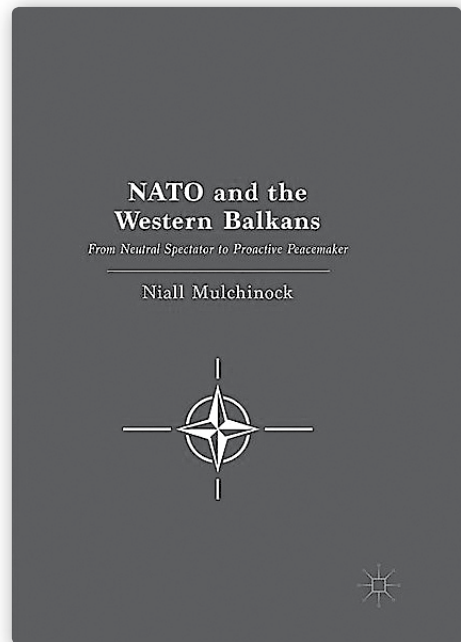


Niall Mulchinock
NATO AND THE WESTERN BALKANS:
FROM NEUTRAL SPECTATOR TO PROACTIVE PEACEMAKER

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Niall Mulchinock, an expert of international relations, has given a valuable contribution with his book about NATO, within which he discusses, the role of Yugoslav wars in the transformation of NATO from neutral spectator to proactive peacemaker.

Established on April 4, 1949, The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the transatlantic military-political component in Europe after the Second World War, during the Cold War had the purpose to prevent Soviet invasion in Europe. To explain NATO's transformation after the end of the Cold War and the break-up of the Soviet Union, in the first part of the book the author highlights the importance of the summits of London and Rome. London Summit (July 1990) was important because along with a solemn commitment to extend the hand of friendship to the former states of the Warsaw Pact, there was also a need to consider NATO's own military and strategic functions following the end of the Cold War, and also to iden-



tify for the first time the new risks and challenges that could pose security threats to the stability of the alliance in the future. Whereas the Rome Summit (November 1991) underlined the future projections for the Alliance, which were risks for the security of NATO's member nations, resulting from instability and uncertainty in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in the Balkans and in the crisis belt from

Maghreb, North Africa to the Middle and Near East.

The book also describes in what degree did individual NATO Secretaries-General influence the development of the alliance, focusing on Manfred Wörner (July 1988 – August 1994) and Javier Solana (December 1995 – October 1999). Wörner played an important role in NATO transformation and in its response to the Yugoslav conflicts, because he became a significant advocate for the alliance's engagement with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. NATO was fundamentally lucky to have a dynamic, forthright and disciplined Secretary-General like Wörner at the helm of proceedings and decision-making during this transition period. Flexibility and adaptability were key to Wörner's thinking on how the Alliance was going to move forward in the 1990s. There was much criticism about the intervention of NATO in Kosovo, but Javier Solana stated that the objective of NATO's intervention was to prevent more human suffering and more repression and violence against the civilian population of Kosovo.

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, which began in 1989 and the unification of East Germany with the West in 1990 marked a very important step in the end of the Cold War, in the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Union and of the Yugoslav federation. Unlike the dissolutions of the USSR and Czecho-

slovakia, the breakup of Yugoslavia was accompanied with bloody wars. The Yugoslav crisis started with the independence of Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia in 1991, and continued with the crisis of Bosnia and Herzegovina, culminating in 1994-1995, and returned with the Kosovo crisis, especially in the years 1998-1999. The crisis of the former Yugoslavia, with special emphasize on the wars of Bosnia and Kosovo, engaged all major international factors such as the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the European Union and NATO.

The complexities of the Bosnian conflict, which commenced during the spring of 1992, challenged the new security architecture of NATO and, more importantly, drove a wedge between individual NATO member states at a time when they should have been united. The Bosnian war was viewed as a civil war rather than a war of aggression and there was a failure and reluctance to use military force in the early stages of the conflicts, mostly because of the individual preferences and grievances of its member states. In general terms, 1993 represented the year of the failed peace plans for Bosnia, because the most prominent member state to oppose NATO action in Bosnia was the UK from the outset of hostilities in 1992, because it had relatively good ties with the Serbs due to their wartime cooperation against the Nazis in the Second World War. Also France

opposed the use of military force, while Germany, to some extent, supported the use of force in 1991, but there was a general anti-militarism present within the German population. From all the European allies, Denmark was the most vocal in urging for military force in Bosnia. These underlying divisions between the institution and member states would be further exacerbated in the 1994-95 period. The US tactic to build support among the smaller allies showed that it was taking seriously the situation. Americans worked to emphasize their concern for the UNPROFOR troops on the ground in Bosnia, where the British worked on them in the opposite direction. They also tried to isolate the British position by attempting to undermine the strong partnership between Britain and France. The humiliation of UNPROFOR troops being used as human shields in May 1995 was followed in quick succession by the abhorrent events at Srebrenica two months later, when more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys belonging to the ages of 12 to 77 were executed by Serb forces. The failure in Srebrenica, the world's first-ever-safe UN-declared area, is considered to be the darkest event in the UN history. Without US leadership at this moment, it is far from clear if NATO would have used force. The author points out three valuable lessons for NATO from its involvement in the Bosnian War, which were: To make early intervention a pre-requisite in any future outbreak of violence in the region

to prevent the occurrence of another Srebrenica; The construction of a more cohesive and dynamic relationship between the Alliance and the EU; To avoid the future resumption of major transatlantic disputes that had caused a lot of the paralysis in Bosnia. It should be said that failure to respond in due time has resulted with more than 140,000 people killed and almost 4 million displaced, and with more than 50000 victims of sexual violence.

The Butmir Process, which was inaugurated in the autumn of 2009 in BiH aimed to develop new constitutional reforms, which would eventually led to the creation of more centralized institutional structures. In the longer term, these measures would have presumably resulted in the formulation of a probable Bosnian unitary state, overcoming the divisions imposed by the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995, and preparing the country for eventual EU and NATO membership. This initiative produced a mixed response from the various ethnic groups and resulted with internal disagreements over the future political arrangements. The ongoing crisis of Bosnia's future political structures is certainly not helped by the re-opening of old wounds. Bosnia still, however, remains a deeply ethnically divided country and is not a fully functioning state. One can argue that the alliance should have been more pro-active in supporting the return of internally displaced persons and the arrest of war criminals. The Inter-

national Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, an ad hoc tribunal established by the UN in 1993, mandate of which ended in 2017, wasn't so successful in sentencing war criminals of the Yugoslav wars because from 161 accused, only 89 of them have been sentenced, 59 of which have served their sentence. The strong partnership between the EU and NATO in BiH was further enhanced with preliminary plans in place to deal with any possible outbreak of hostilities in that country during the 2008–10 political crisis. In the event of a hypothetical outbreak of hostilities, EUFOR (The European Union Force) troops would have been supplemented by troops from the KFOR mission in Kosovo.

NATO had been trying to carve out a strategic partnership with Russia, but the alliance's evolving relationship with Russia was also disrupted by the Kosovo intervention. The air attacks against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) put this important relationship in peril as Russia was a very vocal supporter and defender of its Serbian ally during Operation Allied Force. The intervention of NATO in Kosovo still has many criticisms for two reasons. First, NATO's decision to engage in large-scale military action without prior Security Council authorization raised significant doubts about the status of the law governing the use of force and the viability of UN primacy in matters of international peace and security. Second, NATO's high-altitude bomb-

ing campaign, conducted without a single NATO combat casualty but with significant civilian casualties within the FRY, called into question the appropriate relationship between means and ends in an intervention designed to save lives. However, the use of military force was the only way of putting an end to the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo, based on the UN Security Council Resolution 1199, which among other things, expressed deep concern about the excessive use of force by Serbian security forces and the Yugoslav army, and called for a cease-fire by both parties to the conflict. Approximately 740,000 Kosovars, about one-third of the entire population of Kosovo, had been expelled from the latter one and thousands more are believed to be internally displaced. An unknown number of Kosovars have been killed or disappeared in the different operations, and there are more than 20000 victims of sexual violence. This intervention of NATO had the purpose to maintain the grim possibility of another Srebrenica repeating itself in Kosovo.

NATO has been leading a peace-support operation in Kosovo, the Kosovo Force (KFOR) since June 1999, after the end of the war, when Kosovo passed under the international administration of the United Nations. KFOR's objectives were to deter renewed hostilities, establish a secure environment and ensure public safety and order, demilitarize the Kosovo Liberation Army, sup-

port the international humanitarian effort and coordinate with the international civil presence. Nevertheless, one error made in relation to KFOR operations in Kosovo was incapability to be adequately prepared for a probable are-up of violence in the northern section. The eruption of hostilities in the tense town of Mitrovica in 2000 and 2004 exemplified NATO's inability to deal effectively with these occurrences

in a diligent and swift manner. Another criticism would relate to the development of close relations between KFOR and former members of the now-defunct KLA.

Finally, without the American tactics on NATO member states, there would not be an intervention of NATO in BiH and, also in Kosovo, something that is emphasized by the author himself.