

The Yugoslav conflict and European Community diplomacy

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Whilst the break-up of the Soviet Union was relatively peaceful, the collapse of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia led to years of civil war that ended only with the intervention of the Western powers. In 1989, the Republic of Serbia announced its intention of creating a 'Greater Serbia' that would include the Serb minorities in Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia. When Croatia and Slovenia declared independence in 1991, they were brutally repressed by the largely Serb Yugoslav federal army. The European Community at first declared a preference for the continuation of the Yugoslav Federation, which had been linked to the European Economic Community (EEC) by a cooperation agreement since 1980. The Twelve, divided, had to call on the United Nations and the United States, which played the leading role in the Yugoslav crisis. However, the European Union regained some measure of cohesion, with the adoption of an action plan for the former Yugoslavia initiated by France and Germany in November 1993. The war in the former Yugoslavia was a test of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) provided for by the Treaty on European Union. It also highlighted the inadequacies of an independent military capability, whereas it was the European Union that provided most of the humanitarian aid.