**ANATOMY OF A CRISIS IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT**

**by David M. Law**

**Brussels, 1994**

This blog is based on a presentation that was given to the European Action Committee for Peace in Bosnia,meeting at the European Parliament in Brussels on 18 May 1994. It addressed the situation in the then FRY – prior to the dispatch of US troops in Bosnia later that year - the relationship between the conflict and the enormous changes then underway in the statal environment, the factors shaping Western policy towards the conflict and the ingredients that could bring about a shift in Western policy towards the conflict. It is offered here out of possible historical interest, at a time – December 2011 – when Bosnia-Herzegovina finally seems to have taken steps towards a centralised government, ostensibly with a view to eventually acceding to EU membership, nothwithstanding the grouping’s ongoing financial, economic and institutional crisis.

**THE SHAPE OF STATES TO COME**

Many things have been said about the way the conflict in the FRY influences our strategic environment:

 the risk of spillover to adjacent areas

 the danger of proliferation of similar kinds of ethnically-driven conflict to other parts of Central and Eastern Europe (C & EE)

 the damage that can be done to our governments and institutions as they attempt, and fail, to manage and resolve the conflict

 the threat to the prospects of establishing a functioning new international system after the collapse of the Cold War order.

If that were not enough, there are some reasons for believing that the impact of failure in Bosnia could be greater still, a kind of defining moment in the opening chapter of a new phase of history of man in state and society, the contours of which we can as yet barely discern.

Up to now, we have tended to assess the disintegrative tendencies of recent years in C & EE as something restricted to this part of the world and its specific historical circumstances.

My view is that the collapse of Yugoslavia, the USSR and Czechoslovakia and their succession - so far - by 22 states is not the end of something but the beginning of something, namely a process whereby many of today's states will disappear, and not only those which are

 the weakest economically

 the ethnically most homogeneous, or

 have been on the losing side of a war, as has been of course a key force propelling statal restructuring in C&EE.

To give you two examples, I need only cite Italy and my own country, Canada.

Both of these states may overcome their present difficulties but for the time being whether they will survive the next generation of political change with their current territory intact is at the very least open to question.

The reasons why these states and others in other parts of the world may disappear are varied and numerous. Essentially the process is triggered by two factors:

 First, a state loses the allegiance of a political majority of its people, or of a political majority of one or more of its constituent communities, this because

 it loses its resource base,

 its ruling elite loses its legitimacy,

 it loses its cohesive identity, or

 any number of factors which in isolation or combination produces a situation whereby a collective will to exist fades and finally fails.

 Second, there appears to be a feasible alternative or alternatives to the existing state.

My thesis is that at the end of this millenium, and increasingly into the next century, societies will have access to technology which makes possible, and even attractive, the establishment of new statal entities. Why?

The nation-states which now dominate our statal environment tended to be territorially driven as it was territory which provided the key to the wealth generated by farm, mine and factory.

Now, increasingly, it is the accessing, production and exchange of information and knowledge which engenders wealth, and in the process provides a new resource basis for the constitution of statal entities.

At the same time, the ongoing miniaturisation of computer technology makes it possible to manage ever more processes at ever lower levels of aggregation, in ways which are decreasingly dependent on the control of territory.

This releases enormous potential for what I call the REVOLUTION INTO SMALL It amounts to an invitation to individuals and groups which feel themselves to be misled, misrepresented, mismanaged and mistaxed to seek out alternatives to the states which govern them, essentially at lower levels of aggregation.

At such levels, I think we can expect to see an explosion in the number and importance of city-states, dukedoms and regional entities, corresponding to today's smaller nation-states or spawned by the larger sovereignties.

At the higher levels of aggregation, I think what we will see will resemble somewhat the fate of the British Empire after World War II when it was gradually transformed into a much looser structure with neither a lead nation nor a fixed centre. What we may have in future are political, security, economic, cultural and other functional commonwealths which thrive on flexible coaltion building and reflect the new neighbourhoods in the making which transcend geography.

The transition from a period of statal stability to one of statal mutation raises a number of extremely challenging questions.To return to the case of Yugoslavia, what we see are a series of extremely negative precedents which risk making what is probably an inevitably fitful process a very violent one indeed. For example, we see

 the effort of elites to resort to a violent redefintion of the interrelationships among the peoples of Yugoslavia in an effort to preserve their power ,

 the marginalisation of possibilities for arriving through negotiation at a non-hegemonial, new modus vivendi among constituent communities

 the accentuation of territorial conquest at a time when borders themselves are waning in importance

 the bestialisation of inter-communal relations, and

 the tendency for those which have intervened to become sucked into a logic of ethnic purity which not only exacerbates the difficulty of dealing with the conflict in Yugoslavia, but strengthens the tendency towards nationalist tendencies in their own environment.

**THE FACTORS SHAPING WESTERN POLICY TOWARDS THE FRY**

How can this wave of violence and despair be turned back? In an attempt to answer this question, I will try to describe how policy towards the situation in Bosnia has gotten where it is, focusing above all on EU and overall Western policy, which I believe are the key variables.

The end of the Cold War represented a bifurcation point in the traditional pattern of decision making in the Western community. During the Cold War, the US took the lead in Western decision making in European security affairs. After the Cold War, the US was no longer prepared to take the lead; rather it looked instead to the EU to take a lead which it could then support. But instead of the EU evolving the decision making structures that would male this possible. rising to this challenge, its member states have tended to renationalise their policies. This has led ineluctably to the following:

 a splintering of European resources available for use in the FRY

 a mismatch between requirements and means

 a strategy designed not to suffocate the conflict but to contain it (some would say ignore)

 a situation on the ground characterised by ever greater complexity

 the embracing by some of the intervening nations of the notion of the ethnic state

In other words, a situation has been created whereby it has became very difficult to lay the basis for a new post-Cold war transatlantic partnership, in my view, essential for generating the critical mass of resources and moral authority required for dealing successfuly with the conflict.

An alternative path forward for the EU would have involved the following:

 EU members, acknowledging that foreign security policy could no longer be effectively pursued on a national level, decide to federalise this function and create a credible Common Foreign and Security Policy. Here the implication is at the minimum a pooling of military resources, their placement under European command subject to European political control, whereby ideally that political control would be subject to the control of the European Parliament and its electors.

 This establishes the basis for a new transatlantic partnership and allows the Western community to bring enough resources to bear to address the conflict successfully, with a suffocation strategy designed to marginalise those responsible for the resort to violence and to create a negotiating environment of manageable tension in which the preparedness of the majority of the population in the various communities to coexist would have been the determining factor in reaching a settlement.

Instead, we have a situation whereby as the conflict has developed there has been a growing discrepancy between what is needed in terms of material and ideological resources and what is in fact available. This has generated an ever greater credibility gap in Western policy at the same time as the dimensions of the problem have been steadily extended.

**GETTING WESTERN POLICY TOWARDS THE FRY BACK ON TRACK**

How do we get Western policy back on track? For the EU, the key challenge is to establish a policy environment in which transatlantic cooperation can be secured. Even if the Europeans were to get their act together, policy makers would have to overcome a series of formidab le arguments againt the United States deploying in Bosnia and beefing up its committment in the region:

 First, there are Bill Clinton's domestic preoccupations; he was elected on a platform of putting America right again and in particular reducing the deficit; in the meantime, other domestic concerns such as Whitewater and Paula Jones have entered his agenda.

 Second, from the prospective of multi-ethnic America, any policy which smacks of favouring ethnic purity such as espouised by certain EU member states runs the risk of sewing domestic division stateside.

 As for US foreign policy overall, the idea has been to focus on those areas where US involvement was deemed to be essential: proliferation, maintaining the Asian balance, growth and democracy in the Americas and managing the post-Soviet transition of Russia and the Ukraine.

 In the case of the FSU, there is moreover concern in the US that a more muscled US approach would undercut this effort; my view is that even if this perspective currently prevails there is a much more powerful argument, namely, that to coddle the myth of a Serbian-Russian alliance is to invite greater security headaches down the road.

 Than there is the United States' historical experience in war, e.g.

 in World Wars I and II: "last is best"

 in the Cold War and the Gulf War, an effective coalition was the key to success

 in Vietnam, Somalia and Haiti the lesson has been to avoid seemingly unwinable

 situations.

For the time being, I do not see the votes sufficient for a significant change in US policy. If, however, the EU can step up to the plate, there are strong arguments for the US to put its shoulder to the EU's wheel. In addition to the question of the future of Russia, the US can not afford to give the impression that it is too preoccupied or too weak to do more in Bosnia at the same time as it tries to engineer a historic Middle East peace, not to mention such key concerns as keeping the Cold War coalition intact and building on the prospects for a new world order. The bottom line is, however, that the US must feel that these concerns can in fact be supported by a change in its policy towards the FRY towards greater engagement and commitment.