

The Dayton Agreement

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It was the intervention of the Americans that eventually proved decisive; by assisting the Croatian army, they established a balance with the Serb forces in Bosnia, and their diplomatic intervention led to the peace conference which met in Dayton (Ohio) from 1 to 21 November 1995 and reached an agreement that was concluded in Paris on 14 December. The Dayton Agreement was a peace agreement that preserved the entity of the Bosnian state within its international recognised frontiers, with a reunified Sarajevo as its capital and comprising two entities: one Muslim-Croat (51 % of the territory), the other Serb (49 % of the territory). In order to ensure compliance with this agreement, President Clinton secured the Senate's backing to send 20 000 American soldiers to Bosnia. On 20 December 1995, UNPROFOR was replaced by IFOR (Implementation Force), a 63 000-strong multilateral force under the command of NATO, which included 20 000 US soldiers and was responsible for keeping peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The western Balkans would nevertheless continue to be a powder keg, but the presence of a multilateral Stabilisation Force (SFOR, which replaced IFOR) under US command, which was set up in November 1996 and renewed in July 1998, brought peace to Bosnia.

Yet other provinces of the former Yugoslavia descended into civil war. This was particularly the case for Kosovo, historically a Serb 'cradle' whose population consisted of 90 % Muslim Albanians who were in favour of independence or incorporation into Albania. Clashes in Kosovo between Albanian separatists and Serb forces increased in 1998. With mediation attempts proving unsuccessful, the European Union imposed sanctions and NATO launched a retaliation operation against Serbia in June 1998.