

Croatia in July 1991. This only gave all the parties a period of time in which to prepare for war.⁸

In August the EU convened a conference in the Hague under the leadership of Lord Carrington. That conference established the Badinter Commission to arbitrate the dispute, but its assessment of the situation differed from that of Carrington and forced him to acknowledge the imminent possibility that Yugoslavia was dissolving.

Initially the United Nations was unable to deal with the crisis because the charter prohibits interference in internal problems. It gradually became clear, however, that Slovenia and Croatia would be recognized internationally and that there existed a real threat to international peace and security. This gave the Security Council grounds to take up the problem, but by then civil war was on and peacekeepers were sent to Croatia.

When Slovenia and Croatia declared independence, old alliances re-emerged as if they had only been held in abeyance since the 1940s: Germany and Austria enthusiastically supported the new assertions of independence, while Russia took the side of Serbia. Large quantities of arms were acquired without difficulty (\$320 million worth of weapons went from Berlin to Zagreb and \$390 million from Moscow to Belgrade). Germany exercised great pressure within the European Union in favor of secession. The United States was to hold out briefly against Germany, then to reverse its position by recognizing the breakaway republics.

By early 1992 the United Nations were invited by the parties in conflict to station troops

⁸Not all the conference participants were convinced of the EU's intentions. Slobodan Drakulic, for example, doubted that the Europeans had any intention of saving Yugoslavia. They saved Yugoslav secessionists, he said. Only at the moment when the secessionists were losing the war did the European "Troika" of leaders come to Yugoslavia to mediate between the embattled Slovene and Croat secessionist governments and the federal authorities that still existed. They asked Croatian and Slovenian governments to suspend their acts of secession, not to revoke them. Drakulic adds that the arms embargo which they imposed was a sham that was respected by almost no one who had arms to sell, including Switzerland.

Drakulic suggests that the Canadian government should beware of the EU's playing similar role in the possible separation of Quebec. Mediation between secessionists and federal authorities as political equals — and that is what Europeans did in July of 1991 — inevitably legitimates secessionists and delegitimizes federalists.

between the Serb and Croat forces in Croatia, as a part of the peace plan brokered by Cyrus Vance.

As soon as Slovenia and Croatia became independent, it became virtually inevitable that Bosnia and Herzegovina would also ask for recognition as a sovereign country, and this happened in December 1991. All Yugoslav republics were in fact directly asked by the European Union to seek recognition as separate states. The EU was thus instigating the breakup of the country.⁹ Serbia and Montenegro refused the EU offer, arguing that both of them had been internationally recognized at the Berlin Congress of 1878, and were therefore in no need of international recognition. They saw themselves as the remaining Yugoslavia.

The legitimacy of Bosnia-Herzegovina's claim was ambiguous. Constitutionally, the republics had a right to secede. However, since Bosnia is a society comprising three main ethnic groups, the Bosnian constitution required that a majority of voters within all three groups was required for any legislation to be enacted. Perhaps as a self-fulfilling prophecy, Badinter Commission, which expected Yugoslavia to come apart, hastened it by proposing a referendum, but not one requiring concurrence of all three communities. Predictably, the 63 percent of Bosnians who were Muslim or Croatian voted predominantly for secession, while the Bosnian Serbs boycotted the referendum in protest. They argued, as had Serbs in Croatia, that if their republic had a right to secede, they had an equally strong moral claim for seceding from it, preferably to join Serbia, or if not that, at least to maintain a small independent state of their own. This dispute became the precipitating cause of the Bosnian war. By March the republic declared independence and ethnic civil war immediately broke out.

In the formal presentations of papers at the conference there was no discussion of this referendum but one did hear private conversations on the matter. There were expressions noting the prima facie legitimacy of the basic grievances of those groups who suddenly found themselves minorities in Bosnia and Croatia. More than one person commented, for example, that if the Croats and Bosniaks had a right to secede from Yugoslavia, then the Serbs in Eastern Slavonia, the Krajina, and Bosnia-Herzegovina should equally have the right to secede from Croatia and Bosnia. Further, when the Bosnian Serbs boycotted the referendum, they had a constitutional basis for protest: namely, all decisions of constitutional import had to be made consensually

⁹A parallel situation can be seen in the actions of French politicians who have openly promised to recognize Quebec should it secede from Canada, thereby encouraging secessionists.