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Pessimism about the U.S. peacekeeping mission in Bosnia is plumbing new depths these days, at the very moment that prospects for the mission's success are brightening. Since June, NATO forces have finally been leaving their bunkers and taking action to implement the Dayton peace accords. But these first signs of hope have been greeted only by renewed calls for withdrawal.

Opponents of the deployment, ignoring the recent progress, have once again declared the Bosnia policy mission impossible. "Our goals are unrealistic," Henry Kissinger insists. "The overwhelming reality" in Bosnia, he wrote recently, is the "ineradicable hatreds" of the Muslims, Croats and Serbs. Since we cannot solve the problem of ethnic hatred, Mr. Kissinger avers, we can accomplish nothing at all in Bosnia. He recommends the U.S. preserve the current cease-fire for a "reasonable period"—a decent interval—and then withdraw and let the chips fall where they may. Other critics, like Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R., Texas), have called for a formal partition of Bosnia into ethnically cleansed enclaves, followed by a rapid U.S. departure from the scene.

Achievable Goals

What these critics really mean, but dare not say aloud, is that the best we can hope for is a pause that will allow NATO and the U.S. to pull out with a few shreds of their prestige still intact before the awful war in Bosnia resumes. This defeatism placed. The goals of the U.S. and NATO in Bosnia are both limited and



achievable, so long as we have the will and the patience to see the strategy through to the end.

Let's recall why we went into Bosnia in the first place. It was not to eradicate centuries-old ethnic hatreds in the Balkans. The existence of those hatreds, while unfortunate, was tolerable so long as they were contained by institutions and power arrangements that kept them from exploding into warfare and unspeakable atrocities. But when Yugoslavia self-destructed in 1991, the lid came off. Ethnic mistrust, exploited by Slobodan Milosevic and others, turned into ethnic war and genocide.

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presenting the West with a set of new threats. Warfare in Bosnia could spill over into Kosovo and Macedonia, possibly involving Greece and Turkey—both NATO members.

Next, there was the inescapable fact that a genocidal war had broken out on European soil. Some argued that the Balkans were somehow not really in Europe, or that they were outside the normal operating sphere of NATO. But could NATO pretend to be undertaking the important post-Cold War mission of preserving security and stability in Europe while ignoring the first challenge to that mission? Could the U.S. proclaim itself the leader of the Bosnian crisis as if it insisted that the Bosnian crisis was merely a European problem? Even Mr. Kissinger agrees that "the NATO allies would have done well to stop the killing" in 1991 on the grounds that "they would not tolerate such outrages within reach of NATO forces."

The overarching goal of the Dayton peace plan was not to teach Serbs, Muslims and Croats to love each other, or even to bring complete justice to the victims of genocide and ethnic cleansing. Rather, the goal of Dayton was pragmatic and closely attuned to U.S. and European interests. The accords aimed to meet the new threats to European stability and to the vitality and moral integrity of NATO, and to do so by keeping Bosnia together and building new institutions and power arrangements that could manage and contain ethnic ten-

sions, as they had been managed and contained before.

This has been a hard task, and until recently the Clinton administration has mishandled it. For more than a year, it oversold what Dayton could accomplish and, more damaging, understated the commitment's costs and duration. The price for these deceptions is now high: The critics are driving a wedge between high expectations and grudging reality.

But somewhere between unrealistic hopes and utter despair lies a sensible strategy for dealing with Bosnia and a set of goals that are limited and achievable.

yet essential to prevent further war, genocide and instability in Europe.

Preserving a multiethnic Bosnian state within its current boundaries does not require that we eradicate ethnic nationalism overnight or even over the next few years. It does require that we use our enormous economic, diplomatic and military power in a sustained way to demonstrate to all of Bosnia's ethnic groups that their only safe and economically productive course is to implement Dayton and to begin cooperating to reconstruct Bosnia. Those who flout the provisions must suffer economic and diplomatic isolation and the risk of facing NATO's guns. Those who support Dayton must be protected and rewarded.

The evidence that such a strategy has started to work, and that success in Bosnia does require immediate ethnic harmony, can be found today in Republika Srpska, the Serbian part of Bosnia. President Biljana Plavsic is no lover of Muslims. As recently as a year ago she was a close ally of indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic, and during the war she supported ethnic cleansing. Her decision this summer to support Dayton was a response to the economic decay of Srpska, not a conversion to multiethnic harmony.

But Ms. Plavsic's shift shows the new realities in Bosnia that NATO has created since June. Thanks to NATO's more vigorous efforts to implement Dayton, and the "omise of economic aid to Ms. Plavsic's stronghold in Banja Luka, she and many

other Bosnian Serbs have begun to see the wisdom of compliance. If NATO keeps the pressure on and the inducements flowing, over time Mr. Karadzic will see his followers dwindle. They would probably divide even faster if NATO summoned the courage to capture Mr. Karadzic and send him to The Hague for trial.

Keeping U.S. troops in Bosnia for an uncertain period of time is not easy to sell at home. It will require some candor by the president and the Republicans in Congress. Dayton will not be implemented by next June, and pursuing even limited goals in Bosnia would require taking some risks and showing both personal and political courage. It will mean occasionally putting U.S. and NATO troops in harm's way, and it will mean having the tenacity to stay even if casualties occur.

What is the alternative? Mr. Kissinger's thinly veiled call for a decent interval before NATO withdraws and the war resumes does not even pretend to answer the question of how a "run away" exit strategy will affect NATO and U.S. leadership in Europe. Nor does Sen. Hutchison's proposal for a partition of Bosnia. None of the parties are satisfied with the current territorial division of Bosnia, least of all the Muslims who are today better armed and ready to fight if Dayton is abandoned.

Partition's Pains

When the next war breaks out, Serbs in Srpska will suffer as much as everyone else. Unless NATO is willing to patrol the partition lines for some time to come—which Sen. Hutchison does not favor—partition only leads to the eruption of a war just as vicious and dangerous as the one NATO went in to stop. One can safely predict that the moment we left, the pressure would begin to build for us to go back in.

The U.S. could survive if we walked out of Bosnia without achieving what we went in to do. But many thousands of Bosnian Muslims, Serbs and Croats wouldn't, and neither would America's position as leader of the NATO alliance. Atlanticists like Henry Kissinger, who have beaten the drums for the expansion of NATO, ought to keep that in mind as they help set the stage for the alliance's failure in Bosnia.

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Bosnia: In for the Long Haul