

Editorial

The Entente Cordiale

On June 15, President Clinton, in answer to a question from the press, reaffirmed his policy commitment for military steps to rein in Serbian aggression in the Balkans. Unfortunately, the President said, his policy had not changed, but U.S. allies still do not agree with it. What he was referring to was the disagreement with the British and French, who object to any such action being taken; more precisely, the agreement between them to continue support to the Serbian aggressors.

Despite efforts by the U.S. administration to try and claim that the war in the Balkans is not a matter of vital U.S. national security interests, it is clearly just that. In fact, the stronger Serbia gets, the more we see similar forces coming to the fore in the former Soviet Union, to reassert a "Great Russia" policy. What has occurred is that the U.S. President has simply capitulated to pressure from the reincarnated Entente Cordiale—the Franco-British alliance which first arose in 1898 and led to the outbreak of World War I.

Historically, on those occasions when France has acted in accord with the British balance-of-power geopolitical gameplan, the whole world has suffered. Clinton's backdown is leading to one more debacle for mankind. This century began with the submission by the nations of Europe to the British liberal economic, political, and pseudo-scientific worldview. It is ending with an equally great disaster as so-called free-market economics are used as the tool to reimpose the rule of oligarchy on an economically ravaged world.

While no imperialist policy can be justified, still, a comparison between British policies in what is now known as the "Third World," and those of France and Germany, show the monetarist British taking the lead in the depredation of subject populations. Crucial to this is their racist outlook justified by the theories of Parson Malthus. Thus, the British brazenly ruled out the possibility of development for any people they had subjugated. They asserted that no improvement in the lives of subject "races" should occur because it would only occasion a countervailing increase of hunger and famine.

When the Entente Cordiale was originally formed in 1898, the key issue was Franco-German relations. Would France and Germany continue in fratricidal wars, or would they ally on the basis of a joint commitment to inter-European economic development—based upon the expansion of major infrastructure projects such as the trans-Saharan and trans-Siberian railways—which would also allow the export of technology to Africa and Asia?

The latter was the policy of France's Foreign Minister Gabriel Hanotaux. Unfortunately for the future of world politics over the past century, despite his tenure in office during 1894-95 and then again during 1896-99, his policies were defeated. Hanotaux capitulated to British policy directives. Forced to choose between the British and French, he acceded to the formation of the Entente Cordiale, which also included Russia.

The consolidation of that unholy alliance occurred during a standoff between the British and the French in Sudan, at Fashoda, where a French military mission opposed the British on Sept. 20, 1898. The French government backed down before British pressure, and military forces were withdrawn on Nov. 4. A comprehensive military alliance against Germany and Austria-Hungary was then drawn up by the two nations, which split Europe down the middle.

From then on, the drumbeat was on for war.

While the United Nations is now ostensibly the forum where policy alliances are forged, the reality today is not far different from 100 years ago. The policy being followed today is precisely that of the wicked Entente Cordiale. The only difference is that the scale of nuclear weaponry and global integration of the world economy mean that another world war would be a quicker descent into hell.

The juxtaposition of military action in Somalia targeting innocent civilians, to the failure to take action to rescue Bosnia, tells it all. Essentially, all of the mistakes of the 20th century, those leading to World War I and those that brought us to World War II, are being repeated with a vengeance.