakers faced a difficult dilemma that was brought into the open by the Sarajevo crisis: ignore Russian objections and act in Bosnia to achieve peace or to protect the 'safe areas' and thereby create a crisis with Russia, or restrict their efforts to traditional diplomacy with Russian support but with little prospect of success. The latter option was maintained until summer 1995. Western inaction was also, of course, as much the result of a lack of political will to act in Bosnia, and disunity among the Western states themselves, as of a fear of alienating Russia (although this contributed to the lack of will). The potential impact on relations with Russia of action in Bosnia served as an excuse for inaction, and as a

[66] *SWB*, SU/1931 B/9, 25 February 1994.
[67] *SWB*, SU/1930 B/4–5, 24 February 1994.
[68] Italy joined later, in 1996.

mask to conceal serious disagreements among the Western powers over how to proceed. The result, however, was a policy of the 'lowest common denominator', since the major powers, through the Contact Group, avoided any decisions over which consensus could not be reached. For all of the powers, the perceived interests in maintaining great power unity and containing the crisis outweighed the risks of a more interventionist stance.[69]

The Sarajevo crisis demonstrated the ascendancy of a realist outlook in Russian foreign policy. The Yugoslav conflicts were viewed in terms of Russia's great-power interests, but this was not on the nineteenth-century model of support for allies in the region and rivalry with other powers for domination of the region. Instead, Russian policymakers attempted to use the conflicts to demonstrate Russia's great-power status, to insist that Russia must be involved in diplomacy and have a right of veto over international intervention. Above all, they aimed to restrict NATO's role since, in the wider context, NATO was perceived as the greatest threat to Russian interests in Europe.

The shift to this realist position occurred earlier than some commentators have suggested, *during* Kozyrev's tenure as Foreign Minister rather than with his replacement by Evgenii Primakov in January 1996.[70] Primakov was in many ways a more skilful diplomat and was certainly more consistent; his realism was also more heartfelt than that of Kozyrev, but the fundamentals of policy remained the same. We are now familiar with Russian insistence on a 'multi-polar' world which Primakov never tired of mentioning; but its primary claim – that the West and particularly the United States and NATO must not and cannot act unilaterally, and that Russia remains a great power – was adopted in 1993 while Kozyrev was still Foreign Minister.

Russian policy towards the conflicts in former Yugoslavia has remained fairly constant within this realist framework and, as a consequence, subsequent crises have involved similar issues. The Kosovo conflict brought into wider debate the roles of NATO, the United Nations, and Russia in the post-Cold War world. But these questions had been raised much earlier in Bosnia. The reaction of Russian policymakers to the air campaign against Serbia – regarded as an act of aggression by NATO against a sovereign state which, by 1999, was viewed as Russia's potential ally in the Balkans – was more abrasive than it had been at any stage of the Bosnian conflict: this time, for instance, Russia broke off almost all relations with NATO. But in many of the essentials, the official Russian reaction was an echo of February 1994: objection to the use of ultimata and apparent Western one-sidedness; insistence on peaceful means of diplomacy; refusal to allow NATO to set the agenda or to intervene militarily; defence of the primacy of the UNSC; and belief that Russia was essential to any peace deal and was the key to the final settlement. At the same time, the government refused to yield to opposition demands to support the Serbs militarily and break off relations with the West. As Allen Lynch argues, the basis of Russian policy since 1993 has been insistence on Russia's great-power status 'while at the same time avoiding a rupture with the G7 states, in the first place the United

[69] D. Ludlow, 'Direct Governmental Involvement in the Search for a Negotiated Settlement to the Conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina with Special Reference to the Work of the Contact Group, September 1992 – July 1994', on Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (CD-ROM).

[70] See also Lynch, 'The Realism of Russia's Foreign Policy'.

States, whose cooperation remains essential to Russia's internal as well as external prospects'.[71]

Most of all, the Sarajevo crisis and subsequent international crises over the conflicts in former Yugoslavia show that Western and Russian policymakers viewed events there through the prism of wider security issues. For the West, events in former Yugoslavia cast into doubt their ability to uphold 'Western values' within Europe; but they also provided the opportunity to show that NATO retained a purpose and could use its experience and capabilities to help resolve ethnic conflicts in Europe and perhaps beyond. For Russian diplomats, they presented an opportunity to prove Russia's continued great-power status, but preventing NATO action also had wider connotations linked to NATO expansion and the potential danger of NATO involvement in the former Soviet Union, as well as the domestic political scene. These connections are clearly illustrated by Kozyrev's warning in November 1994 that Russia's 'ultra-nationalists trying to stage a domestic *révanche* would certainly take advantage of such ill-considered steps as hasty expansion of NATO membership or the alliance's bombing strikes in Bosnia'.[72]

Already by 1994, Kozyrev's vision of an alliance between Russia and the West in which democratic states would act together to take concerted action to protect human rights and prevent violations of international law had been significantly diminished. In 1992, Kozyrev had written that the New Political Thinking of the Gorbachev period had been greeted by the 'civilized world', but 'now more is expected of democratic Russia, of democrats in the Kremlin: a real alliance with those who guard international legality and are ready to use for it the most decisive measures', a line that 'in recent votes in the Security Council has begun to crystallise in the shape of a firm Russian "da" '.[73] In February 1994, Russia was not asked; had it been asked, it would have provided a more traditional 'nyet'. The interrelated factors of imminent NATO expansion and NATO involvement in former Yugoslavia, on the one hand, and the shift in Russian foreign policy on the other, had brought about the change. The new order of priorities in Russian policy towards the Yugoslav conflicts and in foreign policy as a whole is evident in Churkin's own explanation of his motivations in negotiating a deal over Sarajevo:

> To be honest, when I was working on this problem, the main thing I was trying to prevent was a national humiliation for Russia. Not a further escalation in Bosnia – although I didn't want that, of course, and I had clear instructions on that score – but a humiliation for Russia. After all, given our current low-esteem, if everything had been done without us yet again, the consequences could have been graver for us than for the Bosnians.[74]

[71] Ibid., p. 8.
[72] *SWB*, SU/2145 B/5, 5 November 1994.
[73] Kozyrev, 'Preobrazhenie ili kafkianskaia metamorfoza'.
[74] Molchanovyi, 'Sostoialsia li proryv rossiiskoi diplomatii?'.