



**Gen. Antonio Catena – Vice President AESI**

## INCIPIIT

The Balkan Peninsula has always been a patchwork of peoples: five principal languages; five religions (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Muslim, Jewish).

Ethnic tensions and border rivalries, due to the existence of large minorities beyond the national borders, caused in the twentieth century disputes and wars till the bloody conflicts broken out in 1991, eleven years after the President Tito death which marked the beginning of the Yugoslav crisis.

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

An historical overview seems opportune to a better understanding of the most complex Peace Support Operation carried up to now.

In summer 1991 Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia proclaimed their independence causing the intervention of the Federal Army in order to prevent the Federation breakdown. The European Community recognized the states of Slovenia and Croatia , conferring , de facto, an international value to the military operations ended in Slovenia in the same year in accordance with the Brioni Agreement – but only in 1995 in Croatia after a real war between the Federal Army and the Croatian Forces in spite of the fragile armistice mediated by the United Nations that in 1992 had sent a Peacekeeping Contingent ( UNPROFOR ).

The Bosnia Herzegovina too was aiming at independence, though understood in various way according to the interests of the multi-ethnic and multireligious groups. Early in April 1992 the Federal Army started besieging Sarajevo. The Bosnian Serbs reacted by declaring the independence of the Bosnia Herzegovina Republic and by asking the UN to use military forces against the Federal Army. The fighting extended soon to other towns, including Srebrenica in a ferocious interethnic war that opposed not only Bosnian Serbians to Bosnian Muslims but also Croats of Herzegovina to Muslims who in some cases were fighting against the Serbians politically guided by Radovan Karadzic and militarily by General Ratko Mladic.

After the cease—fire imposed by the International Community to Sarajevo in 1994 and the Serb Bosnian refusal to accept the subdivision of Serbia Herzegovina in three republics on ethnic base (Croatian, Muslim, Serbo-Bosnian), fighting broke out again and the Sarajevo siege became fiercer. The Bosnian Serbs occupied the Srebrenica enclave massacring about eight thousand Muslims and

committing all kinds of foul deeds that shook out of their torpor even those who trust that crises can be always solved through dialogues.

The failure both the of UN Peacekeeping mission and the diplomatic missions made necessary to apply to the United States for the cease fire imposition. The NATO resolute intervention and the renewal of an intensive diplomatic activity convinced the belligerents to accept the Dayton Agreements, signed in December 1995 that provide Bosnia Herzegovina be an only multi-ethnic state divided in two entities: the Croat-Muslim Federation and the Serbian Republic of Bosnia Herzegovina; each of them with his own Constitution. The keeping of these complex agreements was secured by 60.000 soldiers (Implementation Force) from NATO nation and from 20 non-NATO nation, including Russia that was seeking a new role in Europe.

## SOME CONSIDERATIONS

The complexity of the recalled events showed the UN structural inadequacy to perform the tasks of a new international peacekeeping in that period of interethnic conflicts and failed states. On the other hand, it showed clearly how much it is effective to build a global security construct based on a small number of major Powers and Regional Organizations.

Nowadays the Peace Support Operations require a specific qualification not only of the military but also of the other Institutions and Organizations able to interact, to accomplish well-coordinated tasks within the process of the pace construction. University, in cooperation with diplomacy and military forces can do its best as the keeper of that culture necessary for the preparation of the future ruling classes and particularly effective for the moral reconstruction of conflicting societies. "University – said an emeritus rector of a nation devastated by violence – can succeed where the international politics failed" .... too optimistic? May be. Nevertheless, AESI engages in giving substance to that assertion both in the Balkans and in the Middle East.

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

When I arrived in Sarajevo (2001) together with other AESI members, making use of a flight for the Italian Contingent, the operations were in "Joint Forge" phase carried out by the NATO Stabilization Force (SFOR). The mission was to create a secure environment suitable for the self-governing prosecution of the peace process with the progressive reduction of the military presence and a greater involvement of the Civilian Organizations and local Authorities.

I was impressed by the still existing ruins and by the life trouble particularly in rural zones where plenty of areas couldn't be cultivated owing to the mines and the poor practicability of the cart roads.

The Special Representative of the Secretary General and Coordinator of the UN operations in Bosnia Herzegovina (Doctor Jacques Paul Klein ) thus described the situation during an AESI visit:

“For the people of the former Yugoslavia who just a decade ago would have been considered as among the first candidates for European integration, more than an entire generation has been lost. Some three hundred thousand people were killed; among them ten thousand victims of the Srebrenica and Zepa massacre. Three and a half million were displaced or became refugees; homes, business, infrastructures were destroyed and, particularly tragic for the future, the brightest youth left in despair, enriching the countries that welcomed them but impoverishing the lands that they grow up in and loved”. But to that unhappy picture acted as a counter balance all that had been realized during the six years after Dayton with the involvement of military forces, diplomacy and university, proving that the International Community has conscience and capability to act with great firmness when the human rights are scorned.

The same conscience and capability were showed in Kosovo in 1999.

AESI was one of the first Associations talented with the strong will to do its best in favour of culture and training “through which the revival passes” (the Dean of the Mosul engineering faculty said). We shared the same concept with the rectors of Mostar Est and Mostar West universities, scarcely talking to each other, when we paid visit to them.

We had begun by joining together in Sarajevo, at the barracks of the Italian contingent, the rectors of the Bosnian Universities. The Italian Ambassador and the Commanding Officer were attending the meetings, proving that together it is possible to get good results. Such a convincement characterized the AESI meetings with the University of Bosnia and Belgrade other than my following visit to the KFOR (Kosovo Force) still operating in Kosovo to foster stability in the Western Balkan area and to support the development of local capabilities.

## CONCLUSION

I conclude with a reflection of the already mentioned UN Representative in Bosnia Herzegovina: “The fact that five years after Dayton ended the fighting in Bosnia Herzegovina and we are still confronting extremist nationalists who are fighting the war by other means, and that in Kosovo we have been able to return most of the people, but not to restore trust, demonstrates the limits of the international interventions. The International Community can suppress fighting, we can rebuild infrastructure, but only the people themselves and their leaders can rebuild a sustainable peace “.

It is difficult to disagree with him. Ergo, we should act on the people and their leaders; but how? Undoubtedly by diffusing culture ... not only the one produced inside the lecture-halls but also the one acquirable on the field; and that is a fundamental task for the European Association of International Studies.

In this contest the European Union can play an important role by proposing concrete possibilities to avoid that Bosnia Herzegovina and some other shaky states of the ex-Yugoslavia remain in a Balkan no man’s land, marginalized from Europe and the International Community.