

# Peace and Stability Lessons from Bosnia

MAX G. MANWARING

*Parameters*, Winter 1998, pp. 28-38.

---

The United States' civil-military involvement in the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, with NATO and other elements of the international community, has been a major topic in the national and international security dialogue since the 1995 signing of the Dayton Peace Accords for Bosnia. Many have concluded, in light of that experience and subsequent developments, that conflict of the sort encountered in the Balkans may well be a harbinger of future US military operations. The dialogue suggests that the complex challenges of multinational peace and stability operations encountered in Bosnia-Herzegovina reflect the disorder of the post-Cold War era and could characterize other *intranational* conflicts.

The US Army deployed a significant number of personnel to Bosnia early in 1996 to collect, consolidate, and report on hundreds of incidents and activities that were related to the deployment and subsequent operations of US forces in the region. The raw material collected by the teams under the rubric of "lessons learned" was reviewed and analyzed within the Army, emerging as lessons to be examined by all of its elements to support training, review doctrine, and develop and acquire materiel appropriate to peace support operations. One of the organizations involved in the process of learning from the experiences of the deployed force, the US Army Peacekeeping Institute, subsequently sponsored two meetings of senior US and other officers and civilians, during which the lessons were examined and validated.

At the invitation of the Army Chief of Staff, more than 100 individuals from over 50 different national and international organizations attended the two meetings, eventually sending him more than 75 recommendations derived from the lessons that had been collected and analyzed. The topics reported out dealt with strategic and operational issues, and addressed lessons learned that affected the Chief of Staff's responsibilities under Title 10, USC, his role as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and his advisory responsibilities.

This article examines some of the recurring themes from those meetings, which took place in May 1996 and April 1997. The intent then and now was not to relive history as we would have liked it to have been, but to focus on the broad themes and issues that invoke the invaluable power of leader judgment and unity of effort in peace operations. The consistency of the lessons learned from these and other US and United Nations reports is impressive, and inspires confidence that the lessons are valid.

## **The US Civil-Military Experience in Bosnia**

Since the end of the Cold War, the nature of the international security system and the verities that shaped US and Western national purposes, policies, strategies, and priorities have undergone fundamental changes. In place of the predictable Cold War international structure we now have a world of dangerous uncertainty and political ambiguity in which time-honored concepts of security and the classical military means to attain it, while necessary, are no longer sufficient.[1] As a consequence, it is important to revisit some of the imperatives of contemporary multinational peace and stability operations.

Five salient topics derived from the US experience in Bosnia-Herzegovina through early 1997 have been collected here. While many other sets of issues emerged from the two meetings, space precludes addressing more than a representative number of the most important ones. To ensure open and forthright discussion during the meetings, a strict agreement of nonattribution was adopted by the participants.[2] Consequently, while documentation of the proceedings is sketchy in the following discussions, every effort has been made to describe the proceedings accurately.[3]

The five categories of issues are:

- Understand and deal with the political complexity of contemporary peace and stability operations.
- Address and resolve the problem of ad hoc arrangements in strategic planning and coordination.
- Develop more mature peace and stability operations doctrine.
- Revisit the total army issue.
- Rethink the force protection issue.

### *Political Complexity*

The political complexity of contemporary peace operations stems from the fact that *intrastate* conflicts such as those in the former Yugoslavia are the result of careful political consideration and strong political motivation. Additionally, a large number of national and international civilian and military organizations and nongovernmental organizations are engaged in a broad political, economic, informational, and military effort to bring peace and stability to specified peoples. Thus, contemporary conflict is not only political but also multinational, multiorganizational, multidimensional, and multicultural. Understanding and working effectively in that complex environment depends on "mind-set adjustments that will allow leaders to be comfortable with political ambiguity and at ease as part of a synergistic process." [4]

The political complexity issue dominates contemporary peace and stability operations at two levels--the type of conflict and the cooperation politically necessary to deal with it.

First, in *intrastate* conflict, confrontation is transformed from the level of military violence to the level of a political-psychological struggle for the proverbial "hearts and minds" of a people. Within the context of a people being the ultimate center of gravity, antagonists can strive to achieve the Clausewitzian admonition to "dare to win all"--the

complete political overthrow of a government--instead of simply attempting to obtain leverage for limited territorial, political, economic, and social concessions in the more traditional sense.[5] Thus, turning Clausewitz upside down, contemporary conflict is not an extension of politics, politics is an extension of conflict.

In this environment, responses to direct and indirect threats must be primarily political and psychological. The blunt force of military formations supported by tanks and aircraft could be irrelevant or even counterproductive. The more subtle use of "soft" political, economic, psychological, and moral power--supported by information operations, careful intelligence work, and surgical precision at the more direct military or police level--would be imperative.

At the second leadership and cooperation level of political dominance, a mandate likely to be promulgated for intervention in another *intrastate* conflict situation such as that in the Balkans might read something like this: "In cooperation with international organizations, national civilian agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and coalition partners, initiate a combined peace operation to aggressively take control of a contested area, stop any escalation of violence, and impose an internationally acceptable level of law and order. In addition, be prepared to support relevant agencies in dealing with the political, economic, and social aftermath of the *intrastate* violence." This kind of situation requires the greatest civil-military and military-military diplomacy, cooperation, and coordination.

In such situations, responses must also be well organized, highly cooperative, carefully coordinated, and conducted with considerable political skill. Otherwise, "strategic ambiguity" is introduced; opponents are given the opportunity to "play at the seams" of the operation and frustrate objectives; allies are allowed to pursue their own agendas; political, personnel, and monetary costs rise; and the probability of mission failure increases.

Until appropriate political-psychological responses to perceived direct and indirect threats in intranational conflict become reality and until realistic political-psychological responses to multilateral coordination and cooperation problems in that security environment become habitual, the United States and the rest of the international community face unattractive alternatives in such situations. They can either leave forces in place to maintain a de facto military occupation, or they can depart the scene with the sure knowledge that the conflict will erupt again. In the latter case, the time, treasure, and blood expended will have been for nothing.

At a minimum, there are five educational and cultural imperatives to modify Cold War mind-sets and to develop the leader judgment needed to deal effectively with complex, politically dominated, multidimensional, multiorganizational, multinational, and multicultural peace and stability operations.

First, the study of the fundamental nature of conflict has always been the philosophical cornerstone for understanding conventional war. It is no less relevant to nontraditional

conflict. Thus, concepts such as "enemy," "war," and "victory" should be reconsidered and redefined for intrastate conflict. Moreover, nontraditional interests centering on national and international stability need to be reexamined and defined. Finally, the application of all the instruments of national and international power--including the full integration of legitimate civil and military coalition partners--to achieve political ends has to be rethought and refined.

Second, leaders at all levels must understand the strategic and political implications of tactical actions. They must also understand the ways that force can be employed to achieve political ends, and the ways that political considerations affect the use of force. In addition, leaders at all levels need to understand "ambiguity" and be fully prepared to deal with it.

Third, US military personnel are expected to be able to operate effectively in coalitions or multinational military formations. They must, however, acquire the ability to interact collegially and effectively in peace support operations with representatives of US civilian agencies, non-US civilian governmental agencies, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, civilian populations, and local and global media. As a consequence, efforts that enhance interagency as well as international cultural awareness, such as civilian and military exchange programs, language training programs, and combined (multinational) exercises should be revitalized and expanded.

Fourth, in that connection, planners and negotiators who will operate at the strategic and high operational levels should be nurtured to function in coalition decisionmaking and planning situations that can blend US deliberate planning processes with concurrent multinational and multiorganizational practices.

Finally, education and training for contemporary peace and stability operations must prepare military peacekeeping personnel to be effective warfighters. Peace missions have and will continue to put military forces into harm's way. Political actors in an intrastate conflict are likely to have at their disposal an awesome array of conventional and unconventional weaponry. For many societies, violence is a normal and accepted way of causing change or keeping things "the way they always have been." In either case, peacekeepers must--first and foremost--be good soldiers. Because of the environment in which they must work, peacekeeping soldiers must also display political sensitivity, considerable restraint, and iron discipline.

#### *Ad Hoc Solutions and the Need for Strategic Planning and Coordination*

Ad hoc problem solving and the convoluted strategic planning and coordination situation that developed in the Bosnian experience is a consequence of a systemic disconnect between NATO operational and US planning and implementing processes. It is also a consequence of the fact that, as one participant remarked, "The US created a lot of these problems. They didn't want to work within NATO . . . . The US was a lone wolf out there in this operation and did not coordinate . . . with NATO at all." [6] Like it or not, and prepared for it or not, contemporary conflict requires strategic planning and cooperation

between and among coalition partners, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and the US civil-military representation. This, in turn, depends on leader judgment that will ensure not just unity of command, but unity of effort.

The harsh reality of the Bosnia-Herzegovina experience demonstrated three major strategic planning and coordination problems. First, US and NATO planning and implementing procedures broke down in the face of competing national and institutional interests, and the associated segregated planning and implementing processes. Second, early US military coordination during the assessment and planning phases of the Bosnia intervention did not include key US civilian organizations, international organizations, NATO coalition partners, or nongovernmental organizations. Third, ad hoc reaction to changing conditions and the resultant "mission creep" became the norm in the absence of a single overarching political-military campaign plan. As a result, there was no strategic clarity, no unity of effort, and very limited effectiveness in some aspects of NATO operations in 1996.

At the same time independent uncoordinated planning, called "stovepipe" activities, produced operational and tactical confusion and required more improvisation to fix command and control arrangements, mission limits, supported and supporting logistical and personnel procedures, rules of engagement, and status of forces agreements. As an example, on 1 December 1995, the Commander in Chief of NATO's Allied Forces Southern Europe (AFSOUTH) was assigned by the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, to command the NATO Implementation Force. However, the AFSOUTH commander did not have proper authority to command US forces or to resolve US logistical, command and control, communications, and intelligence relationships. The resultant confusion led to more quick fixes and contributed to the duplication of effort required to conduct operations. It also added significantly to the political, financial, and manpower costs of the unintegrated peace and stability mission in Bosnia.

Given such a convoluted organizational and procedural situation, it is extremely difficult to make any kind of operation credible or effective. For operations such as those in Bosnia-Herzegovina to achieve any measure of effectiveness beyond keeping a lid on the situation, logic and good management call for a mechanism to achieve a unity of effort. Creating that unity of effort requires contributions at different levels.

First, at the highest level, the primary peacekeeping parties must be in general agreement with regard to the objectives of a political vision and the associated set of operations. And although such an agreement regarding a strategic or operational end-state is a necessary condition for unity of effort, it is not sufficient. Sufficiency and clarity are achieved by adding appropriate policy implementation and military management structures--and "mind-set adjustments"--at the following three additional levels.

The second level of effort requires an executive-level management structure that can and will ensure continuous cooperative planning and execution of policy among and between the relevant US civilian agencies and armed forces. That structure must also ensure that all political-military action at the operational and tactical levels directly contributes to the

achievement of the mutually agreed strategic political end-state. This requirement reflects a need for improved coordination within the operational theater and between the theater commander and Washington.

Third, steps must be taken to ensure clarity, unity, and effectiveness by integrating coalition military, international organization, and nongovernmental organization processes with US political-military planning and implementing processes. It has become quite clear that the political end-state is elusive and operations suffer when there is no strategic planning structure empowered to integrate the key multinational and multiorganizational civil-military elements of a peace or stability operation. It is also clear that duplication of effort, an immediate consequence of the absence of such a strategic planning body, is costly in political, personnel, and financial terms.[7]

At a base level, however, unity of effort requires education as well as organizational solutions. Even with an adequate planning and organizational structure, ambiguity, confusion, and tensions are likely to emerge. Only when and if the various civilian and military leaders involved in an operation can develop the judgment and empathy necessary to work cooperatively and collegially will they be able to plan and conduct operations that meet the needs and use the capabilities of the US interagency community, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and coalition military forces. Unity of effort ultimately entails the type of professional military education and leader development that leads to effective diplomacy, as well as to military competence.

### *The Need for More Mature Doctrine*

The need for more mature peace and stability operations doctrine is made clear when every civil and military organization involved in missions such as those in the former Yugoslavia operates under its own procedures or doctrine. To compound this problem, extant doctrine is generally designed to provide conventional military solutions to traditional military problems. There is no standardized doctrine for all levels in such operations, even within NATO. Moreover, there is little or no doctrinal recognition of the fact that peace and stability operations are primarily multinational, political, and psychological in nature. In that context, we are reminded, "We are operating with very old doctrine and legalities. These need to be changed and bought up to speed as soon as possible. . . . Joint doctrine is good, interagency not so, and multinational doctrine is virtually nonexistent." [8]

At present, peace and stability operations appear to be viewed as relatively traditional military actions organized to take control of a specified area, stop any violence, and impose peace. The conflict statistics of the past 50 years, however, show convincingly that the trend continues to be away from traditional international operations and toward nontraditional intranational missions. Decisionmakers, policymakers, and planners assume they are dealing with a system of sovereign states involved in conventional territorial aggression. Instead, more often than not, contemporary conflict involves the security and survival of a community or people within a fragmented state. In that situation, peace enforcers will probably find no definable military force to face, no

specific territory to control, no single part of society on which to concentrate, and no wholly legitimate government with which to work. Instead, peace enforcers will likely find contending sources of authority involved in the long-term causes and effects of myriad instabilities and destabilizing forces within the affected state or region.

These instabilities and destabilizing forces include starvation, environmental devastation, lack of socioeconomic and political justice, criminal anarchy, large-scale refugee flows, militant religious fundamentalism, greedy civil and military bureaucrats, warlords, and ethnic cleansers. Sooner or later, the spillover effects of intranational violence caused by these and other instabilities place demands on the international community--if not to resolve the problems they represent or create, then at least to harbor the victims. These kinds of substate instability problems require a holistic approach that relies on various civilian and military agencies and contingents working in an integrated manner to achieve the common goals of peace and stability. Former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali argued that "only sustained, cooperative work to deal with underlying economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems can place an enforced peace on durable foundations." [9]

Difficult as all this may be from an ethnocentric perspective, the doctrinal problem of bringing likely participants together on a level playing field must be dealt with quickly and completely. The urgency of developing mature multilateral civil-military doctrine for contemporary peace and security requirements is clear: "If [the US Army] is going to truly be an army capable of fighting two major regional contingencies, or whatever the policy is, and still be able to meet national diplomacy requirements, you are going to have to deal with these [doctrinal] issues. Now; not tomorrow, not the next day, now. Now is the time for a change of mind-set." [10]

Relevant doctrine at the conceptual level for multilateral peace and stability operations must, first, focus on the need to recognize the real locus of power (e.g., the civil population) in a given operational area, and, second, the civilian and military resources and time stages needed to plan for and implement a truly successful conclusion to a given peace process. Then, in an operation involving national and international civilian organizations and coalition partners, early coordination during the assessment and plan-development phases is essential for establishing mission responsibilities and supported and supporting relationships and limits, and for avoiding ad hoc reactions to contingencies.

At an organizational level, the countries and international organizations most likely to be coalition partners need to share the understanding that cooperation and coordination are key to success. That understanding then should lead to the development of processes that can and will define and implement shared partnership goals (end-states), options (ways), and realistic capability requirements (means). In that connection, these same processes need to develop standardized doctrine at all levels that ensures the rapid and coordinated response of combat, combat support, and combat service support forces--both to enable and to sustain a holistic strategic civil-military effort.

Thus, at the operational level, a comprehensive doctrine for peace and stability operations would have to include as equal partners:

- the appropriate land, sea, and air forces
- bilateral donors (e.g., US civilian agencies)
- principal UN agencies
- UN human rights, civil administration electoral staff, and development staff elements
- UN or international civilian police

Doctrine so structured would allow the various political actors to plan, coordinate, and integrate their activities at specified stages of the implementing process. These unifying efforts, in turn, could ensure that conditions are established to allow a host nation to develop or renew its political solvency and legitimacy--and that a given mandate for peace may in fact be fulfilled.

### *The Total Army Issue*

There remains the old Cold War problem of the tooth to tail ratio. In accordance with the Total Army concept, the active Army continues to rely on the reserve components to provide vital elements of support. Because of the dependence on the reserve components to provide an appropriate balance of skills in a given military situation, one conference participant said that lack of timely access to reserve component forces can be "a war stopper. That is perhaps too bold a statement, but it would [make the problem] extraordinarily difficult." [11] In the most stark terms, continued and timely reserve component support for a unified operation in the former Yugoslavia, and possible subsequent peace and stability operations elsewhere, is essential to mission planning, execution, and completion. [12]

In the initial stages of Operation Joint Endeavor in 1995, the late arrival of reserve component units into Bosnia-Herzegovina to provide an appropriate mix of reserve and active force structure and skill densities "really slowed things down and made everything 'touch and go' up to the last minute." [13] The availability of these reserve forces is dependent on the identification of appropriate units and individuals, and a Presidential Selective Reserve Call-Up (PSRC). In the early stages of the Bosnian intervention, the call-up authorization was not used in a timely manner. Moreover, as the operation in the former Yugoslavia continues, the extensive use of a relatively small number of specialized reserve component units and individuals has created a shrinking pool of available personnel. Qualified civil affairs and psychological operations personnel are especially scarce. Alternative solutions, such as contracting selected functions or relying on an allied nation for appropriate capabilities, do not exist. Thus, the Total Army issue is becoming more and more critical as the United States continues to support the operation in the Balkans, and to maintain other commitments around the world. This problem will likely reach crisis status in the not-too-distant future unless enlightened leaders take measures to create a more responsive and balanced total force. The following five recommendations, if adopted and carried out, would help resolve the issue.

- Reevaluate and expand the force structure of selected active and reserve units and individuals to meet current planning requirements for major regional contingencies, logistics readiness centers, and operational tempo standards.
- Determine the "right mix, the right number, or a combination of the two" of active and reserve component units and individuals with high deployment tempos, and make the appropriate adjustments.
- Redefine and reduce the time required to mobilize and demobilize reserve component soldiers to allow maximum time on mission support.
- Pursue initiatives such as the "Prime the Pump" and the "Voluntary Early Access to Ready Reserve" programs to make available up to 30,000 reserve component volunteers prior to a planned PSRC authorization.
- Take the necessary steps to promulgate any new legislation that might be required to implement the above recommendations, and to make the Total Army more efficient and effective.[14]

### *Force Protection*

Force protection for US personnel involved in peace operations should always be a guiding principle in the conduct of any mission--regardless of the mission's level of intensity. Nevertheless, in Operation Joint Endeavor, the US force protection effort has taken on a higher degree of importance than the peace and stability mission in Bosnia itself. This has led to the observation that "sometimes even a good thing carried to excess can have negative effects. The force protection issue must be reconsidered." [15] Again, this depends on sound judgment by good leaders who understand the criticality of the issue and who are willing to initiate the relevant policy changes.

Excessive emphasis on force protection at the strategic level calls into question the willingness of the United States to use its formidable military power. Force protection also has taken on a higher degree of importance than the other battlefield dynamics of firepower, leadership, and maneuver, and has often stifled the flexibility of the operational commander. Second- and third-order effects send mixed signals to warring factions, reduce US credibility with coalition partners as well as antagonists, and hamper civil-military cooperation. Carried to its logical conclusion, excessive emphasis on force protection can be politically and militarily dangerous.

There is only one tenable recommendation regarding the force protection issue: "Make the necessary mind-set adjustments to return the responsibility for force protection back to the operational commander." [16]

### **Conclusions**

Even though every conflict situation differs in time and place, none is ever truly unique. Throughout the universe of contemporary conflict in general--and peace and stability operations in particular--there are analytical commonalities. The final outcome of a conflict such as that in the former Yugoslavia is not determined primarily by the skillful manipulation of violence on the battlefield. Control of the situation and its resolution are

determined by the qualitative judgments and unity of effort established before, during, and after a conflict is politically recognized to have begun and ended.

Two common denominators underlie the discussion of the issues considered in this article. The first is the need to understand and to behave as though the Cold War is over and to learn how to optimize capabilities in an ambiguous, nontraditional, international security environment. In colloquial terms, this common denominator relates specifically to "mind-set." In more formal terms, it refers to leader judgment. The second common denominator involves the political partnership requirements that will permit doctrinal and structural change related to coalitions and operations involving mixes of military and civilian organizations. This requirement is fundamental to maintaining unity of effort in complex humanitarian relief or peace support operations. Together, these two common denominators are essential for success in complex humanitarian and peacekeeping operations.

The ultimate challenge now and for "2010 down the road" is that national leadership needs to examine the grand picture and not just Bosnia. The United States needs to reorient its thinking and actions to deal with the issues of leader judgment and unity of effort, or "there won't be any" solutions to the problems of peace and stability.[17]

---

## NOTES

1. This and subsequent assertions are based on the consensus reached in each of the conferences. Because of the nonattribution policy, however, assertions are not cited. Direct quotes are cited as "Nonattribution."
2. The first Bosnia-Herzegovina After Action Review (BHAAR I) Conference was held at Carlisle Barracks, Pa., on 19-23 May 1996. The second conference (BHAAR II) was held at Carlisle Barracks on 13-17 April 1997.
3. The Bosnia case is well documented by the periodic reports of The United Nations Secretary General, and by a number of other lessons-learned projects, including "Multi-disciplinary Peacekeeping: Lessons from Recent Experience" (UN Lessons Learned Unit, Department of Peacekeeping Operations), December 1996. Additionally, the Joint Staff J-7 representative on the BHAAR I Plenary Panel stated that "the BHAAR findings match J-7's."
4. Nonattribution.
5. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), p. 596.
6. Nonattribution.

7. See, in this same issue of *Parameters* (Winter 1998-99): Mark R. Walsh and Michael J. Harwood, "Complex Emergencies: Under New Management"; Kurt E. Müller, "Toward a Concept of Strategic Civil Affairs"; and Thomas Gibbings, Donald Hurley, and Scott Moore, "Interagency Operations Centers: An Opportunity We Can't Ignore."

8. Nonattribution.

9. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace* (New York: United Nations, 1992), pp. 11, 32-34; and "Global Leadership After the Cold War," *Foreign Affairs*, 75 (March-April 1996), 86-98.

10. Nonattribution.

11. Ibid.

12. Few readers will be aware of the Army's responsibilities under Title 10, USC, for sustaining US forces deployed on such operations. See, for example, David Fastabend, "An Appraisal of 'The Brigade-Based New Army,'" *Parameters*, 27 (Autumn 1997), p. 81, n. 1.

13. Nonattribution.

14. As one of the experienced individuals who reviewed a draft of this article remarked, "The idea of a 'Reserve Ready Reaction Force' has been around for more than a decade. There are serious legal, financial, and political problems involved with deploying selected reservists 'prior to a planned PSRC authorization.' Not the least of these problems is how to hold civilian jobs for deployed reservists. Other problems involve child care plans, drafting doctors, dentists, police, clergy, etc. who may be doing essential community service, and getting reservists paid while Congress debates funding for contingency operations." Overcoming such obstacles will not be easy, but must be done.

15. Nonattribution.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.; and author interview with Ambassador Edwin G. Corr in Washington, D.C., 9 April 1998.

---

Dr. Max G. Manwaring (Colonel, USA Ret.) is an adjunct professor of political science at Dickinson College (Carlisle, Pa.) and a political-military affairs consultant. He has a Ph.D. from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and he has served in various academic and military positions at, *inter alia*, the US Army War College, the US Southern Command's Small Wars Operations Research Directorate, and the Defense Intelligence Agency. He is the author of several articles and reports dealing with

political-military affairs and is editor or coeditor of *El Salvador at War: An Oral History* (1989), *Uncomfortable Wars: Toward a New Paradigm of Low Intensity Conflict* (1991), *Gray Area Phenomena: Confronting the New World Disorder* (1993), *Managing Contemporary Conflict: Pillars of Success* (1996), and *Toward Responsibility in the New World Disorder: Challenges and Lessons of Peace Operations* (1998).