

UNIVERSITY OF MACEDONIA



Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies

MA Dissertation

*Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of the Masters in
“Politics and Economics of Contemporary Eastern and Southeastern Europe”*

By Apostolis Karatolios

**« Russian Foreign Policy towards SE Europe in post-Cold war era:
Moscow’s quest for power in a competing international system.
The case of Kosovo »**

Supervisor A: Dr. Nikolaos Raptopoulos

Supervisor B: Dr. Manos Karagiannis

**Thessaloniki
December 2014**

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Summary

Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union seemed powerless to defend its interests in the near external and neighboring environment, let alone the interests of former allies (such as Serbia), which watched, unable to react, to leave one by one from the Warsaw Pact for seeking for an accession in EU and NATO. In the early 1990s Russia in the Balkans region followed rather a «neutral policy», primarily due to inconveniences related to difficulties confronted in internal political scene level as well as in international level, her leadership although aware of the huge internally and economic problems facing Russia, showed difficulties in adapting herself in the new realities of the international system, as if USSR had not ceased to exist. Thus, Russia fatally accepted the dissolution of Yugoslavia, without being able to protect the vital interests of its last ally in the Balkans, who was no other than Serbia.

The successor of B. Yeltsin, V. Putin, after having brought about the economic recovery and managed to de-ideologize the Foreign Policy of Russia, attempted the configuration of the foreign policy based on energy and financial investment. Putin played a prominent role in the effort to maintain the status quo in Kosovo, given that a potential secession of Kosovo would mean the creation of precedent for future secessions in other areas, some of which are located in Russian's south border. In this regard, Russia was the first country that reacted to Kosovo's declaration of independence and competed for a non-international recognition of Kosovo, taking advantage of its participation in UNSC.

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FOREWORD

Soviet Union was always a considerable power and it was receiving the respect and recognition of all the Western powers, as it played a major role in shaping the situation in the wider Eurasian space. Soviet Union always attracted and defended all the powerless and economically weak countries of the world and all those who did not tolerate the unipolar global governance. Leaders from western countries, who showed hatred for the Communist regime of the Soviet Union, admired the achievements of this country. It was Winston Churchill who first recognized the power of Russia in public and foresaw the outcome of the WWII during a BBC radio broadcast in 1939, when German forces invaded in Eastern Europe: *"I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key. This key is national Russian interest. It cannot be in accordance with the interest of the safety of Russia that Germany should plant itself upon the shores of the Black Sea, or that it should overrun the Balkan States and subjugate the Slavonic peoples of south eastern Europe. That would be contrary to the historic life-interests of Russia.... Hitler, and all that Hitler stands for, have been and are being warned off the east and the southeast of Europe "*¹. This quote and many other such as the quote of Henry Kissinger that recognized the role of Russia in the European balance of power the last 200 years², constitute grounds for me to deal with the achievements of the Russian nation that reached the edge of the collapse in after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, but managed to revive from its ashes and to evaluate its potential to play again a leading role in its neighbour and international environment. The Balkans and especially the war in Yugoslavia exemplify the reappearance of Russian power in the international stage. Particularly during the Kosovo crisis, Russia has demonstrated a powerful presence and shown that it can defend its interests armed with diplomacy. The nadir point in the recent Russian history was the dissolution of Soviet Union while its attitude during Kosovo's declaration of independence was culmination point and a diplomatic comeback of Russian hegemony and a strong blow to the US dominance in the area. Russia, the new emerging state that resulted after the dissolution of the Soviet Union

¹ The Churchill Society, Winston Churchill, BBC Broadcast, London, 1st October 1939. The Russian Enigma, . <http://www.churchill-society-london.org.uk/RusnEnig.html>

² Henry Kissinger, Diplomacy, New York, 1994, p 32

in 1992, became the largest successor of the Soviet Union and a new, autonomous and an active member of the international system.

In the post-Soviet era decisive questions were raised among Eastern and Western countries, regarding the peace and security in Eastern Europe of that period, due to the power gap that was created after the dissolution of Soviet Union. Will the new Russian state manage to revive? Will it follow the same track of Soviet Union's foreign policy? Would Russia be ready in the near future to develop tight relations with the West in military and in political level, free from its defects from the Cold War era? What would be the relations of Russia with the former communist states? Was Russia ready to re-assume a principal role in Southeastern Europe? Was Russia able to prevent the dissolution of Yugoslavia and keep playing a dominant and protective role of all the orthodox countries? All these question were arisen among all these people that dealt with geopolitics and geostrategic and made provisions for the new balance of power in the region. The Western observers hoped that Russia would renounce the role of global superpower and would limit itself in a more restraint role, that of the 'ordinary power', both in Europe and in the world with the role of a young partner of the US, under a new unipolar world order.

The new Russian government of B.Yeltsin that took office in 1991 and much more the successive government of V. Putin in 2000 did not compromise themselves with the current situation of a weak and powerless Russian economy and they strived for the reconstruction of the Russian state and the recovery of its lost prestige in the international stage. In its foreign relations in 1990s Russia, the once superpower, saw one after the other its allies to leave the Warsaw Pact and seek for the admission to Western coalitions and alliances, but the West did not positively and promptly respond to the fulfillment of the aspirations of all Eastern Europe states. In the power gap created after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1991 and the anarchy situation that has emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe all the major powers of the Western world and especially NATO and the EU sought how to be benefit of it and played a leading role in the political developments in the area.

In 1992 for first time in European history a large state seemed to be unable to act in international politics according to its "national interests". The political developments in Russia after the collapse of communism were reflected in foreign

policy towards both the former Soviet republics and the former communist countries of Eastern Europe. Russian foreign policy in that period was inadequate and the situation in Southeast Europe was mostly hostile against Russia which was considered the successor of USSR. In Russian foreign policy of that period one could observe a trend of revival of Soviet hegemony towards Southeast Europe with disappointing results, mostly due to lack of pragmatism and realism.

Russia attempted unsuccessfully to re-approach many of the countries of the former Eastern bloc with no apparent results. The efforts of Yeltsin to revive the prestige Soviet Union fell through because they lacked reliability and effective guarantees to cover the needs of collapsing economies of Eastern Europe. Thus, a new competitive environment created in Eastern and particularly in South Eastern Europe between Russia and the West and the future of these countries was depended both on the situation of their economy and to the ties that the political elites of these countries kept with Russia in order to protect their private interests.

For the Eastern bloc countries of Central Europe it was much easier to adapt themselves to the new situation, as they had started earlier their efforts to westernize their economies. For the SEE countries this attempt was more difficult, because beyond of their economic situation, this area was always under the control of the Soviet Union and they had established a centralized communist regime. The Balkans as a geographical area does not neatly fall within territories of Russia's primary strategic interest, which include the CIS and SCO countries, the Baltic regions and other places with a Russian population (such as the Republic of Georgia). The Balkans, however, features prominently in foreign policy discussions in the Russian Federal Assembly and in the Russian press and Moscow always kept an eye for the developments in that region. This area provides to Russia access to Mediterranean Sea, it constitutes a buffer zone between Russia and the West, and it constitutes an alternative energy road for the Russian resources that connected Eastern with Western Europe.

In 1990s Russia having seen that loses its traditional allies in Balkans, exercised some political pressure to the governments of eastern Balkans (such as Bulgaria and Romania) in order to maintain some political connection to the region but it met negative responses from these countries, and the countries of Western

Europe and USA, which wanted to integrate them in western coalitions. Eventually, Russia made a last effort to play a leading role in the developments in the region with the involvement in the Yugoslav crisis, defending the national interests of Serbia, which in many cases coincided with its own national interests. So, Russia despite its financial problems within the country, focused in the developments in the Yugoslav crisis and especially the developments in Bosnia and Kosovo. While in the case of Bosnia Russia was unable to react, due to extended economic crisis that prevailed for years in Russia, in the case of Kosovo Russia demonstrated a powerful reaction, especially during the period of Putin's leadership. Moreover, Moscow, after the bombing of Serbia and as soon as V. Putin took the office, sought to play a more active role in the international affairs and pursued to be respected by all international actors, without joining necessarily any international organization.

The Kosovo issue was for Russia a sensitive international issue, not so much for the defense of the Serbia's sovereign rights, a state which was a traditional ally of Tsarist Russia, but because a possible secession of Kosovo from Serbia would set a precedent and would open the bags of Aeolus for similar secessions in Russia's southern border. Russia eventually admitted that the situation in Kosovo is rampant. There was a need to find a viable solution for both sides, which would take into account the rights of the Serbian minority, but at the same time it could not accept the declaration of independence.

Russia's current presence in the Balkans is part of Russia's overarching new foreign policy framework, which is based on pragmatism, and aimed at increasing Russia's political, economic influence and strategic assets in the Balkans. Russia's strategy has provided more independent foreign policy options to policy-makers in countries such as Serbia, complementing their efforts to join the EU which require an implementation of complex legal, economic and political standards.

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- **ABBREVIATIONS**

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DPA	Dayton Peace Agreement
ESDP	European Security and Defenses Policy
ICO	International Civil Office
IFOR	Implementation Force
KFOR	Kosovo Force
MAP	Membership Action Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PCA	Partner and Cooperation Agreement
PfP	Peace for Partnership
SEE	South Eastern Europe
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
UN	United Nations
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the Soviet regime in mid-1992 marked the beginning of a new era in Russian politics. The most prominent of those was the disengagement of Russia from the remnants of the political structures and institutions of the Soviet era, and a shift to the market economy, entering into a long period of transition and the re-definition of its role as a global actor. At the same time Russian leadership would maintain some elements that guaranteeing the individual interests of political elite.

The new Russia was found in a changing international environment very different from that of its predecessor. In the place of the former "Empire", now new independent states were emerging and an equal number of national flags were raised at the UN Headquarters. The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact caused the loss of Moscow's allies - satellites of central and eastern Europe, while in the economic field, the transition from state controlled economy to the free market economy, caused turmoil resulted in a galloping inflation and ultimately in the rapid decline in living level of large social groups.

The geo-political changes in Southeast Europe after the end of the Cold War saw many former Communist countries becoming soon members of the EU and NATO. This had both positive and negative consequences for Russia, prompting it to become more active particular in the developments in Balkans, especially under two Vladimir Putin's presidential terms, and his successor Dmitri Medvedev's Presidency (2008-12). Moreover, Moscow's economic interests have been advanced with a larger presence of the Russian companies (both state-owned and those in private ownership) in the Balkans.

A major problem that Russian governments had to face in the post-Soviet era, was the loss of international prestige and power which left the US to act as a sole big power in the international system. The United States and all the Western Europe states saw the weakness of Moscow as an excellent opportunity to expand their influence eastward in order to fill the "power gap", which was created by the collapse of the Soviet Union at the center of Eurasia and play dominant role in the area.

In 1990's, Russian foreign policy displayed weaknesses and incoherence in its diplomatic, political and economic sectors, as it was undergoing a transition from

state socialism to democratic governance structures and market economy. In the international level, Russia could not prevent NATO members from launching military strikes in the Balkans in 1995 and in 1999, despite its vocal opposition to them within the United Nations Security Council. The EU members and the US also viewed with suspicion Russia's opposition to NATO expansion and military campaigns, and Russia's responses to the Chechen separatism. Russia's economic troubles also worsened after the 1998 financial crisis, which further weakened Russian diplomatic clout and restricted its foreign policy options.

During Yeltsin's presidency, Russia has gone through a period of redefinition its foreign policy, influenced by an unrealistic trend of the revival of the Soviet Union, while most countries of the former Soviet Union had terminated their relations with the ex-superpower of the eastern bloc, because Russia lacked a credible foreign policy.

Despite the gloomy forecasts by the international observers, V. Putin, a very capable political leader who served first as Prime Minister in 1999 and later became Russian President in 2000, created expectations about continued economic and political reforms. The power to V. Putin's centralized policy was given by the amendment of the Russian Constitution in 1993, which provided strong power to the Russian President and weakened the role of Duma.

Putin's policy took advantage of the favorable international circumstances, of high oil prices that led to the recovery course the Russian economy. However, the necessary modernization and much more the democratization of the country, passed into the second order. Russian economic policy, particularly during Putin's governance, has begun to show a stabilizing trend and particularly increased growth rates, providing the component requirements for future alignment with the economic model of the most developed countries. Moreover, the selection of the best administration policy between the management of limitless natural resources and claims for the control of the major energy roads, aims to an extended and dominant role in the energy chessboard, the dynamic reset to the arena of international developments.

A thumbnail of the impact of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in Russia's foreign policy is seen through the Russia's role in Balkan developments and especially in the Yugoslav crisis. Firm conclusions about the course of evolution Russia's foreign policy can someone exported evaluating the period of Russian engagement in the Kosovo crisis up to the declaration of independence and the following period that is characterized by the persistence of the rejection of recognition of its independence.

With the collapse of Communism, the Eastern Europe has been freed from the “ideological boundaries” of the Cold War period. Consequently, and the states of the Balkan Peninsula so far under soviet control, ceased to belong in the Russian sphere of influence, since many countries- included newly emerged states that were created after the dissolution of Yugoslavia- sought for accession to western organizations such as EU and NATO, but the western coalitions did not fulfilled their expectations on the whole. Most states pursued their economic growth by accepting the rules of market economy, because the rules of the centralized economy during the communist regime had driven them to the edge of collapse.

Slovenia, and Croatia, sought from the very first moment and before the collapse of Soviet Union to consolidate them in Central Europe. At the same time in the West, countries from the western Balkans that were involved in Yugoslav wars and they had a weaker economy, were considered as a Balkan state of the second order and it was more difficult to be accepted by western institutes.

The fact that most Balkan states were part of the “Eastern bloc” are aiming to join, or have already joined the EU and NATO gave floor for debate between intellectuals. However, it was arisen a fundamental question for the role of the Russian nation in this sensitive area in 1990’s which belonged in the Soviet era in its sphere of influence: what caused this change in the evolution of Balkan history and what was the role of the Russian entity in this sensitive area after the “ideological revolution” of the Balkans and their “integration” with the western institutions. Did Russia compromise with the perceived loss of control of SE Europe?

Some preliminary observations as N. Markovic notes lead us at three crucial events that can interpret this change of the Balkan history³. The first is the Yugoslav crisis that followed the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the subsequent declarations of independence. The second is the internationalization of the crisis, in other words the involvement of the “international community” in the conflict. During this process it became apparent NATO’s trend for eastward expansion and the setting up of a new, both European and global, security model. The third event is the fact that the Balkans has always been seen as an “object” rather than a “subject” of international relations. The NATOization of the Balkans only proves this observation. In light of the Balkan history, the subordination of the region to the big powers, which dominate the international system is not an unusual one, as evidenced not only by centuries-long Ottoman or Austro-Hungarian rule, but also by more recent decades in Balkan history.

On the other hand, the Western involvement in the Yugoslav conflict had a positive consequence to the loss of the fragile balance previously existing in this part of the world. However, it was not Russia that implemented peace in that area. In the beginning of 1990s there was no clear understanding in Russia of what was going on in the Balkans due to difficulties inherent to the radical transformations in the Russian political and social system. Russian attention had focus on how to recover from its financial crisis and to overcome some vital issues in her neighborhood with the new emerging states after the dissolution of Soviet Union, rather than claiming an international recognition. For this simple reason Russia’s Balkan policy could not be but inadequate.

The Yugoslav crisis, which has impacted so greatly on the current development of international relations and new geopolitical divisions in the world, was initially perceived by Russian authorities as an unpleasant obstacle on their way to the “civilized world”⁴. That is why Russia was in hurry to recognize – well before any intra Yugoslav agreements were reached – the independence of Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. That is why Russia willingly accepted to play the power game

3 Nina Markovic, *Russia’s Role and Influence In The Balkans In The 21st Century: Investment, Energy And Politics*, Melbourne: University of Melbourne, February 2011, p.2-8.

4 Nikiforov, Konstantin, « Russian Foreign Policy and the Balkans in the 1990s », Moscow, 2007, p.3-10.

according to the Western rules in solving the Yugoslav issue: big players impose their will onto the Yugoslav peoples, and the latter comply unquestioningly⁵.

Russia in 1990's had the illusion that if she succeeded to play a role of mediator in Bosnia would gain an international financial assistance. So, Russia was used by western countries as a tool to bend the Serbian resistance. What Russia was needed for in the Bosnian case, was to play a supporting role in favor of the western countries, in order to ensure its formal legitimacy, by exerting traditional pressure on the Bosnian Serbs. Russia played this supporting role during the Dayton peace talks in November 1996 as well as during peace implementation operations in post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina. Accordingly, Russia's idea of establishing a new "pan-European system of security" based on the OSCE framework ended up in failure⁶.

In the Kosovo crisis there was a little bigger interference of Russia. Once again NATO's attack against Serbia could not be avoided despite the efforts of the Russian special envoy V. Chernomirdin. The West managed to tie the Serbs down and break their fierce resistance.

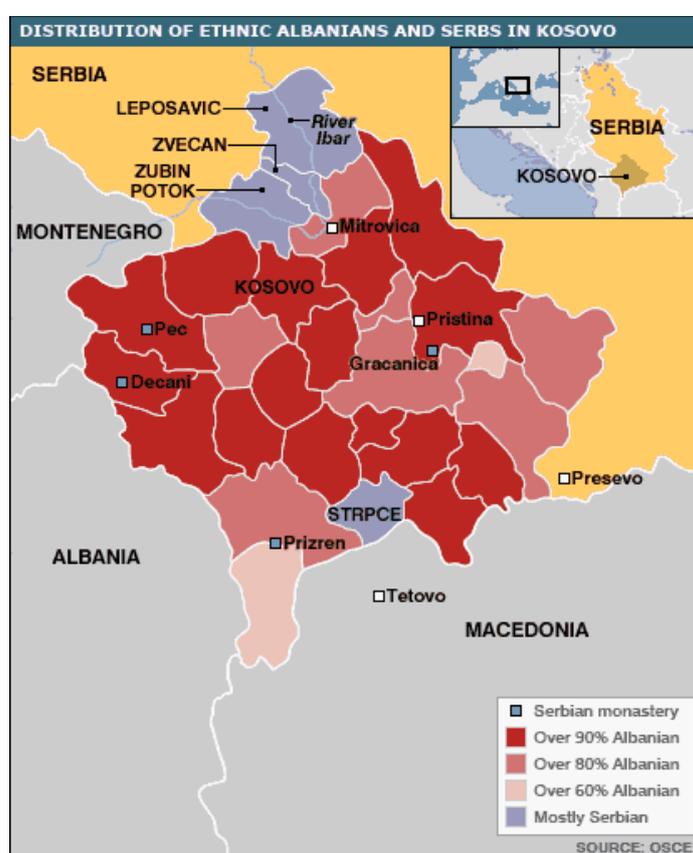
After the Kosovo crisis and until its declaration of independence Russia was almost unable to influence situations in the Balkans. Russian diplomacy stopped scoring high level victories in the Balkans. : In reality Russian diplomacy seemed unwilling to recall the events in the former Yugoslavia, or even chose to forget them altogether. An indication of Russia's attitude towards the Yugoslav crisis was the withdrawal of the few Russian peacekeepers from Bosnia and Kosovo in 2003.

The last few years, however, Russia got more and more involved in the Kosovo status talks. The reasons for this reactivation may be found in Russia's aspiration to transform her newly-gained economic power into political power, and also in the fact that there are in the post-Soviet territory as well some unrecognized self-proclaimed states, moreover, for the most part pro-Russian. What Russia pursue during the talks about the Kosovo's declaration of independence is to lay down "universal principles"

5 J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr. "U.S. Army War College Guide To National Security Policy And Strategy" 2nd Edition Revised and Expanded, Carlisle, June 2006 p.3-7.

⁶ Nikiforov, Konstantin, « Russian Foreign Policy and the Balkans in the 1990s », Moscow, 2007, p.3-10

applicable in all situations, not just in the case of Kosovo⁷ and reassure the legitimacy of its declaration of independence. It is clear that the recognition of Kosovo will put only a temporary end to the Yugoslav crisis. All the proposed solutions for both Bosnia and Kosovo issues only transfer the problem to the future, where they will be faced by the next generations. The potential consequences of the Balkan crisis caused the rapid reaction of international organizations in order to prevent the spillover of crisis beyond the Balkan Peninsula. However, the ethnic tensions cannot be resolved automatically with the interventions of international actors, but needs a long run engagement of international community to bridge the differences among all sides.



Map 1: Distribution of Ethnic Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo in 2008

Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7246809.stm>

The role of Russia in the Southeastern Europe in the post communism era and Moscow's quest for power in a competing international system and especially in the Kosovo crisis is the object of the present dissertation. It was Moscow's quest for power that drew more the attention of international community especially its presence

⁷ Amanda Akçakoca, Thomas V anhouwaert, Richard Whitman and Stefan Wolff, *After Georgia: conflict resolution in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood*, European Policy Center, April 2009, p. 26 – 27

during the Yugoslav crisis, which with its mistakes and its weaknesses allowed the emergence of the current situation in the ex-Yugoslav territory. There is little doubt that the most remarkable presence of Russia during the Yugoslav crisis is its efforts undertaken to resolve the issue of Kosovo. In 1990's Russia's involvement was limited. The Russian weakness to play a determined role in the Yugoslav crisis in the 1990's, was counterbalanced by its intense activity that Russia developed during the previous decade in order to find a solution for the case of Kosovo. The Russian President Putin, despite his efforts to reverse the climate on the Kosovo issue, was found in front of a fait accompli, and quickly realized that there was no way of restoring the situation in Kosovo, as it was before 1998. However, the economic



Map 2: Distribution of ethnic groups in former Yugoslavia in 1991.
Source: <http://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/items/show/170>

growth that the Russian President achieved in the two successive quadrennial of his governance, managed to strengthen Russia's position at an international level.

The methodology which was followed in the realization of this dissertation was the correlation of the crisis in the SEE and the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia with the powerless situation of the Russia foreign policy in the post-

Soviet era. At first we analyze how the collapse of the Soviet Union caused the “shrinking” of Russian foreign policy and its relationship with other international organizations in the post-communist period on the basis of its financial strength and how Russia sought its recovery in the international stage with its engagement in the crisis of such a sensitive area as Southeastern Europe and especially in Kosovo where the western powers had already invaded and played leading role and the rest of countries of ex-Yugoslavia saw with suspicion it’s engagement . The relations of Russia with the US have been taken into consideration, but these were not explicitly evaluated. The reason is that it doesn’t seem to exist any significant change in post-communist era and their relation are reflected through their relations with NATO. One should take into consideration the fact that the Russia-US relations have always a competitive character and rarely a sign of reconciliation between these entities should be expected. In the post-Cold war period US regularly tried to constrain Russian interests in its neighboring region, while Russia seemed to keep a defensive position, while trying to use its energy power in order to maintain and expand its zone of influence.

Russia's quest for a new identity and the foreign policy transformations that followed the collapse of Communism are some of the elements that render the country an interesting topic for research. Particularly, the re-emergence of the Russian superpower and the role she played throughout the Yugoslav wars and during their aftermath will be the key points of interest and the main focus of this dissertation. Based on foreign literature review (books, journals, internet sources) we will provide an analysis of how has the Russian foreign policy been designed and implemented during and after the Yugoslav wars, as well as during the Yeltsin and the Putin eras, with particular focus being on the case of Kosovo.

In particular, the first chapter of this paper will present a review of the Russian foreign policy with regard to Russia's major “opponents”, the USA, NATO and EU as well as to other nations of the West. We will see in depth how Russia's role in the international scene weakened after the end of the Cold War, as well as how her position changed after the domestic political developments and the geopolitical changes that took place at an international level. Some of the central points of this chapter will be the geopolitical issues that determined the foreign policy of Russia

during the 90's and the early 2000's, the strategic choices of Presidents Yeltsin and Putin, the factors that had an impact on Russia's relations with the West as well as the way she dealt with crucial issues. All of the above will constitute the theoretical basis for our analysis on the foreign policy transition and the re-emergence of Russia as a superpower in the international scene.

The second chapter is dedicated to the relations of Russia with some dominant Balkan states after 1992 and the key role that the energy power -in combination with the financial investment- played in the Russian foreign policy in the region. Energy reserves and gas pipeline network which spread in Europe gave to Russia the power to recover in the international competition for dominance in the region. However, some countries such as Bulgaria and Romania had already made their own choice to access into western coalitions.

The third chapter is dedicated to the role of Russia in the Yugoslav wars and above all in the Kosovo war period. We will provide a timeline of the wars of Yugoslavia and the dissolution that followed, while we will simultaneously examine Russia's position and the extent of her involvement in all these wars, but will focus mainly in the Kosovo case. We will examine how Russia saw the Kosovo crisis as an opportunity to oppose western policies and prevent US and EU domination in the international system. In addition, we will provide answers to the question “why did Russia take a more active role in the resolution of the Kosovo issue?”, while we will further explain how Russia's involvement in Kosovo was actually connected to the territorial disputes arising in her own external borders.

Finally, we will draw our conclusions with regard to the recovery of the Russian power and the shift in Russian foreign policy -as presented in the previous chapters- in the sensitive Balkan region and the political and ideological background under which the Russian policy in Kosovo was designed.

CHAPTER I

RUSSIAN FEDERATION: DOMESTIC SOURCES AND THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

1.1 The Russian Foreign Policy and the role of the economic factor (1991-2010)

The serious economic and financial difficulties encountered by Russia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, left the new Russian leadership with no choice but turn towards the West for assistance and support. The fact that the West could not provide answers to all the problems of Russia, led Moscow to a « self-help » strategy in order to solve effectively crucial problems jeopardizing her mere existence, a choice that eventually led to a less pro-Western foreign policy. In the late '90s the essential issue for Russia was its new geopolitical role in international affairs and the ongoing debate by the elite for the prestige of Russia.

According to scholars of contemporary Russia, the critical situation of the Russian foreign policy in the late '90s was based on four essential reasons. First, Russia was under constant uncertainty about its identity (crisis identification). Second, Moscow was deeply interested in the symbolism and image (status) of the country, even if it implies meaningless showdown, mainly in the former Soviet republics, which constituted “the most critical problem of foreign policy”.⁸ Third, there was a pronounced tendency towards isolation and introversion, which limited the ability of Russia to follow international developments such as economic globalization. Finally, an equally common and systemic problem associated with the turbulent history of Russia was the persistence since 1917, to security issues. Traditional geopolitical perceptions of the Cold War era determined what constitutes a threat to Russia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union which covered the ideological vacuum created by the fall of Communism⁹. As a result, throughout the '90's geopolitical issues largely determined the foreign policy of Russia. However, due to lack of geopolitical

8 Karaganov, Sergei, 'What Is Russia To Do? What Is To Be Done With Russia?', *Moskovskiyev novosti*, no. 8, p. 5. Light, Margot, 'Post-Soviet Russian Foreign Policy: The First Decade', in Brown, 2001. Archie, Ed., *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, February 29-March 6, 2000, p. 416.

9 Spillman, Kurt, *Towards the 21st Century: Trends in Post-cold War International Security Policy*, Studies in Contemporary History & Security Policy, Bern, 1999, p.243-290

perspective and policy design and its influence on the legacy of the Cold War,¹⁰ Yeltsin's government led to wrong actions and unrealistic conclusions. The influence of the past and its interest to the emerging new status were witnessing how Russia understood threats, with the US and NATO to constitute the most important external threat to the new state. This geopolitical agenda had profound impact on Russia's relations with the former Soviet republics and the West, aided by the Russian desire to maintain the old borders of the Soviet Union as a strategic frontier of Russia. Yeltsin's government remained adhered to the geopolitical and security priorities, defied the economic interests and their usefulness for promoting political goals. The former Soviet republics tried and achieved greatly to reduce the economic dependence on Russia through diversification of foreign trade, foreign directed investment and external aid.

The way that the Russian leadership dealt with crucial issues was inadequate and failed to meet the expectations of a superpower. The following data provide tangible evidence: Russia's economy was a step before the collapse, which finally came in 1998, the once strong Soviet army had given way to a corrupt, unreliable and low morale army, the level of crime was comparative to that of a Third World country, there was an acute demographic problem and finally, while the influx of foreign capital was considered something like a "forbidden fruit", it was necessary for the survival of the Russian state the almost absolute dependence of Moscow from the West. Given the aforementioned inconveniences and weaknesses, Russia was one of the medium-scale states¹¹.

President Putin's strategic choice was favoring an orientation towards the reconstruction of a "strong state", which undeniably had influenced Russia's foreign policy. His intentions became quickly apparent when he took the office in 1999¹². Since then, Putin was a supporter of the "Eurasian culture" as a part of the Russian strategic concept, which emphasized the development of relations with the countries

10 Karagiannis Manos, Notes "*Russian Foreign policy in Post Communist Balkans*", Thessaloniki, 2011, p.1-5

11 Phillis Constantinos, '*The new direction in basic principles of Russian foreign policy and the subsequent relations between Russia and the West*, Athens, 2003, p. 4-5.

12 Putin W. Vladimir, *Russland an der Jahrtausendwende*, authentic text on the website of the Russian President on 29.12.1999. Russian German translation in Annex: Wolfgang Seiffert, *Wladimir W. Putin - Wiedergeburt einer Weltmacht* (Rebirth of a world power), München, 2000, p. 139-164.

of the Eurasian Commonwealth¹³. At the same time, he considered US as a key partner and he was seeking rapprochement with the EU.



Map 3: Eastern and South Eastern Europe
 Source : <http://serbianna.com/analysis/archives/1032>

Russia was in transition from the dominance of the Communist Party’s rule of law, to the Russian style democracy and market economy. Much progress had been made in these areas, but there were also listed several setbacks. Despite the –often justified- criticism regarding the internal development or her aspects on international issues, Russia was considered as a potent power factor: she was a nuclear power, a permanent member of the Security Council and also an exporter of oil, gas, diamonds and other natural resources, that had solid international presence and a growing industry and agriculture.

13 Papava, Vladimer , “*The Eurasianism of Russian Anti-Westernism and the Concept of “Central Caucaso-Asia”*”, Moscow 2013, p 1-42.

A key feature of Putin's foreign policy in relation to the US was to avoid conflicts and compromises, since, according to his advisor on foreign policy, Karaganov, Russia still needed 20-30 years to catch up with the US¹⁴. So, after the 11th September attacks, Russia showed positive signs for cooperation with the US against terrorism and took up the initiative to act as a mediator in the dispute with Iran about nuclear weapons, which has strengthened its political position in the world¹⁵.

Russia developed also her relationships with the Asian regional actors, in particular with China. Although there were historical and geopolitical conflicts between Russia and China, both sides tried not to be dominated by feelings of hostility and band together against the US¹⁶. Moreover, Russia has a significant role in the “Group of Shanghai”, which practically presented as a new Eurasian strategic link between Russia, China and other Asian countries and is open to adhesion even to India, Pakistan and Iran.

As time went by, Russian foreign policy became evident and easier to distinguish, Putin expressed his negative feelings against US efforts to create a new global order more often, which allows no more place to a second super power. More precisely the Russian President criticized the growing militarization of American international behavior, he required compliance with the international law and he was against the intention of the US to build up the so-called “missile shield” in Poland and the Czech Republic¹⁷.

Notwithstanding the challenges that Moscow was facing from the West, Putin tried not to escalate the crisis. Moreover, the Russian president wanted to build Russia’s future according to a more secure strategy, based on solid financial footing. He therefore considered that the financial control of the former Soviet Republics would result in the political control of the Central Asian and Caucasian entities¹⁸. For

14 Karaganov, Sergei ,” *Russia And Europe In The New Economic And Political Landscape: Between Nigeria And Venice*”, New York, 2009, p.1-11.

15 McFaul, Michael”*U.S.-Russia Relations after September 11, 2001*”, Stanford ,2001 p.1.

16 Lieven, Anatol “*U.S.-Russian Relations and the Rise of China*”, Washington, 2011, p.3-7.

17 Larivé, Maxime “he Building of the US Missile Shield in Europe The triangular relationship: US, EU, Russia” Miami, 2011, p. 5-18.

18 Nixey, James “*The Long Goodbye: Waning Russian Influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia*” London, 2012, p.1-16.

this reason Russia aimed to infiltrate economically even in countries with which political relations were at a low level.

Despite his perceptions to use geopolitical, territorial and military issues to promote Russia as a major player on the world stage, Putin retained a more realistic sense in the conduct of the international politics. The absolute calculations of Putin helped him to realize that the financial targets were not yet included in the agenda of the Russian foreign policy. For him the key point for the economic growth was the improvement of living standards, while the key to restore the Russian prestige in foreign affairs was the Geo-economics and especially the power that was derived from the extraction of its hydrocarbon deposits. Russia's economic success came not only from high oil prices but also from economic reforms undertaken during Putin's first term. It can be roughly estimated that half of Russian growth during 1999–2008 can be attributed to high oil prices¹⁹. Russian President V. Putin foresaw the crucial role of economic factor in the global competition for gaining power, which is reinforced by the economic reforms of Russian economy and it is boosted with the extraction of energy deposits. ²⁰Also, he advocated that “*the greatest danger facing Russia is the weak economy and the movement of worldwide competition from the realm of the military in this of economic conflict*”.²¹

The position of Russia should have been changed in the international scene according to the strategic priorities that set Putin. The economic growth would be effective with the economic expansion of its operations beyond Russia's borders and the subsequent capitalization of political benefits.. Thus, at the heart of Moscow's external affairs is energy diplomacy and thus strengthening economic relations of the country abroad.

In conclusion, the economy played a key role in the restoration of the lost prestige of Russia after the dissolution of the USSR. President Yeltsin was unable to pull Russia out of the crisis of identity in which Russia had fallen. There was an

19 Anders Åslund, Sergei Guriev, and Andrew C. Kuchins, “*Russia after the Global Economic Crisis*”, Washington, 2010, p.1.

20 *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*. (5 April 2000), ‘Think Tank Proposes “New Foreign Policy” for Russia’, vol. 52, no. 10, p. 2.

21 Weafer, Paul. (15 April 2004) ‘*Russia Revising Great Game Rule Book*’, *The Moscow Times*, p. 21.

ideological vacuum, which was exacerbated by the lack of a clear definition of means and targets. However, Putin attempted to revise its foreign policy on a more realistic basis, driven by economic diplomacy. Therefore, nowadays R appears increasingly as a major power factor in the international stage as a major power factor, which significantly respects the existing rules of the international law, but it is often attempting to redefine these rules according to its international interest.

1.2 Russian Foreign Policy 1991-1999: From the liberal idealism and the “obsessions” of Yeltsin to the pragmatic nationalism and conflictual relations with the West.

The configuration of modern foreign policy of Russia passed through various stages of the objectives identified in the neighbouring, in the Eurasian and global environment. This is characterized by gradually abandoning the role of global superpower, the realistic adjustment to the new situation created by the dissolution of the Soviet Union and efforts for economic penetration into neighboring states exploiting energy reserves. The understanding of contemporary Russian foreign policy, requires the study of the evolution of Russian foreign policy in post-Soviet Russia, which can be divided into the periods that follow here below.

In the brief initial phase of its international inaction, Russia was seeking new principles on foreign policy, seemed to develop in 1992 a nearly explicit willingness to cooperate with the West. Russia already having condemned communism, could not continue in the same ideological direction identified with the foreign policy of the Soviet Union.

The political line that had been adopted by the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the period 1991-1993 and was accepted by President Yeltsin, was similar to the vision of those who were pro-Westerners and supported relations with Euro-Atlantic powers “Atlantics”, whereby Russian foreign policy should give priority to relations with the West more than any other region of the world²². Also, Russia broke relations with the remaining communist regimes, while the Russian

22 Kanete. Roger (Ed.), *“Russian Foreign Policy in the 21st Century”*, Pelgrave-MacMillan, London, 2010, p.10-70.

government officially stated "remorseful" about the events in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, and the annexation of the three Baltic countries.²³

The Russian government and the political elite was convinced that there was a need for close cooperation with the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and integration of defense and foreign policy, while on the other hand, the radical liberals foresaw and demanded full decoupling. The former Soviet countries not only distanced themselves from Moscow, but they distanced themselves between each other²⁴. The objectives of the common market and the common foreign and defense policy did not reach the desired level of cooperation as Russia wished.

Undoubtedly, the first post-Soviet years, both the Russian economy and Russian society had the absolute necessity to improve the relations with the Western countries. However, the early pragmatism was accompanied by a highly pragmatist realist approach, taking the longer view that the West could not solve any Russian problem.

According to the prevailing aspect of that period, the main lever by which Russia would regain a leading role on the European continent was the OSCE, which could be the basis for a Europe more unified and free from competing military alliances, in which would be subjected both NATO and the CIS.²⁵ Nevertheless, Moscow very soon discovered that the Western European countries preferred the effectiveness of NATO than the emergence of the OSCE as a governing body of European security²⁶ and likewise, they realized that the countries of Central Europe gave greater importance to NATO and the EU, than the creation of a pan-European security system. Russia strongly reacted to the prospect of joining NATO countries that formerly belonged to the Warsaw Pact, such as the Czech Republic, Hungary and

23 Petro Nikolai N., Rubinstein Alvin Z., *"Russian Foreign Policy, From Empire to Nation-State"*, Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc., 1997, P. 98-99.

24 Puplescu, Nicu *"Eurasian Union: the real, the imaginary and the likely"* Paris, 2014, p.3-20

25 Ivanov I. S., *The New Russian Foreign Policy*, Foreword by H.A.Kissinger, Nixon Center and Bookings Institution Press, Washington, 2002, p.96-99.

26 Hopmann, Terrence, *Building Security in Post-Cold War Eurasia The OSCE and U.S. Foreign Policy*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington,, 1999, p.3-7

Poland. However, by mid-spring of 1997 it had become obvious that it could only but accept the accession of these countries to NATO.²⁷

In the Middle East, the diplomatic presence of Russia fell significantly during the 1990s, too. The leading role of Soviet Union during in the past decades in the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, decreased in the beginning of the post-Cold war era due to the Russian economic inability to support the friendly Arab regimes. Moreover, all efforts for successful conclusion of the peace process in the Middle East were based -and they are still based- in the US. These events resulted in the strengthening of the internal pressures in Russia that demanded the interruption of relations with the West and as a consequence the change of foreign policy.

The opportunity was given during international conflicts, to whom West was unable to deal with adequately, such as the crisis in Yugoslavia and particularly ethnic and political conflicts that erupted in Georgia, Tajikistan, Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan,²⁸ Moscow, in fact, was obliged to react to these crisis, since they could be transferred to areas within the Russian territory and thus, demanded immediate and forceful action which might not be acceptable to the West. In addition, China in the East continued strengthening its military forces, while Japan was still distrustful for Moscow, mostly because of the Kuril Islands dispute²⁹. Moreover, in the south, Turkey and Iran sought to increase their influence in the new Muslim republics of the Caucasus and Central Asia.³⁰

Thus, while the Russian foreign policy in 1992 seemed to unconditionally set out a western route, the next two years (1993 and 1994), President Yeltsin, proceeded to redefine national interests and strive to strengthen its presence in the international stage.³¹ Because the economic, social and political situation of the estimated 25 to 27

27 Donaldson R. H., Noguee J. L., *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 2002, p.241-247.

28 Jackson, Nikole J., *Russian Foreign Policy and the CIS: Theories, Debates and Actions*, London, Routledge, 2003, p.81-82.

29 Collins, Robert ., *The Russo -Japanese Dispute over the ownership of the Southern Kuril Islands*, Bangkok, 2013, p. 21-26.

30 Renee de Nevers , "Russia's Strategic Renovation, Russian Security Strategy and Foreign Policy in the Post-Imperial era", *ADELPHI Paper*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, 289, Brassey's Ltd, London, 1994, p. 68-71.

31 Reddaway P., Glinski D., *The tragedy of Russia's Reforms-Market Bolshevism against Democracy*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, 2001, p. 429-434.

million Russians living in the successor states of the USSR worsened significantly (especially in Latvia, Estonia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Ukraine), Russia was forced to exert political pressure on these countries for the protection of Russian minorities³².

Finally, the new constitution of 1993 provided to the president virtually unlimited authorization to conduct foreign policy³³. Yeltsin wanted to make clear to his opponents that with the new constitution the power of the parliament has been neutralized. Only the President would be able to set the foreign policy goals and the necessary strategy to attain them from that moment onwards.

This change became effective in the following few years by adopting a distinct and competitive foreign policy than that of the West in matters such as the war in Bosnia³⁴, on the issue of transit oil/gas pipelines from the Caspian Sea countries, the sanctions against Iraq, the postponement for voting by Duma for the ratification of the agreement which is reducing strategic weapons START II³⁵ and on the strong objections raised by the Moscow for the enlargement of the Atlantic Alliance eastward. Russia was in no position to militate the US, at least for issues which affected national interests, such as the situation in the Middle East or even in the Balkans.

In addition, on 11 December 1994, Yeltsin and the Security Council, bypassing the constitution and the parliament began its first massive military action against Chechnya, which was developed into a persistent guerrilla war of liberation, without visible political solution.³⁶ The President invoked the new military doctrine. The dislike of Russians against Chechen terrorists, which was widespread in Moscow and St. Petersburg, in no way meant that the population was willing to accept a ruinous war against another ethnic group within the Russian territory. According to

32 Jackson, Nikole J., *Russian Foreign Policy and the CIS- Theories, Debates and Actions*, London and New York, Routledge, 2003, p. 76-78.

33 Moore, Rita, *The Path to the New Russian Constitution*, Portland 1995, p1-15.

34 Reddaway P., Glinski D., *op.cit.*, σελ. 346-348.

35 *Idem.*

36 Service, Robert, "Russia-Experiment with a people, From 1991 to the present", London: MacMillan, 2002 p.152-166.

polls, about 2/3 of the Russians rejected at the end of 1994 the Russian invasion in Chechnya³⁷.

That Russia was obliged to pursue a moderate and cautious foreign policy, estimating accurately the impact of its movements both at home, and abroad. The Russian government invoked its weakness in domestic affairs and rollover risk by more nationalist forces in order to extort concessions from the West, in both political and economic terms.

The following few years Russian economy thanked to some important developments, such as: the aid offered by the International Monetary Fund, the invitation to take part in the deliberations of the G-7 group and contact group on the issue of Bosnia and Kosovo, her accession to the Council of Europe, her participation in the initiative "Partnership for Peace" and signed with NATO a special strategic relationship agreement with the EU and a Partnership and Cooperation agreement.

To conclude after 1993, three key characteristics defined the Russian foreign policy. First, the fragility of the political system and the serious difficulties observed in the creation of a market economy, delimit the capabilities of the Russian foreign policy. Many of the commitments they had made in the past and maintained for pure ideological reasons or served the needs of Competition in the international arena with the US, they were not valid anymore. Second Russia, due to its necessity of delimiting the actions of Russian foreign policy, adopted a hierarchical approach to the priorities, choice that indicated the predominantly regional rather than global interests. Third, the shift realized from an ideologically charged foreign policy to a more pragmatic one³⁸. Moscow no longer wished through its foreign policy to diffuse ideology but only to maintain its territorial sovereignty and economic development. In other words, the decisions then were taken on the basis of cost-benefit analysis, which assessed the tangible benefits to be gained by this policy.

The politician that determined mainly the second period of Yeltsin presidency (1996-1999), was Yevgeny Primakov. Although he gave a strong dose of realism in

37 Youngs, Tim, *The Conflict in Chechnya*, London, 2010, p.1-26

38 Maroudas Av., Tsardanidis Ch., "*Where Russia is going? Economic and political implications of the transition*", Institute of International Economic Relations, Exandas, 1999, p.106.

the configuration of Russian foreign policy, in fact he failed to de-ideologize it. In contrary from the one ideological edge, according to which the concept of a strong collaboration with the West dominated, they reached to the other edge of the highly conflictual relations. The Western-oriented political elite were now a minority, but even those so-called “Westerners” were more "partners" rather than "allies" of Russian state³⁹. However, the dominant anti-Western rhetoric of the Soviet period yielded positive results: in 1997 signed a formal cooperation agreement between Russia and NATO⁴⁰, in 1998 the G-7 became G-8 after the entry of Russia, while the latter continued to get loans from the International Monetary Fund.⁴¹

The Russian foreign policy of Primakov era, has been characterized by many as a "political alternative", and instead of cooperation with the West, they were presented as "alternative" opportunities for partnerships with countries of Eurasia. In addition to its influence in the CIS area, it was not excluding a "triangular alliance" between Russia-China-India, to ensure both that the growing economic power of China will not threaten Russia, particularly in the underpopulated territories in the Far East, and secondly to provide a counterweight to American hegemony.

The dispute with the West reached its peak in the spring of 1999, for second time after the NATO bombing in the former Yugoslavia in mid-'90s⁴². NATO's led raid in Yugoslavia prompted a strong reaction of the Russian government and the Russian public opinion. Two main reasons that reinforce the anti-Americanism in Russian society in the late 1990s: First, the ongoing economic crisis and the "shock treatment", coupled with frustration due to lack of financial assistance from the West. The widespread economic crisis that began in 1992 was exacerbated by the lack of loans in August 1998 and by the significant depreciation of the ruble, while at the same time, the already low living standards fell by 30%.⁴³ Second, the attitude of the West, mainly with the expansion of NATO, and the bombing of the former

39 Brown, Stephen, *Post-Communist Russia and anti -Americanism: Has the West lost Russian public opinion?*, Wollongong, 2006, p.1-17

40 Donaldson H.R., Noguee J.L., “The Foreign Policy of Russia-Changing Systems, Enduring Interests”, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 2002, p.241-247.

41 Ivanov I.S., “The New Russian Foreign Policy”, Foreword by H.A.Kissinger, Nixon Center and Brookings Institution Press, Washington, 2002, p.114.

42 Reddaway P., Glinski D., “The tragedy of Russia's Reforms-Market Bolshevism against Democracy”, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, 2001, p. 292-298

43 *Idem.*

Yugoslavia, increased the reaction from nationalists within political landscape of Russia, for whom the West seemed natural enemy. The Russia-West relations in case of Kosovo were more competitive than it was immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The Yeltsin accused the US that sought to transform Yugoslavia into a protectorate, and believed that the war would create a unique precedent in International Relations, hereinafter allowing the US to intervene in the internal affairs of sovereign states.

To some, the period 1999-2000 recalls reminiscences of or even a U-turn towards the Cold War era.. The nationalist ideology of "Great Russia" was strongly reinforced and expressed the majority of the Russian political elite. The idea of a multipolar system was thwarted, as in practice there was no more place for a second superpower. The feeling of nostalgia of the past glories of Russia dominated in political and academic circles. The new "alternative" foreign policy was pursued and it was based on the theory of Eurasia with the central idea of national unity as the heart of the Russian nation.

During this second period of post-Soviet foreign policy there were no changes to the operation of the CIS. The integration with the former Soviet republics was a key priority. However, the crisis of 1998 had made Russia much less attractive in the former Soviet republics, which felt safer outside the Soviet influence⁴⁴. Many of them such as Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, were seeking to maintain their sovereignty in their areas each one for its own reasons and openly opposed to Russia's will.

In the Middle East, Russia's strong opposition to unilateral US military action against Iraq, was expressed first time in 1994, and continued also during the period 1997-1999. This attitude enabled Russia and personally Primakov to undertake the role of mediator, allowing him to claim that Moscow is playing a vital role in delaying military confrontation in Iraq⁴⁵.

44 John O'Loughlin, Vladimir Kolosov and Andrei Tchepalyga *National Construction, Territorial Separatism and Post-Soviet Geopolitics: The Example of the Transdnister Moldovan Republic*, p.1-30

45 Ivanov IS, *op.cit.*, p.132-133.

Attempting to prove that Russia was still a superpower effectively in regional affairs did not miss the opportunity to mediate in the Arab-Israel conflict, by visiting in November 1996 and October 1997 Israel, the Palestinian Authority and neighboring states, while in May 1997 intervened in the Lebanese crisis, trying to convince Syria and Lebanon to stop the strengthening of Hezbollah⁴⁶. However, this trend of Primakov, trying to convince the impending return of Russia to the Middle East, although the Russian political influence in the region had been lost since the mid-50s.

The critical element that characterized both the Primakov government (1998-1999), and his tenure in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1996-1998) was that of pragmatism, but these elements reminded more the reminiscent of the Soviet era.

1.3 Putin's Foreign Policy: 2000-2008

When Putin assumed the power of the Russian leadership as a Prime Minister in 1999, he put the limits of Russian power in realistic contexts, which of course was limited by the economic weakness of the country. This does not mean that he abandoned ambitions for global influence, but he performed a more conscious effort to reconcile ambitions with the available resources. In early 2000 as Russian President, V. Putin conducted his campaign with the slogan "United Russia" and "Powerful Russian state", but without a detailed plan⁴⁷. Later, in early 2001, Putin set the political criteria: a clear definition of national priorities, pragmatism and economic efficiency⁴⁸.

Thus, while in the first post-Soviet period, the foreign policy of the Russian Federation was seeking a way to redefine close relations with the US, since 2000 Russian foreign policy has distinctly European orientation. Europe was considered as a natural partner, so Putin and his government proceeded to the development of bilateral relations with all Western European countries⁴⁹, and especially with Germany

46 Gorodetsky, G., *"Russia between East and West-Russian Foreign Policy in the Threshold of the Twenty First Century"*, Frank Cass, London, Portland, 2003, p.164-165

47 Kunov A., Myagkov M., Sitnikov A., Shakin D., *Putin's Party of Power and the Declining Power Parties of Russia*, The Foreign Policy Centre Report, April 2005, [<http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/436.pdf>].

48 *Idem.*

49 Donaldson H. R., Noguee J. L., *op. cit.*, p. 331.

and G. Britain, which were already the main trade and economic partner after the fall of communism.

When Putin assumed presidency he redefined the concepts of East and West. The rejection of the "Eurasianism" did not mean an altogether rejection of a dynamic foreign policy towards Asia⁵⁰. The improvement of Sino-Soviet relations was important for Russia. China was a key country for Russia's policy in Siberia and the Far East. For more than 30 years the area of Russian-Chinese borders (extending to 4000 km) was a field of confrontation and conflict, which have now given way to a non-violent and uncontrolled immigration of Chinese citizens in sparsely populated Russian territories. This demographic "gap" in the Far East was a threat to Russia to maintain control of the region. Thus, in July 2001 Russia and China signed a treaty To broaden their economic cooperation, in which it was stressed that it did not include a military agreement, and this agreement was not an alliance against a third country⁵¹.

Russia also intensified relations with North and South Korea and improved its relations with Japan. During Putin's visit to Tokyo in September 2000, among others, recognized the Declaration of 1956 which stated that the Soviet Union delivered in Japan one of the Kuril Islands. Economic cooperation between the two countries continued to grow while Russia became a full member of the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation.⁵²

Therefore, Russian foreign policy of the new millennium emerged as more pragmatic in Eurasian version, while based on geopolitical criteria⁵³. Russia is bordering with six major geographic regions: Europe, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, Central Asia, China and the Far East. Russian foreign policy to the broader Asian region was then dynamic, based on pragmatic and realistic criteria.

50 Raphael Johnson M., *Russian Nationalism and Eurasianism: The ideology of Russian Regional Power and the Rejection of Western Values*, [<http://www.4pt.su/en/content/russian-nationalism-and-eurasianism-ideology-russian-regional-power-and-rejection-western>].

51 See the full text of the treaty here: <http://www.voltairenet.org/article173177.html>

52 Ivanov I.S., *op.cit.*, p.126-127

53 Gorodetsky, G., *"Russia between East and West-Russian Foreign Policy in the Threshold of the Twenty First Century"*, Frank Cass, London, Portland, 2003, p.174-181.

The realism was perceptible in Russia's relations with the CIS countries⁵⁴. It had become clear that the economic integration of former Soviet countries within the CIS was impossible. The volume of trade had declined significantly between Russia and former Soviet countries, while the latter often sought partnerships with Western countries. Thus, Russia had followed a pragmatic policy, pursuing the development of bilateral cooperation only with those CIS countries that were willing to do so. Russia recognized without hesitation the full integrity of the states of the former USSR and excluded all thoughts on the revival of the Soviet Union, placing as primary goal the economic growth which is essential not only for the survival of the Russian state but to exercise a more effective foreign policy. The remarkable case that showed the de-ideologized Russian foreign policy, was that of Russia-Belarus Union. The sequence of treaties which were signed in 1996, 1997 and 1999 between the Presidents of the two states, Yeltsin and Lukashenko⁵⁵, had not yet entered into force mainly for one reason: because Putin wanted the association not to affect the Russian economy, but the steps of integration to become on the basis of mutual interest⁵⁶.

The situation in international relations completely overturned after the events of September 11 in New York and the subsequent global war on terrorism declared by the US. The reconfiguration of priorities of domestic and foreign policy was imperative for all countries. Russia has supported the US with significant intelligence and facilitated NATO aircraft of all types directed to Afghanistan, ceding them the right to use the Russian airspace, while agreeing the installation of US military bases in Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan⁵⁷. The next few days after September 11 the Kremlin announced the new long-lasting plan of constructive dialogue and cooperation with the West and the US, which was culminated with the visit of Putin in Washington in October 2001 and his meetings with European leaders during Slovenia summit. In general the plan was adopted despite the obvious difficulties encountered by the Russian side. Moscow accepted the abolition of the Treaty on Ballistic Missiles of 1972 (ABM) offered by the US,

54 Phillis, Constantine, "Putin's Realpolitik: Toward a Foreign Policy of the Possible (March 2000-March 2004), University of Reading June 2006

55 Service, Robert, "Russia-Experiment with a people, From 1991 to the present", London: McMillan, 2002, sel.174-175

56 Phillis, Constantine, *op. cit.*, June 2006.

57 Menkiszak, Marek, *Russian Afghan problem: The Russian Federation and the Afghanistan problem since 2001*, Warszawa, 2011, p.42-45

despite the fact that it considered this step as a political mistake.⁵⁸ The Kremlin also allowed the US military involvement in Georgia despite its reaction to the cooperation of Western countries with the countries of Central Asia.⁵⁹ What would be the tangible benefit for Russia with all these concessions? The creation of a "coalition against terrorism" with the US was for Putin a matter of principle, so someone could say that the tangible benefits were ignored. However, Moscow had won two clear, immediate and important advantages: first the overthrow of the hostile Taliban regime in Afghanistan by supporting the coalition forces the Russia coalition forces⁶⁰, and second, the decline of the criticism derived from the West for the war in Chechnya, partly redefined and joined as a fight against the international terrorism⁶¹.

However, the biggest change was Russia's relations with NATO, which entered into a whole new orbit. From discussions of general content were converted into a detailed political negotiation, in order to find the mechanism by which Russia would participate effectively in the activities of NATO, without becoming a member of it⁶². Of course, in this case NATO would remain a distinct organization. It would become the key instrument of European security, because with the Russian participation would lose its role as a defensive military bloc.

Furthermore, the official line taken by Putin had three main priorities: The first is related to the interests of his own country. The foreign policy of that is "serving" the domestic policy, which requires the development of an efficient security system, the increase of living standards and the creation of a 'civil society'. Russia should have continuous diplomatic presence and use correctly and carefully the data presented abroad. The second priority was related with a non-isolationist policy, and specifically with the integration into the community of democratic states and international financial structures. Finally, the third priority was a strong presence and

58 Donaldson H.R., Noguee J.L., *op. cit.*, σελ.335.

59 Sakwa, Richard, *"Putin: Russia's Choice"*, New York Routledge, 2004, p. 216-217.

60 Service, Robert, *"Russia-Experiment with a people, From 1991 to the present"*, London: McMillan, 2002, p.179.

61 Menkiszak, Marek, *Russian Afghan problem: The Russian Federation and the Afghanistan problem since 2001*, Warszawa, 2011, p.42-45

62 Smith, Julianne *The NATO-Russia Relationship Defining Moment or Déjà Vu?*, Washington, 2008, p.5-10

dynamic policy in all directions, maintaining a balance between East and West, Europe and Asia⁶³.

Bush's decision to invade Iraq had begun to evolve into a major test of the new, mainly personal, relationship he had created with Putin⁶⁴. Since the end of the Cold War the Russians resisted the imposition of America in the world, but they have been proved unable to intercept it. The interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo were especially angered the anti-American forces inside Russia. But Iraq had even greater strategic importance for Putin. It was something that Putin could not easily accept and necessary lying down⁶⁵. The interest of Russia on Iraq has reference to decades ago, in the time when the Soviet Union 'cultivated' client states in the Arab world and accepted with joy Saddam Hussein, as he turned the former British protectorate into a considerable force in the region. In the last years of Hussein government, Russia had emerged as the biggest trade partner of Iraq to the UN program "Oil for food", buying 40% of the permitted oil exports and selling to the government of Hussein more food, medicines and equipment for the oil industry than any other country since the program's inception in 1996⁶⁶. What also preoccupied the Russian leadership was whether the intention of the US to intervene militarily in Iraq signaled the 'reordering' of the international system with less respect for international law, occasional contempt for the United Nations and *ad hoc* coalition with the willing countries to do so.⁶⁷ It was something that at a later time, it was repeated in the Balkans and especially in Kosovo.

As Putin was thinking how to react to American threats against Iraq, the situation became more and more complicated. Would it be rational to sacrifice a profitable relationship with an old ally such as Iraq, which brought tangible economic benefits to Russia, for the sake of an uncertain and until then no profitable growing friendship with the most powerful country in the world? In the months that followed the signing of the Moscow Treaty on mutual limitation of nuclear arsenals, the

63 Kulhánek, Jakub, *Putin's Foreign Policy and the Founding of the NATO-Russia Council*, Prague, 2008, p.1-18

64 Akerman, Ella, *Old Friends In The New World: Russia And Iraq From Gorbachov To Putin, 1990-2003*, London, 2007, p.3-12

65 Cross, Sharyl, *Russia and NATO Toward the 21st Century: Conflicts and Peacekeeping in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo*, San Jose, 2001, p.5-20

66 Baker PE, Glasser S., *Absolute Plan Putin" Modern Times*, Athens, 2007, p.354-355.

67 Phillis Constantine, *One year after the US intervention in Iraq*, Athens, March 2004, p.3-10.

Russians had come to resent of what they considered one-sided relationship with Washington.⁶⁸ It seemed that they repeatedly offered to US the hand of friendship, but did not get back any important assistance. Russia had delivered Central Asia to the West, it compromised to issues of ABM Pact and NATO expansion, had closed military bases maintained by the Soviet era in Cuba and Cam Ran Bay in Vietnam, and had offered assistance in the operations of espionage in Afghanistan. The main priority of the Putin was the restoration of the economy and Bush had done nothing to help in this effort.

The intention of the Russian leadership was not so much to prevent the destiny of Iraq but to send a cross-Atlantic message to the other side of the Atlantic, that Washington was not able to promote "bloodless" choices in the international system and without cost. Simultaneously, Kremlin in Iraq succeeded to 'divide' the West, which also was one of the key political Putin's choices especially in his second tenure. Putin, as we will see in following paragraphs, was in full awareness of the situation and did not wish to challenge the US leadership, mainly because the country lacked the view of the first alternative model/ideology. The other reason was that in no case could Russia become overall more attractive ally compared to US for the rest of the countries.⁶⁹ However, what U.S had attempted and partly succeeded, was to make Russia an additional choice for cooperation in specific areas, where Moscow had comparative advantages (e.g. energy) and from which the partner countries will benefit mostly geopolitically and less economically.

Returning to the anti-terrorist coalition, attacks within Russia in 2002 (May 9th in Dagestan and October 23 at the theater in Moscow) were combined and connected directly with the September 11th attacks. The Putin's foreign policy became more aggressive in the fight against global terrorism, so Russia escalated the military activity in Chechnya with long and hard operations. The overall policy of Putin in Chechnya, essentially was not different from that of the previous decade. The only difference was that this time the media was under complete control and that Russia's

68 Ivanov I. S., *The New Russian Foreign Policy*, , Nixon Center and Bookings Institution Press, Washington, 2002, p.114-115.

69 Fawn, Rick, *Realignments in Russian Foreign Policy*, Frank Cass Publishers, London, 2003, p.39-41.

rhetoric on terrorism was identified with that of US, so she did not act alone⁷⁰. The US President, G. Bush, on the other hand was happy to see similar to its own reactions from Russia, while these developments would mitigate the criticism of the latter in the Iraq war.

Undoubtedly, the international situation provided to Putin an opportunity to return to the international stage and play his own role in the coalition against terrorism. Although for a while the West showed a greater understanding of the situation in Chechnya and more sympathy for the difficulties of Russia it was not delayed the international condemnation by US, EU and UN for human rights abuses by the Russian military in the region.

It is important to emphasize on the rhetoric used by the Russian President, not necessarily in consistent course with the practice. When, for example, he was accused for using energy power as means of political coercion, he quoted the rules governing the market economy to justify its decisions.

In tactical level, the Russian president has used aspects of a multilateral diplomacy giving priority to the UN, the creation of a more fair world, the need of use political and diplomatic means for resolving disputes with the participation and co-decision by the International Community, so that the positions of the country to become more attractive for other states. In this way he hoped to gradually undermine American unilateralism, although the example within Russia itself did not constitute a serious alternative to the American model⁷¹. A significant diversification compared with the past was the Kremlin's attempt to create *ad hoc* bilateral or regional cooperation mechanisms, mutually beneficial, in order that Moscow becomes the most attractive partner.

What Putin primarily sought especially in the last years of his governance was the need for recovery of the national consciousness, and to gain the respect of friends and opponents. However, in contrast to the recent past, Russia appeared determined to compete the West, if she considered that this would effectively promote her interests.

70 Akerman, Ella, *Old Friends In The New World: Russia And Iraq From Gorbachov To Putin, 1990-2003*, London, 2007, p.3-12

71 Paev, Baev, *Prospects for Russian-US cooperation in central Asia*, Oslo, 2008, p.2-11

However, she would prefer, to avoid a frontal collision with western countries since it was perceived would damage her interests.

During this period, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which Moscow considered as a traditional sphere of influence, became a primary objective of the foreign policy of Putin, the reason was that the EU and NATO tried to include in their own sphere of influence countries of Central Europe and Baltic. The relations of Russia with Baltic countries remained in a tense situation.

The Russian president and US President G. Bush failed to resolve their differences for the installation of US missiles in the Czech Republic and Poland, during their meeting in the Black Sea on April 6, 2008. However, they both agreed for the need of the existence of strategic cooperation between the two countries and they ended the long era of conflict that saw one another as "threat or enemy." This successful meeting was concluded with the participation of Putin to the NATO summit in Romania on April 2, 2008. The meeting ended with the acceptance of the proposal of Russia to NATO, for the non-accession to NATO the two new emerging states of the former Soviet Union: Georgia and Ukraine, fearing that integration would reduce Russia's influence in the neighboring countries⁷².

1.4 Russia-NATO Relations

In 1991 NATO revised its strategic doctrine to take into account the new security environment in Europe. In view of that, NATO has radically reduced the adaptation of its conventional and nuclear forces. NATO expanded and would continue to expand its political functions, taking on new missions of peacekeeping and crisis management in support of the UN and the OSCE, to address new security challenges in close association with other countries and international organizations.

Official contacts for cooperation between Russia and NATO began in 1991, under the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (later renamed Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council) and there was a deepening of contacts, when Russia joined the

72 Gallis, Paul, *The NATO Summit at Bucharest*, CRS Report For Congress, Washington, May 2008, p. 3-6

program Partnership for Peace (Partnership for Peace)⁷³. During the 1990s, the two sides signed several important cooperation agreements. In 1994, Russia joined the Partnership for Peace. The cooperation between Russia and NATO was developing in a number of key areas: the fight against terrorism, military cooperation, cooperation in Afghanistan, non-proliferation, etc.

On May 27, 1997, at the NATO summit in Paris, the two sides signed the ‘Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security’ and a roadmap for the future of NATO-Russia relations. This Act defined the goals and mechanism of consultation, cooperation, joint decision-making and joint action that will constitute the core of the mutual relations between NATO and Russia.⁷⁴ Both sides stated that they do not see any more each other as adversaries, and have the political commitment to work creatively together to "continuous and inclusive" maintenance of peace in the Euro-Atlantic area.

The Russia-NATO relations continued to be competitive after the end of the Cold War, especially due to the NATO expansion, as many countries from Eastern and Southeastern Europe expressed their interest to join the North Atlantic Alliance. The first attempt of NATO enlargement to countries of the former Soviet Union, especially in Ukraine, caused a rift in the cooperation with Russia. This situation continued under the Putin and Medvedev Presidencies. This rivalry was demonstrated during Russia-Georgia conflict in August 2008, when many NATO members including the US supported diplomatically Georgia. It was also extended to the Balkans, where two NATO bases are located, and elements of NATO’s proposed that an anti-ballistic missile defense shield would be established, a proposal in which Russia opposed. Moscow’s concerns about further NATO expansion to the East have been expressed in nearly all key strategic and foreign policy documents by the Russian Federation since 2000⁷⁵. Some closer cooperation has been developed between Russia and NATO on issues of common concern, such as the fight against international terrorism and transnational crime in Afghanistan.

73 “The Partnership for Peace programme”
http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50349.htm

74 See the full text of the Act here: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_25468.htm

75 See for example: The foreign policy concept of Russian Federation 2008, [<http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2008/07/204750.shtml>].

The use of force by the NATO alliance against Serbia and Montenegro in 1999 was a catalyst for Russian foreign policy to turn towards greater self-reliance. Russian foreign policy under Putin's leadership assumed a greater security focus. This development has been influenced by the increased numbers of suicide attacks by terrorists sympathetic to Chechnya's secession from the Russian Federation, which threatened Russia's internal stability.

Russia was actively participating in peacekeeping operations supporting UN and OSCE, as well as in crisis management in different areas of the world. Russia was contributing to the multinational forces for peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and crisis of Kosovo.

In September 2001, shortly after the terrorist attacks in New York, we have the reestablishment of relations and the creation of NATO-Russia Council (NATO-Russia Council - NRC), as a demand in the need for concerted action on common threats⁷⁶. The NATO-Russia Council was established on May 28, 2002, at the summit of NATO in Rome. The council is an official diplomatic tool for handling security issues and joint projects between NATO and Russia, which includes a culture of consensus, consultation, "adoption of joint decisions and joint actions".⁷⁷

According to the Framework Action Council, all 26 NATO members and Russia have the right to joint decision-making and not in the form of a bilateral "NATO + 1", which was the case with the Permanent Joint Council⁷⁸.

Because of the fact that NATO and Russia have similar ambitions and mutual challenges, the NATO-Russia Council since its establishment in 2002 is seen by both sides as an effective attempt to promote cooperation between all the parties involved. The heads of state of NATO-member states and Russia have made a positive assessment for the achievements of the cooperation during the NATO-Russia summit in Bucharest in April 2008.

76 NATO-Russia Relations: A New Quality Declaration by Heads of State and Government of NATO Member States and the Russian Federation

See: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_19572.htm

77 NATO-Russia Council , See: <http://www.nato-russia-council.info/en/about/>

78 *Idem.*

In April of 2008, the NATO summit in Bucharest had to accept the position of several key European allies and deny Ukraine and Georgia the accession to the Membership Action Plan. The decision itself was rational, if not the only possible, as long as Ukraine was lacking the internal popular support to join NATO and thus democratic legitimacy of the application, while Georgia did not have peaceful borders with all its neighbours.

The NATO-Russia relations were strained in the summer of 2008 due to the action of Georgia in South Ossetia. Russia received the condemnation of the North Atlantic Council for its act to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states. The General Secretary of NATO argued that recognition by Russia of Abkhazia and South Ossetia infringed many resolutions of the UN Security Council, including resolutions adopted from Russia. Russia, in turn, insisted that recognition was in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Final Act of the CSCE in Helsinki in 1975 and other fundamental rules of international law⁷⁹. Relations intensified further in May 2009 when NATO expelled two Russian diplomats on charges of espionage. The already taut situation also got worse by the NATO military exercises in Georgia. Before the Russian parliamentary elections of 2011, President Dmitri Medvedev had also said that if Russia had not invaded Georgia in 2008, NATO would have expanded further to the east⁸⁰.

Russia was seriously concerned about NATO enlargement with countries of the former Eastern bloc, especially after the accession to NATO in 2004, of the three Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). Of particular importance is the fact that these countries are distanced from the traditional area of responsibility of the Alliance and for the first time the Alliance invaded in the territory of the former Soviet Union⁸¹. Western analysts note that Russia had not acquired the power and influence

79 Popjanevski, Johanna, *International Law and the Post – 2008 Status Quo in Georgia: Implications for Western Policies*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program Washington, D.C., May 2011

80 A. G. Marshall notes precisely: “The 2008 war in Georgia had seemingly put an end - or a halt - on NATO's eastward expansion. Russia had - after 18 years of NATO expansion - finally drawn a line in the sand over how much it was willing to put up with”. Marshall G. Andrew, ‘The West Marches East, Part II’, Geopolitics, Analysis, *The Hampton Institute*, 19 June 2014.

[<http://www.hamptoninstitute.org/west-marches-east-part-two.html#.VIrSzSsVtg>]

81 Dmitri Trenin, «Bear's silence», at <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2002/issue1/greek/art3.html>

to prevent other nations to enter NATO. Furthermore, they considered this effort as futile and counterproductive political action.

In September 2009 during a speech, the NATO Secretary General Anders Rasmussen said that NATO and Russia will work together on issues such as counter-terrorism and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction⁸². According to that NATO was to remain and continue the policy of "open doors": «I do not believe that the enlargement of NATO and the European Union has created any security problems for Russia. Instead, a more stable and prosperous Europe, actually contributes to the security of Russia. We must also be realistic, recognizing that NATO will continue its enlargement policy - not because it has the intention to "encircle" or marginalize Russia, but because respect the territorial integrity and the right of every sovereign state to decide freely which security policy is essential to enable in Europe»⁸³.

Another important issue that has soured relations between the two powers was the declaration of independence and international recognition of Kosovo. For Russia the issue was a red line, as this would stimulate respectively separatist movements within national borders and destabilize the Balkan region. The Russian leadership responded dynamically with the recognition of the two seceded Georgian national minorities (N. Ossetia and Abkhazia), a situation that changed the energy balance and security in the Caucasus region and consequently the US and European interests in the region.

1.5 Russia-European Union Relations

The relations between Russia and the EU have longer history than that with the US. However, this relationship is controversial and involves elements of both collaboration and competition. Historically, the dilemma was how Russia could approach the EU without losing its identity. The Russian society was still divided between those who promoted the union of Russia and the EU and those who see the

82 *NATO and Russia: A New Beginning*, See the speech here:
http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_57640.htm

83 *Idem*

EU as a threat to Russian culture and they believed that the orientation of their country should be eastward⁸⁴.

Another obstacle against the improvement of bilateral relations was the different geopolitical characteristics of the two parties. Russia geographically belongs to Eurasia yet has strong elements of a western culture, which first emerged during the Tsarist era and were enriched after the prevalence of Russia as a superpower and the spread of the European culture in the countries of Eastern Asia (e.g. Japan, China, Korea, etc.)⁸⁵.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, relations between the two sides were at its worst level during the conduct of the war in Chechnya in 1993. The EU considered this war as a field demonstration of power and imperialist tendencies of Russia and simultaneously contempt of human rights⁸⁶. On the other hand, for Russia this war was a struggle for the survival of the Russian Federation, which had peacefully renounce some years ago.

At the same time, the EU had continuously expanded eastward and across the Atlantic, the US encouraged a similar expansion of North Atlantic alliance. This development was a threat to loose of control of neighboring states belonging to the Russian sphere of influence of the former Soviet Union.

The cooperation on a bilateral basis for the European Union and Russia, began in 1994 with the conclusion of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)⁸⁷, which entered into force shortly after the December 1, 1997 having a 10-year duration. In April 2004, due to the forthcoming enlargement of the EU, it was agreed to extend the agreement by EU with the ten new members that joined on 1 May 2004. The new member states that joined included the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia and

84 Gomart, Thomas, "Europe in Russia's Foreign Policy important but no longer pivotal", Russia/NIS Center May 2010

85 Gomart, Thomas, *EU-Russia Relations Toward a Way Out of Depression*, Center for Strategic International studies, July 2008, p.3-15

86 Stepanova, Ekaterina *Western Policy on Chechnya: Rationalizing Relations with Russia?* Moscow December 1999, p.1-7.

87 Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs): Russia, Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia, Europa29.Sep.2010

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_relations/relations_with_third_countries/easte_m_europe_and_central_asia/r17002_en.htm

Lithuania) and countries of the former Warsaw Pact (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia).

The Partnership and Co-operation is based on common principles and objectives, namely, to promote international peace and security, support for democratic norms and political and economic freedoms as well. It also provides the possible adoption of a free trade area between Russia and the EU. The agreement extends to a wide range of activities, including political dialogue, trade in goods and services, business and investment, economic and legislative cooperation, science and technology, education and training, nuclear energy and space cooperation, the environment, culture and cooperation in combating illegal activities⁸⁸.

The international isolation of Russia from the western world during the Cold War era was not an obstacle in the continuously improved commercial relations between the EU and Russia. Trade relations were highly rising after the collapse of the Soviet Union, particularly the years of Putin's governance. Significant progress in relations between Russia and the EU was the election of President V. Putin in 2000 and the successive visits he made in EU member states.⁸⁹ These contacts have stopped temporarily after the dispute of Kaliningrad in 2002.⁹⁰ The subsequent war in Iraq highlighted the discord that existed between the EU Member States, and opened diplomatic roads for Russia in the heart of the EU. The re-election of Putin in 2004 coincided with the worsening of situation in Iraq, which resulted in the increase in international oil prices, that has yielded huge profits in the Russian economy⁹¹.

The EU in 2010 was the most important trading partner of Russia, as she exported 55% of its products to EU⁹². Thus, Russia owes a big part of her development to the trade relations with the EU. The rapid increase in the GDP of

88 Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs): Russia, Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia, Europa29.Sep.2010, http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_relations/relations_with_third_countries/eastern_europe_and_central_asia/r17002_en.htm

89 Thomas Gomart, *op. cit.*, May 2010

90 Sander Huisman, "New European Union policy for Kaliningrad", Institute for Security Studies March 2002

91 Vitaly Yermakov, *The Benefits of Better Oil Sector Taxation*, The Moscow Times, Feb. 09 2004, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/sitemap/free/2004/2/article/the-benefits-of-better-oil-sector-taxation/233064.html>

92 See table in [ec.europa.eu](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/russian-import-ban/pdf/eu-exports-to-russia_en.pdf) : Eu 28Agri foods exports to Russia and the world , in http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/russian-import-ban/pdf/eu-exports-to-russia_en.pdf

Russia in the period of Putin's governance (an increase of 55% of GDP over the period from 2000 to 2008), was due to the above commercial transactions. Specifically, in 2008 the EU exported products to Russia amounted to 105 billion euros, while the same year the Russian exports to the EU amounted to 172 billion euros. The balance of trade between Russia and each individual EU country is positive for 21 out of 27 countries and is negative for the remaining six (Germany, Malta, Denmark, Ireland, Slovenia and Austria)⁹³. Furthermore, Russia maintains trade relations with the EU as a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), too.

The relations with the EU are often confined to the energy sector. But Russia has used the dependence of the EU, in order to achieve other goals in its relations with the Western world. Due to the powerful position she holds in the global system Russia has managed to stop a NATO enlargement eastwards. Although this feat is limited to a diplomatic level, Russia covers 60% of the EU requirements for gas, and has forced many EU countries to understand some of her vital interests and to comply with her instructions. This particular energy relationship, contributed to a deeper understanding of the problems faced by both sides⁹⁴. Indeed, Russia and the management of Gazprom recognized the fact that the EU is the largest source of revenue and she behaved accordingly⁹⁵.

Russia considers the cooperation with the EU, in major strategic and security issues. Recently at EU– Russia summit, Moscow suggested a joint action plan in the context of the ESDP Action⁹⁶. The cooperation with the ESDP, serves important goals of Russian foreign policy, both in the near external environment and in the international arena. The common areas of action are summarized in preventing and

93 See: Reddit, *EU trade balance with Russia and EU energy dependence (reliance on imported energy)*, December 7, 2014, <http://i.imgur.com/s8tA8PE.png>

94 Fraser, Cameron, 'The Politics of EU-Russia Energy Relations', *Eurasian center report*, June 2009 p.1-10

95 Smith, Keith, 'Russia-Europe Energy Relations Implications for U.S. Policy', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, February 2010, p.1-13.

96 Mark Webber, *Third Party inclusion In ESDP: Form and Substance-A Case Study of Russia*, Loughbourgh University, UK, June 2011, p.1-16, http://aei.pitt.edu/2205/1/002261_1.PDF

managing crises in Europe, the fight against terrorism, securing the rights of national minorities and to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction⁹⁷.

The advent of 2007 marked the end of the PCA, after the first ten-year period of its implementation. The year 2008 was expected to bring a positive momentum for the Russia-EU relations, when Dmitry Medvedev took office. His relatively liberal and legalist reputation in the West, was expected to bring new rapprochement of bilateral relations. However, the reality turned out to be different from the expectations. Domestically, Russia did not demonstrate any sign of liberalization which could have positively affected the bilateral dialogue. Instead of that, Medvedev extended his presidential terms of office.

Finally, in January 2009, when the second Russian-Ukrainian gas crisis broke up, as a result of a totally non-transparent system of gas trade on the territory of the former Soviet Union, Europe found its energy security threatened. With Russia losing the reputation of Europe's reliable energy supplier, the key concept of an emerging energy community that could serve as a cornerstone of the bilateral partnership suffered a severe blow. All these developments led to the mutual alienation of Russia and Europe and Moscow was increasingly isolating itself from its potential Western partners.⁹⁸

Second, Russia and EU could not agree about the future of their common neighborhood. Although the European Union would apparently not like to provoke Russia with its actions related to EU eastward enlargement, it has no other choice but to increase, rather than decrease its regional activity.

The EU has been supportive of reforms in Ukraine, which demonstrates firm European aspirations. EU has been consistent in its demands of liberalization of the regime in Belarus, and this consistence started to bear fruit paving the way for the now on-going foreign policy reorientation of Minsk. The Union also was acting as a donor for Georgian post-war economic recovery..

97 Larissa Kuzmitcheva, *Russia and European Security and Defence Policy: Problematic „Strategic Partnership ?”*, Central European Political Studies Review, <http://www.cepsr.com/clanek.php?ID=213>

98 Grygiel, Jakub, *Russian Strategy toward Central Europe*, Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA), Washington, October 2009, p.1-11.

Bilateral relations between Russia and the EU have not been characterized by stability. Especially given the bipolarity of the Cold War era, the geopolitical differences and the gap in the interests and ideologies of the two sides, who seem not to converge most of the time. The collapse of communism and even more Putin's rise to power opened the way for cooperation, mainly in trade and energy sectors. This strategic cooperation has served the interests of both sides, since Europe has found her major energy supplier to cover her needs and Russia has ensured the monopoly in the area. Yet serious foreign policy differences tend to bring their bilateral relations on the verge of an ongoing crisis, which puts the future of their cooperation into question.

CHAPTER II

BALKANS AND RUSSIA AFTER 1991

2.1 Relations between Russia and Balkan States

The end of bipolarity with the collapse of the Communist regime in the early 1990s dramatically changed the balance of power in the Balkans. In the subsequent overthrow of Communist regimes in Romania and Bulgaria, Moscow lost its geopolitical strongest allies in the region. Additionally, the Kremlin was forced to focus on ethnic conflicts in the so-called neighboring region.⁹⁹

Russia maintained good relations with the Balkan states during the communist era. After the collapse of communism the landscape changed and most states turned to the West. The relations with Bulgaria and Romania, and the other states that emerged after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, deteriorated immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In brief, in the following pages we will focus on the relations of Russia with the major Balkan states.

2.1.1 Russo- Bulgarian relations

Relations between Russia and the Bulgarian state have dated back as far as the 1800s, when Moscow and Sofia established diplomatic relations on July 7, 1879. Some common cultural elements between the two nations are worth mentioning at this point. The Cyrillic alphabet originated in Bulgaria, was adopted by the Russians and other Orthodox Slavs as their standard alphabet. Both nations had the tradition of calling their monarchs “Tsars”, a Slavic word for Caesar or Emperor. Normally, Russia supported Bulgaria among other Slavic nations in the Balkans not only for the sake of historic and cultural ties but primarily in order to create alliances with them against her enemies. During Russia's wars against the Ottoman Empire (a common enemy among Europeans), especially in the 1877 war, Russia helped Bulgaria gain sovereignty from the Ottoman Empire. However during the First World War, the Bulgarians joined the side of the Central Powers. During the Cold War, Yugoslavia

⁹⁹ Robert Legvold, “Russian Foreign Policy in 21st century & and the shadow of the past.”, *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 86, 5, Sept./Oct. 2007.

emerged as a communist power independent of Soviet control. Rather than joining Yugoslavia, Bulgaria became a Soviet satellite state, the most loyal to the Soviet Union in the Balkans region. After the fall of communism in 1989 Bulgarian–Russian relations were brought to a new level. The relations were highly influenced by the ideological orientations of Bulgarian government -right-wing or left-wing-, as the leftist governments were seeking closer ties, while right-wing governments had a more strict approach to political and economic relations. The new democratic governments that took office after the collapse of communist regime aimed to participate in western organizations such as NATO and EU.

2.1.2 Russo-Romanian relations

Russo-Romanian relations remained strained most of the time. Romania during the Cold War era was closely aligned with the international policies and goals of the USSR. But since the mid 50's, Romania began a slow disengagement from Soviet domination, being careful not to incur the suspicions or disapproval of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 caused Romania to distance itself further from the soviet leader Brezhnev. When the UN General Assembly voted on a resolution calling for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Soviet troops, Romania broke with its Warsaw Pact allies and abstained. Romania's foreign policy after 1990 was built exclusively on geo-strategic reasons and less on economic relations, which has led to minimal relations with Russia. Relations between Romania and Russia in 1990s, were marked by an ambivalent strategy, since Romania is located in an area characterized as unstable 'gray zone' of Europe and a field of conflict in the post-Cold War era. Romania remained within the Warsaw Pact until 1991, when it finally seceded from the USSR. In 1992 and 1993, relations between Bucharest and Moscow were especially strained, as they backed opposite sides in the Transnistrian conflict. However, the new Russian Federation was unable to extend security guarantees provided by the USSR to the former allies of the Warsaw Pact. That combined with political considerations led Romania to express, formally in 1993, the desire to join NATO in order to consolidate its national security, which was in a precarious situation. Moreover, Russia considered suspicious the close military relations between Romania and the United States and since 2004 occurred a complete stagnation in bilateral (political) relations. Both

countries refused - although for different reasons -to recognize Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia and strongly supported its territorial integrity. The Russo-Romanian relations are further defined by almost 30,000 Russians who live in Romania, mainly in the Tulcea County.

2.1.3 Russo-Serbian relations

Located at the social, political, and geographic crossroads of Eastern and Western Europe, Serbia occupies a key strategic juncture in the Balkans¹⁰⁰. Diplomatic relations between Russia and Serbia were officially established in 1838¹⁰¹. Despite the obvious geographical distance, Russia has been associated historically with a patronage role for the Eastern Orthodox Slavic peoples against the foreign occupying forces, such as the Ottoman Turks. Russian influence was particularly manifested during the late Ottoman period with the production of Russian spiritual and educational literature that was sent to the Balkans¹⁰². The Russian influence in the Balkans occurred mainly during the Ottoman period and then especially during the Balkan wars, Russia supported nationalist resistance movements, particularly in today's Serbia and Montenegro. Serbia won its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1878 at the Congress of Berlin, largely thanks to the support of Russia. In two World Wars, Russia remained loyal to Serbia. Despite the fact that Russia had traditionally close relations with Serbia, there were moments of tension. During the Cold War the Soviet-Serbian relations were frozen at times , something that is confirmed by the fact that the duo Tito-Stalin never managed to develop relationships of trust and blunts the political differences¹⁰³.

100 US State Department, 'Background note: Serbia', September 13, 2010, [accessed February 15, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5388.htm>]

101 The Serbian embassy in Moscow, 'Politicko-ekonomski odnosi', February 2011 [accessed February 15, 2011, http://www.moskva.mfa.rs/lat/ustext.php?subaction=showfull&id=1250077866&archive=&start_from=&ucat=33&].

102 Nikita Bondarev, 'Russia and Russians in Serbia and Montenegro: Part I', *Russkiy Mir*, October 9, 2009, [accessed February 15, 2011, <http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/en/publications/articles/article0140.html>]

103 Miroslav Jovanovic, *Project Monitoring Russia Serbia Relations*, International and Security Affairs Centre, Belgrade, 2009 [accessed February 15, 2011, http://www.isac-fund.org/index.php?subaction=showfull&id=1241640607&archive=&start_from=&ucat=1&]

In an act that officially marked its non-alignment with either the USA or the USSR, Marshall Tito founded together with other states the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961. Nevertheless, according to E. Petrillo, despite the political differences between the two countries, people have developed joint values and common cultural heritage, mainly because of cordial relations between their national churches.¹⁰⁴

Following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the EU –particularly central member-states of the Union- has become the main competitor of Russian influence in the Balkans¹⁰⁵. In the 1990s, Russian-Serbian relations were generally limited, since Serbia was internationally isolated as a result of the Balkan wars and Russia was economically weak.

Given the redefinition of the objectives of the new independent Balkan states that now participated in international organizations such as the EU and NATO, the prospects for Russia's regional influence began to decline. One of the main tools of Russian foreign policy, in which Russia has resorted to is the use of soft power and the targeted economic investments to enhance her economic, political and strategic influence in the Balkans¹⁰⁶. The EU on its part has also used the regular soft power, in order to increase its influence in the Balkans, such as acting as an attractive model for regional integration.

While there has been a stable framework of bilateral relations and contacts, the relations of the two countries were improved significantly after the fall of Milosevic on 5 October 2000. In addition, Russia has sought to strengthen its regional position in relation to other actors (e.g., EU and the US) as a dominant economic power, which has in turn increased the political influence in the Balkans. Almost simultaneously with the fall of Milosevic a change in the Russian leadership took place with Putin taking over from Yeltsin, in 2000, and redefining in a more realistic way the foreign policy of Russia towards Serbia¹⁰⁷.

104 Enza Roberta Petrillo, « Russian foreign policy towards the Balkans: which perspective? », Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, No.169, April 2013.

105 Enza Roberta Petrillo, *op. cit.*

106 David Clark and Andrew Foxall, *Russia's Role in the Balkans –Cause for Concern?*, London, The Henry Jackson Society, June 2014, p.1-15

107 Kulhanek Jakub, 'Putin's Foreign Policy and the Founding of NATO-Russia Council', *Caucasian Review of International Affairs (CRIA)*, Vol 4(1), 2008, p 136-153.

During the last decade, Russia pursued strategic investments in energy and infrastructure in the Balkans, proving that Russia's policy towards the region, mainly based on pragmatism and strategic calculations.

The Serbian government maintains a balanced foreign policy between Russia, the EU and NATO. Russian companies now hold a majority of shares in the former state oil company in Serbia, Naftna Industrija Srbije (NIS Jugopetrol)¹⁰⁸. However, members of Serbian parliament remain divided on the issue of relations between Serbia and NATO, mainly because of the NATO air strikes against Serbia and Montenegro in 1999.

To date, outside the Commonwealth of Independent States, Serbia is the only country with a free trade agreement with Russia, according to which Russian goods produced in Serbia are considered to be of Serbian origin and exported duty-free to Russia¹⁰⁹. The ability to export goods from Serbia to the Russian market without paying customs has already been recognized by leading Russian multinational companies installed production units in Serbia in order to contribute to the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Despite this being the leading factor of Russian-Serbian economic relations it also contributes to the strengthening of bilateral relations at all levels. Russia beyond the political support of Serbia in the Kosovo issue has provided financial assistance for the reconstruction of destroyed Serbian Orthodox churches in Kosovo.¹¹⁰

The interest of Russia to the fate of Serbia after the dissolution of Yugoslavia was attributed to the fact that Russia faced similar situations in the new states that emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, but also because Russia wanted to control this sensitive area of the Balkans for smooth transfer of Russian natural gas to

108 Naftna industrija Srbije A.D., Interim Condensed Consolidated Financial Statements, 31 March 2014 See: http://www.belex.rs/data/2014/04/00087658_E.pdf

109 See: *Protocol Between The Government Of The Republic Of Serbia And The Government Of The Russian Federation On Exceptions From The Free Trade Regime And Rules On Determination Of The Country Of Origin Of Goods To The Free Trade Agreement Between The Federal Government Of The Federal Republic Of Yugoslavia And The Government Of The Russian Federation Of 28 August 2000*, available in <http://siepa.gov.rs/en/files/pdf2010/Protocol%20Russia-Serbia.pdf>

110 Ilir Deda and Lulzim Peci, *Kosovo Serbs After The Declaration Of Independence :The Right Momentum For Confidence Building Measures*, Prishtina, July 2008, p.1-10.

Europe¹¹¹. After the collapse of the Communist regime in Russia, Moscow lost one after another all her traditional allies. Nevertheless, Serbia was the only traditional ally left in the Balkans.

2.2 Russo-Balkan financial relations

From economic perspective, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Balkan states have tried to put their economy into the rules of free market, and moderated the economic relations with Russia. Russian investments in the Balkans are comparatively low in relation to the investments of other countries in the Balkans region. In recent years much has been said about increasing political and economic influence of Russia in the Balkans. The opportunity was given to Russia for economic penetration in the Balkans in 2008 with the eurozone crisis, which has particularly affected the economies of Balkan countries, which are linked to the EU. An analysis by the Economist Intelligence Unit notes that the transitional economies of Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo, Albania and FYROM have suffered most from the global recession of 2008-09¹¹². The recovery in 2010 and 2011 was moderate. This means that the average production in the region is still well below the levels before the crisis. The Balkan economies are particularly vulnerable to a recession in the eurozone, because the EU is the major trading partner for all the Balkan countries and the economic crisis has discouraged exports and the inflow of FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in these countries of Balkans¹¹³. The last four years Moscow has encouraged Russian companies to invest across Southeast Europe and trying to turn the area into a focus of investor interest and high strategic value to facilitate the penetration of Western Europe¹¹⁴. Moscow considers the Balkans as a key region for the promotion of Russian influence and a buffer zone between East and West.

111 Goldthau, Andreas, *The Politics Of Natural Gas Development In The European Union* London 2010, p.1-11.

112 Bartlett Will, Vasilis Monastiriotes, *SE Europe after the crisis. A new dawn or back to business as usual*, London, LSEE – Research on South Eastern Europe European Institute, LSE 2010, p. 1-113.

113 Petrović Žarkon, *Russia Serbia Relations at the beginning of XXI Century*, Beograd, - ESSAY COMPENDIUM –ISAC fund 2010, p.1-33.

114 Simonov Konstantin, *Russian Energy Interests in South-Eastern Europe*, Moscow, 2009. p.1-9.

2.3 Energy Diplomacy of Moscow in the Balkans

The Balkan region is of great strategic importance for Russia, including the role of the Balkans as a major interchange for transportation and infrastructure used for the supply of natural gas and oil to European countries. Therefore, energy objectives of Russia in the region considered as a top issue on the political agenda. The control of oil and gas has become one of the leading power factors in the evolution of Russia in the international system. The extraction and export of large quantities of hydrocarbons can be instrumental in redistributing power among the great powers and is the largest revenue of the Russian economy and important factor for its recovery.¹¹⁵

Russia inevitably plays a central role in energy developments. The reserves of the country's oil reach 80 billion barrels, while those of gas are approaching to 48 trillion cubic meters. Moreover, the very difficult geological structure of the Russian territory and the challenging weather conditions have not allowed the recording of the country's reserves and their full exploitation.¹¹⁶

Putin's government has sought from the outset of its governance to exploit the Russian energy reserves and redrawing its energy strategy. Russian giants companies such as Gazprom and Lukoil were openly encouraged to invest in the Balkan energy markets in order to strengthen the role of Moscow in the region¹¹⁷. The geographical reality and intensity of relations between Russia and Ukraine thus forced Moscow to concentrate on the Balkan Peninsula.

Based on the existing network of Russian gas to the Balkans, the Balkan countries are in some degree dependent on Russia. Countries such as Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia are almost entirely energy-dependent on gas in Russia. Russia made sure that the Balkan countries connect to the gas network before joining the EU. The lack of an alternative supplier or route for energy supply has rendered these

115 Popova Linda, « Russian Foreign Policy toward the Balkans: A Situation Assessment », Mercyhurst College Institute for Intelligence Studies, Unclassified/For Academic Purposes Only, News Risk Weblog, 13 May 2008.

116 Karagiannis Manos 'The foreign policy of Russia in the post-communist Balkans', retrieved in 18 Nov 2011 by http://media.ems.gr/ekdiloseis/2011/event_balkania_karagiannis.pdf.

117 Karagiannis Manos, *op. cit.*, 2011.
http://media.ems.gr/ekdiloseis/2011/event_balkania_karagiannis.pdf.

countries weak and vulnerable to any kind of crisis that could have an immediate impact on energy supply.

Similarly to Europe, this strategy of Russia applies throughout the Balkans, where Russia aims to ensure its sphere of political and economic influence. Moscow is promoting her goals through Gazprom, the giant of Russian gas supply, who as the dominant body of the South Stream pipeline construction is the one concluding agreements with the countries of the Balkan region.

Russia has tried to regain its economic influence and political power over the local governments primarily based on the energy factor. To date, intergovernmental agreements for passing the South Stream have been signed between Russia and Croatia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Serbia, Greece, Slovenia and Austria. Specifically, the one fourth of the supply of natural gas will be purchased by power companies in Serbia and Croatia. Gazprom is planning to include in agreements on South Stream, Balkan countries before their accession to the EU. The fact of rapid integration and interconnection of South Stream to Europe before other European projects is a key factor for energy hegemony of Gazprom in Europe¹¹⁸.

In other words, Russia has based her re-emergence as a superpower globally, her dominance in eastern and southeastern Europe and her relations-building with the EU on the energy dependence that her large amount of gas resources creates. Therefore, her key role in the energy sector is seen by the Russian government as a unique opportunity to take the lead in the economic and political relations with her neighbours, that will consequently allow her to increase her influence in the West as well.

2.4 Conclusions

The context in which configured Russia's foreign relations with the main Balkan countries such as Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria, in the post-Soviet period was unfavorable for Russia and their choice to join the western sphere of influence significantly limited its opportunities to renegotiate their relations with them and the Russia's opportunities for economic invasion were restricted in few Balkan countries.

118 Karagiannis Manos, *op. cit.*, 2011.

It was only Serbia that kept a balanced foreign policy between east and west after the fall of the Milosevic regime in 2000. Furthermore, Balkan Peninsula constitute an alternative energy road to transfer its energy resources to the western market. So, it is apparent that Russia sought to find a way to reinforce its presence in the Balkan region in order to ensure its interests in the area.

CHAPTER III

RUSSIA AND YUGOSLAV WARS-KOSOVO CRISIS

3.1 The Wars of the Former-Yugoslavia

The Balkans had been the region of conflict and it was the bone of contention for both the Austrian and Ottoman Empires for centuries before both collapsed during World War I. In 1929 was created the kingdom of Yugoslavia and the new government, according to J. Norris, purposefully ignored the existing and traditional regions and peoples.¹¹⁹

After World War II it was the communists of Yugoslavia who took power in Beograd under their leader, Josip Tito. The old kingdom was now replaced by a federation of six federal republics, which included Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia, Slovenia, Montenegro and Macedonia and two autonomous regions, Kosovo and Vojvodina. Tito throughout his rule kept the Yugoslav nation together partly by sheer force of will imposed by a strong communist party which cut across ethnic boundaries. When the Soviet Union broke its relations with Yugoslavia in 1948, the latter took its own path.

However, after the death of Tito in 1980 the different wishes of the six Republics of the Federation began to pull Yugoslavia apart, a situation exacerbated by the collapse of the USSR in the late 1980s. Without their uncontested leader, and in light of free elections conducted within the republics and the opportunity for their self-determination, Yugoslavia was divided.¹²⁰

3.1.1 The Rise of Serbian Nationalism

When Tito passed away, nationalist movements soon emerged all over Yugoslavia. In 1986, the Serbian Academy of Sciences issued a Memorandum which claimed that Kosovo had to remain Serbian, despite a 90% Albanian population, because of the historic ties of the Serbian nation with the people living in this land.

119 John Norris, *Collision Course, Nato, Russia and Kossovo*, Westport, Connecticut, Praegar, 2005.

120 Oksana Antonenko, *'Russia and the Deadlock over Kosovo'*, IFRI Russian-NIS Center, Paris, July 2007.

Tensions between Albanians and local Serbs erupted and Kosovo began to fragment. In 1988, Milosevic gained Serb ascendance over Kosovo, Montenegro and Vojvodina, securing nationalist Serb domination in four of the region's units.

The above mentioned developments in Yugoslavia made Slovenia fear from the creation of a Greater Serbia, thus the Slovenian nationalist forces decided to take the destiny of the Slovenian nation in their hands and build a future outside Yugoslavia. In 1990, with Communism collapsing in Soviet Union and across Eastern Europe, Croatia and Slovenia held multi-party elections in response to Milosevic's attempt to centralize the remaining power.

3.1.2 The Wars for Slovenia and Croatia

The 'Croatian Democratic Union' (CDU), a right-wing party came out as the great winner of the first free democratic elections in 1989. The fears of the Serb minority were fueled by claims from within the remainder of Yugoslavia that the CDU planned a return to the anti-Serb hatred of the World War II.

Slovenia held a plebiscite for independence on 23 December 1990, which passed thanks to fears over Serb domination and Milosevic's actions in Kosovo. These fears lead both Slovenia and Croatia to begin arming local military and paramilitaries, decision that fuelled the tension. Slovenia declared independence on June 25th, 1991, and the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) was called to hold Yugoslavia together¹²¹. Slovenia's independence was aimed more at breaking from Milosevic's Greater Serbia than from the Yugoslav ideal, but once the JNA was ready to fire Slovenes, the full independence was the only option. The JNA was defeated in ten days, partly because there were few Serbs in the region for it to stay and fight for¹²².

When Croatia opted also for the declaration of the independence in June 25th, 1991, following a Serb seizure of Yugoslavia's presidency, clashes between Serbs and

121 Yugoslavia: from wage cuts to war-Wildcat, retrieved by <https://libcom.org/files/Yugoslavia%20from%20wage%20cuts%20to%20war%20-%20Wildcat.pdf> , Aug 24 2009

122 Branko Zorn^{1,3}, Veselin Šučur¹, Janez Stare² and Helena Meden-Vrtovec, *Decline in sex ratio at birth after 10-day war in Slovenia*, Oxford Journal, Human reproduction, <http://humrep.oxfordjournals.org/content/17/12/3173>

Croatians increased, and Milosevic and the JNA used this event as an excuse to invade Croatia, aiming in reality to 'protect' the Serbs. This action was encouraged by the US Secretary of the State who told Milosevic that the US would not recognise Slovenia and Croatia, giving the Serb leader the impression he had a free hand¹²³.

A short war followed, where around a third of Croatia was occupied. It was only the UN that took action, offering foreign troops to halt the warfare (mobilising peacekeeping mechanisms that led to the creation of UNPROFOR) and bring peace and demilitarization to the disputed areas. This development was accepted by the Serbs because they had already taken key territories under control and forced other ethnicities out, and wanted to make peace in order to focus on claiming other areas. The international community recognised Croatian independence in 1992, but Croatian areas remained occupied by the Serbs and protected by the UN for several years. Before these could be reclaimed, the conflict in Yugoslavia spread because both Serbia and Croatia wanted to break up Bosnia between them¹²⁴.

In 1995 Croatia's government won back the control of western Slavonia and central Croatia from the Serbs by military means during the 'Operation Storm', thanks in part to US training and US mercenaries¹²⁵. As a result of the takeover of the Croatian territories a counter ethnic cleansing took place: this time it was the turn of the local Serbian population to flee. In 1996, international pressure on Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic forced him to surrender eastern Slavonia and pull out his troops. Croatia finally won back this region by 1998¹²⁶. The UN Peacekeepers only left the region in 2002¹²⁷.

123 Robert Wilde, 'The Wars of the Former Yugoslavia', About.com, <http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/thebalkansandturkey/a/The-Wars-Of-The-Former-Yugoslavia.htm>

124 Zvonimir Baletic, Josip Esterajher, Milan Jajcinovic, Mladen Klemencic, Andjelko Milardovic, Gorazd Nikic, Fran Visnar 'Croatia Between Aggression And Peace, Zagreb 1994 <http://www.hic.hr/books/croatia-between/knjiga.pdf>

125 Croatia - Operation Storm 1995, globalsecurity.org See: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/ops/croatia.htm>

126 CNN World News 'Eastern Slavonia back to Croatia's control, VUKOVAR, Croatia, January 15, 1998, See: <http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9801/15/croatia.handover/>

127 Virginia, Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Keep Peace? International Intervention and the Duration of Peace After Civil War*, Columbia University, New York, 2004, p.274

3.1.3 The War in Bosnia

When in 1991 broke up the war in Yugoslavia, Bosnia was one of its six republics with mixed population¹²⁸. In March 1992, the Bosnian Muslims and Croats of Bosnia voted for the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina in a referendum, while most Serbs boycotted the vote. EU promised diplomatic recognition to any of the former Yugoslav republics on condition that the republics held a referendum on independence and respected the minority rights and the borders of neighboring republics¹²⁹. Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, as a Bosnian Muslim along with his supporters couldn't stay any more under the domination of the central Yugoslav government, although Bosnian Serb leaders warned that international recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina would lead to civil war. In April 1992, few months before the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina by the EU and the USA, ethnic cleansing operations launched by all three ethnic groups against each other and thus a civil-war broke up. Initially, Serbian paramilitary forces operated along with the Yugoslav Army against the allied forces of Muslim Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats, but the latter two broke out their alliance and each one of them launched ethnic cleansing operations against each other.

During the war, apart from the casualties (more than 96,000 people were killed), the refugees (approximately 2.3 million people were driven from their homes) and the catastrophic results that caused to the Bosnian economy, it was also the organized crime that flourished and consequently hindered the recovery of the state after the war. The air attacks along with furious offensive of the Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croat forces, forced the already decimated Serbian forces to cease fire in October 1995.¹³⁰ Thus, the Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, the Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, and the Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, along with representatives of the Bosnian Serbs and Croats, met in Dayton, Ohio, in November 1995 to negotiate a peace agreement mediated by the United States, the EU, and Russia. The final peace agreement was achieved in Paris on December 14. According

¹²⁸ Bosnia consisted of Bosnian Croats (17%), Bosnian Serbs (31%) and Bosnian Muslims (44% in the 1991 census)

¹²⁹ Steven Woehrel, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: Issues for U.S. Policy", Congressional Research Service, February 10, 2005, page 3-5

¹³⁰ Steven Woehrel, *op. cit.*, page 1-3.

to the Dayton Peace Accords, Bosnia-Herzegovina is an independent and an internationally recognized state that preserves its pre-war borders. Internally, it splits in two semi-autonomous “entities”: the Muslim-Croat Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Bosnian Serb-dominated Republika Srpska (RS). Under the Dayton accords, the Bosnian Federation received roughly 51% of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina, while the Republika Srpska received about 49%¹³¹.

The Yugoslav Wars were considered ethnic conflicts that posed a serious threat for a spill-over effect in the broader areas, for this reason they attracted international attention. These wars are generally considered to be a series of largely separate but related military conflicts occurring and affecting most of the former Yugoslav republics.

Often described as Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II, the conflicts have become infamous for the war crimes involved, including ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and rape. These were the first conflicts since World War II to be formally judged genocidal in character and many key individual participants were subsequently charged with war crimes. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was established by the UN to prosecute these crimes.

The international community agrees about the victims of the conflicts in ex-Yugoslavia during 1992-1995. According to the International Center for Transitional Justice, the Yugoslav Wars resulted in the deaths of 140,000 people¹³². The Humanitarian Law Center estimates that in the conflicts in former Yugoslav republics at least 130,000 people lost their lives¹³³.

131 On This day 1995-2005, 1995: *Bosnia peace accord ends three-year war*, BBC HOME, See: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/december/14/newsid_2559000/2559699.stm

132 International Center for Transitional Justice *Transitional Justice in the Former Yugoslavia*, See: <https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-FormerYugoslavia-Justice-Facts-2009-English.pdf>

133 Transitional Justice in Post-Yugoslav Countries. Report for 2006 , p.1-2
http://wcjp.unicri.it/proceedings/docs/DOCUMENTA-HLC-RCS_Trans%20justice%20in%20ex%20Yu%20countries_2006_eng.PDF

3.2 The role of NATO in peace enforcement operations in Bosnia

The war in Bosnia came to an end in 1995 when NATO conducted a series of air strikes against Bosnian Serb positions. These late August air strikes along with furious offensive of the Bosnian Muslim and the Bosnian Croat forces, forced the already decimated Serbian forces to plead cease fire in October 1995. Thus the leaders of the three nationalities, met in Dayton Ohio, in November 1995 to negotiate a peace agreement under the presence of mediators from the United States, the EU, and Russia. According to the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) the supervision of the civilian peace implementation is carried out by the High Representative selected by the Peace Implementation Council.

From military security perspective, the NATO forces were tasked with the implementation of DPA because NATO is the only big military organization that is able to take such an action under the directions of the UN. NATO initially deployed 60,000 troops to Bosnia through the tasking forces of Implementation Force (IFOR)¹³⁴. NATO deployed forces arrived in Bosnia in December 1995 and had played a crucial role in the peace enforcement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. When NATO concluded successfully the military tasks outlined in the Dayton agreement and the stabilization of the peace had made serious progress, the IFOR troops were replaced by smaller Stabilization Force (SFOR, initially with about 32,000 troops) in December 1996. In addition, the role of NATO was to gradually to enforce a self-sustaining peace in Bosnia with its own security forces¹³⁵. NATO extended SFOR a second time in June 1998, this time without a specified deadline. Periodic mission reviews by NATO of SFOR operations assessed an increasingly stable security situation and prompted gradual reductions in SFOR's force strength over time. The successful efforts of the NATO's mission in Bosnia were recognized by U.N. Security Council and subsequently renewed its authorization for SFOR's operations¹³⁶.

134 NATO topics, *Peace support operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, See: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_52122.htm

135 Julie Kim, *Bosnia and the European Union Military Force (EUFOR): Post-NATO Peacekeeping*, CRS Report for Congress, December 5, 2006, See: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21774.pdf>

136 NATO topics, *Peace support operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina* See: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_52122.htm

On 2nd December 2004, NATO formally brought to end its Stabilization Force (SFOR) mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and handed over peace and stabilization duties to a European Union force (EUFOR). Thus, NATO has been deeply involved in the post-war country's stabilization and peace-building until mid 2000s.

NATO's commitment to Bosnians' aspirations to join its ranks and adhere to EU continued also at the second half of the 2000s. On 29 November 2006, the alliance did invite Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro to join the NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. Also, NATO foreign ministers have agreed in April 2010 to launch a Membership Action Plan (MAP) for Bosnia and Herzegovina - a penultimate step to joining the military alliance¹³⁷. Although the MAP is not a final promise of NATO membership and it does not commit the alliance to defend Bosnia against a military threat or affect its decision-making mechanisms, it is a crucial assistance program through which NATO and its members provide guidance and support on specific political, economic, security, and legal reforms. The MAP is of utmost importance for the process of reconciliation and peace-building attempts among the formerly warring ethnic populations¹³⁸.

Furthermore, Bosnian authorities are making necessary reforms to become a NATO member in the near future. However, before it is granted NATO membership, the Bosnian government was expected to solve the vital question of defense property. That was, the MAP that Bosnia was granted will formally begin to function only when the military infrastructure is registered as the property of the Bosnian state rather than the property of the Federation of BiH or the Republika Srpska¹³⁹. The alliance welcomed Bosnia's decision to destroy surplus ammunition and arms. Bosnia also succeeded in uniting its rival ethnic armies that fought each other during the 1992-95 war, not a small task for a country that remains ethnically divided. So, Bosnia in 2005 established unified armed forces in which people from all three ethnic groups are working on joint missions and defense programs. In other words, for the first time in the post-war period the soldiers in the Bosnian army wear the same

137 NATO topics' *Membership Action Plan (MAP)* See: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_37356.htm

138 *Idem.*

139 Brljavac Bedrudin, 'A Unified Bosnian Army en route to Join NATO: From the Perspective of a Security Community', Policy Documentation Center, 2011, [http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00006408/01/Bosnian_army_security_community.pdf]

uniform with state insignia, they swear the same oath and serve under the same country flag.

Currently, Bosnia and Herzegovina's cooperation with NATO is set out in an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). The first IPAP was agreed with the Alliance in September 2008 and an updated version was agreed in February 2011. Developed on a two-year basis, such plans are designed to bring together all the various cooperation mechanisms through which the country interacts with the Alliance, sharpening the focus of activities to better support domestic reform efforts¹⁴⁰.

3.3 The Russian involvement in ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Soviet Union initially considered the dissolution of Yugoslavia to be of minor importance as already mentioned above. Indeed, Kremlin showed little interest in the conflict that broke out between the Slovenian forces and the Yugoslav federal army in the summer of 1991. The role of Moscow in Serbo-Croat conflict in the autumn of 1991 was also extremely limited, since the Soviet Union was a step before the dissolution and had much more serious problems to solve. Later, the Russian Federation was among the very first states that recognized Croatia and Slovenia.

Russia began to show a keen interest in what was happening in the former Yugoslavia since 1992, when it became obvious that the US and the European Union wanted to play a distinct role in the region. Yeltsin's government did not hesitate to diversify itself from the policy of the Western countries in the Bosnian crisis. Furthermore, Moscow opposed in the US efforts in the period 1993-1994 to lift the arms embargo in favor of Bosnian Muslims¹⁴¹. Russia in the Bosnian war was not able to prevent the intervention of the allied forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In February 1994, President Yeltsin expressed his concern about the Russian exclusion from the negotiations process and expressed the willingness of Moscow to take up an

140 NATO topics, *NATO's relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina*, See: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49127.htm

141 Marit Moe, *The Contact Group on Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo: The Institution and its Mediation Role*, <http://www.freewebs.com/moemarit/Chapter%20Three.pdf>

"active role" in that process¹⁴². Russia was used by allied forces to ensure the legitimacy of their airstrikes and to exert pressure to its traditionally friendly ethnic Serbs in Bosnia.

Russian armed forces were invited in January 1996 to participate in the peace implementation force IFOR and that development undoubtedly raised the prestige of Moscow among Serb populations. The presence of Russian troops showed in a convincing fashion that NATO and Russia could work together successfully in the field of peacekeeping. However, the participation of Russian forces in IFOR did not reduce to a minimum the tensions caused by the NATO-led intervention in the Russian political system, which is characterized by strong ideological confrontations¹⁴³. The influence of the pro-Western forces decreased significantly and the Eurasian approach began to dominate decision-making. The Euro-Asianists brought harsh criticism of the Russian government for its unwillingness to help the military "Serbian brothers"¹⁴⁴.

In the zone of operations, the Russian forces came under the tactical control of the US-led Multinational Division (North). Later in 1999 a part of Russian forces in Bosnia moved to Kosovo to participate with other multinational forces in peace keeping operations¹⁴⁵. Russia operated in Bosnia and Kosovo until 2003.

Moscow successfully cultivated the image of the patron power of Slavic and Orthodox peoples in order to increase its influence in the Balkans. Russia did not seek actively regional hegemony in the region, since neither compromised vital Russian interests, nor had the means to achieve this. The mediating role of Russia between Bosnian Serbs and NATO in the period 1993-1995 and the presence of Russian peacekeepers in Bosnia made Russia a privileged interlocutor of the US and the

142 Black Stephen, 'From Madrid To Brussels: Perspectives On Nato Enlargement', Washington, Global Security Organization, June 1997, p. 3-10.

143 Smith, Julianne, *Russian-NATO relations. Defining Moment or Déjà Vu?*, Center for strategic and international studies, 2008.

144 Shlapentokh, Dmitry, 'Russian Elite Image Of Iran: From The Late Soviet Era To The Present', Strategic studies institute, 2009, p. 9-11.

145 VALERIE REITMAN and RICHARD BOUDREAUX and MAURA REYNOLDS, *NATO Soldiers Enter Kosovo in First Phase of Peace Mission*, Los Angeles Times, 12 June 1999, See: <http://articles.latimes.com/1999/jun/12/news/mn-45695/2>

European Union and for that reason received significant financial assistance during a critical period for the future of the Russian economy¹⁴⁶.

Despite the strong cultural and historical ties between Russia and Serbia, Moscow's attitude to the Bosnian crisis was mainly defined by geopolitical factors. The Balkan Peninsula was seen by a large part of the Russian political elite as a buffer zone, as an intermediate space between Russia and the West. The systematic involvement in the Balkan events began at a time when Moscow was keen to avoid further reduction of influence in Eastern Europe, especially after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the withdrawal of Soviet/Russian troops from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary¹⁴⁷. However, the economic crisis and the collapse of the stock market in Moscow in 1998 significantly reduced the ability of the Russian government to play a key role in Balkan affairs. At the same time, the Russian political system has entered a new vortex of introspection, given the weakness of President Yeltsin to launch a program of economic and social reforms in the country. Furthermore, the creation of a *de facto* independent Chechen state necessarily limited the interest of the Russian leadership on the Balkans in the second half of the 1990s.

Russian position on post-war reconstruction of Bosnia remains, in line with her Western policy. In particular, in October 2007, Russia upheld the Western denial of ethnic voting (defended by the Serbian minority and the government of Serbia)¹⁴⁸.

3.4 The case of Kosovo

3.4.1 Origins of war

The Serbian-Albanian dispute over Kosovo has a long history and is primarily based on the ancient ethnic hatred between the two nations. However the actual reason of the contention was geographical since the territory of Kosovo which was the bone of contention for both sides. The region has deep symbolic importance to both ethnic groups and the twentieth century was a period of violent ethnic expulsion for

146 Cross, Sharyl, *Russia and NATO Toward the 21st Century: Conflicts and Peacekeeping in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo*, NATO-EAPC Research Fellowship Award Final Report, 2001.

147 Sharp, Jane, *Striving for military Stability in Europe*, New York, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006, p.151-171.

¹⁴⁸ Daria Sito-Sucic, *Powers back Bosnia envoy, Russia faults timing*, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/10/31/idUSL31634181>

both Serbs and Albanians as a result of both sides' efforts to dominate the region. These ethnic tensions in recent years had taken also a religious character, with the majority of Serbs being Orthodox Christian and the majority of Kosovar Albanians being Muslim.¹⁴⁹

Under Yugoslavia's 1974 constitution, Kosovo had been made an autonomous province within Serbia and was given broad political authority nearly on a par with Yugoslavia's six republics. However, Albanians pushed for more extensive political rights, and Belgrade brutally put down student demonstrations in 1981. The relations between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo got worse when the nationalist Slobodan Milosevic took office. Milosevic often directly targeted Kosovo Albanian rights in the province, and these actions increased tremendously its popularity in Serbia. Between 1989 and 1990, the Serb government further curtailed ethnic Albanian rights in the province, culminating with revoking Kosovo's autonomous status in July 1990. Under such pressures, Kosovar Albanians developed their own nationalist beliefs and initially practiced nonviolent resistance amid growing calls for independence, despite making up 90% of the province's population.

The suppression of Kosovar Albanians' movements for independence, by the Belgrade regime led to riots and conflicts in 1989. Kosovars taking into consideration the conflict in Bosnia and the splintering of Yugoslavia, they were convinced that nonviolent action would not loosen Belgrade's pressure. By the 1990's, a poorly organized guerilla movement was set up by the Kosovars. The most important was the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA-UCK) which was composed by nationalists, clans and criminals¹⁵⁰.

The Dayton Agreement in November 1995, only temporarily calmed the nationalist passions in the former Yugoslavia. The collapse of the Albanian government in 1997, flooded Kosovo with military weapons stolen from military bases in Albania and these triggered more intense tensions in the region between

149 Madeleine Lerup, "Russia and the Kosovar declaration of independence", A study of Russian newspaper articles concerning Kosovo, Research Paper, Lund University, Spring semester 2013, p. 5-15.

150 Michel Chossudovsky *The Criminalization of the State: "Independent Kosovo", a Territory under US-NATO Military Rule*, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-criminalization-of-the-state-independent-kosovo-a-territory-under-us-nato-military-rule/7996?print=1>

security forces and guerillas (mainly KLA) and the outbreak of hostilities as of summer 1998.

Under the fear of spread of the hostilities outside the Kosovo's territory and the participations of Serbian forces in the hostilities, in 1998 UN Security Council imposed an international arms embargo on Serbia and Montenegro (at the time) but not to Albanian Kosovars. Soon Kosovo became the subject of international diplomatic games and discussions led by the UN and a contact group consisting of Britain, France, Germany, Italy Russia and United States. In December of 1998, a UN Security Council resolution called for a cease fire and the recall of Yugoslav forces in Kosovo. The plea fell on deaf ears, and fighting between Yugoslav and KLA forces intensified.

3.4.2 The War of Kosovo

The seventy-eight day bombing campaign of allied forces against Serbia started on March 23, 1999 and it was the last international bloodiest conflict of the century, caused by the intervention of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It was the first time that a coalition of counties followed an indirect strategy, based on their air-power capacities, and attacked a regime to end its brutalities against a national minority, without important allied losses. The air attacks aimed to bring back the Yugoslav President to the negotiating table. In the next three months more than 800.000 immigrants would be scattered across southeastern Europe. NATO would have launched the air campaign with the blessing of UN if Russia had not threatened a veto¹⁵¹. This action was perceived by Moscow as an action grossly violating international law, as it had bypassed the UN Security Council, where Russia maintains the posture of a permanent member and has the right to block any resolution. The air bombing of Serbia started under the command of the General Secretary of NATO. The gradual transformation of NATO into a global policeman acting in the world will surprise the Russian political elite¹⁵². However, the Kremlin had very limited power; the country was dependent on financial support from the

151 Ove Bring, *Should NATO take the lead in formulating a doctrine on humanitarian intervention?* See: <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/1999/9903-07.htm>

152 Jens Ringsmose and Sten Rynning 'NATO's New Strategic Concept: A Comprehensive Assessment', Copenhagen, Danish Institute for International studies, 2011, p.50-53.

West, and the Russian army forces were in terrible condition. The march of a Russian motorized phalanx infantry in Pristina a few hours before the arrival of NATO forces did not prevent expulsion of most Serbian Kosovars from Kosovo. The air campaign ended when Russian president Yeltsin exerted power in NATO for stopping bombing¹⁵³. The war was both the most severe crisis in U.S-Russian relations in the post-cold war era and the most dramatic instance of U.S-Russian diplomatic ‘collaboration’ in that period. Although both Russia and US had sought to redefine their relationship, Kosovo war demonstrates that the relations between these two countries were still unfriendly at the end the ’90s.

The conflict in Kosovo has provided some significant lessons on how the situation in a supposed ‘limited war’ can burn out of control, mainly for two reasons: 1) The incoherent action of the allied forces, 2) The inadequacy of the air campaign to reassure a diplomatic defeat and the fall of a regime. While the nationalist leader Slobotan Milosevic has to face the massive power of NATO’s force, NATO hesitated to send troops to Kosovo because of the fear of allied casualties and the alliance had to give realistic responses to the public opinion¹⁵⁴.

3.4.3 The role of Russia in Kosovo’s War

Russia’s attitude in Kosovo was a balanced foreign policy between obsolete Soviet practices and genuine reform. Russia wanted to be respected and it often opposed to western invasion in the area of its influence. However, Russia had not the power and the response of Soviet Union to affect ex-allied states of Warsaw Pact. On the other hand, Russia in the 1990s was unable to promote the interests of Serbs in Kosovo and block any decision of NATO forces to engage in a war with Serbs in Kosovo, because at this time she had no power to head the negotiation process. The economic crash of August 1998 had revealed the corruption and weak institutions that had tarnished Russian economy and the financial assistance from western countries could not help to recover. The reform of the Russian economy was far more demanding and painful, than that it could have expected.

153 Kosovo Chronology, See:
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/etc/cron.html>

154 NATO’s War of Aggression in Yugoslavia: Who are the War Criminals?
<http://www.globalresearch.ca/nato-s-war-of-aggression-in-yugoslavia-who-are-the-war-criminals/2144>

From February 6, 1999, the Contact Group conducted long peace negotiations between Serbs and Kosovar Albanian to restore Kosovo's autonomous status, deployed an armed international peacekeeping presence under NATO's direction named Kosovo Force (KFOR), and eventually held a non-binding referendum on Kosovo's political status. The negotiations were doomed to failure. On March 18, 1999, Kosovars signed the agreement due to intolerable allied pressure, but Serbs did not sign it. Russian mediators opposed to any kind of armed attack of NATO forces against a country that belonged to its sphere of influence¹⁵⁵ but they perceived the risk of the crisis's expulsion outside the Kosovo's region.

Given that Russia had many internal troubles and the often fragile nature of its newly redefined state, it is understandable why Moscow was deeply concerned by the precedent of Kosovo. Indeed, Russia had many similar to Kosovo issues in its borders with the new emerging states from Soviet Union, and if NATO could bomb Kosovo, it might use this precedent to intervene in Russia's neighbourhood without UN mandate. The breakdown in talks led NATO to use force, undermining the role of the UN Security Council. If NATO had gotten the Russia more engaged in designing the contours of the negotiation process, it might have avoided the split at the end of that process.

The allied forces and especially European members of NATO were divided on the preferred outcome of a military operation. Most of them did not trust the Kosovar Albanians forces and sometimes there was a sense among some that NATO was fighting on the wrong side, because the conflict was taken part between Christians and Muslims. Also, there was little consensus within NATO about how to bring back Milosevic in the negotiation table. During the early stage of the bombing much of the diplomacy between Russia and United States was conducted directly between Russian Foreign Minister and his American counterpart¹⁵⁶. NATO attacks on Kosovo, coming three months after the U.S and British bombing of Iraq¹⁵⁷, enraged Russians, which saw the air strikes as geopolitical shake-up. Russian community policy was afraid that

155 Kurth James, *War over Kosovo: Politics and Strategy in a Global Age*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2013, p. 90.

156 Cross, Sharyl, *Russia and NATO Toward the 21st Century: Conflicts and Peacekeeping in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo*, San Jose, NATO intelligence service, 2001,p.5-20

157 A Kosovo Chronology, See:
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/etc/cron.html>

these air strikes served the US interests and defined NATO as the world's policeman to intervene everywhere in the world.

Russia blamed NATO forces for killing more Serbs during air campaign than Yugoslav forces killed Albanians in Kosovo the last year before the operations. While Russian president called for an urgent UN Security Council to stop air strikes. However, UN Secretary General Kofi Anan was subjected high pressure from the members of NATO to stay out of the fray¹⁵⁸. The Russian effort to introduce a UN resolution condemning the bombing was quickly turned back by a twelve to three vote, with only China and Namibia supporting Moscow. There was high pressure from the Russian Duma to pull Russian forces out of the peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and initiate substantial military assistance to Yugoslavia. NATO allies, having seen the inadequacies of UN peacekeeping operations in Bosnia, insisted that the command and control structure for any peacekeeping effort in Kosovo had to be dominated by NATO – not the United Nations¹⁵⁹. However, it was by all allies understandable that Russia was the link between the Milosevic and NATO and a ceasefire would be accepted by the Serbs, only if Russia would guarantee the security of the Serbian forces and the preservation of the borders of the current Yugoslavia. Russia wanted a strong role for the United Nations and wanted Milosevic to approve any deal.

All peace initiatives that had taken place during the air bombing of Serbia, had proven futile and therefore Russia proposed the participation of a distinct and renowned diplomat who would be acceptable by all sides, with the condition that this person would not belong to UN. The proposal was accepted with pleasure by the US and NATO, because that person would give the needed coherence among the coalition forces and would increase the international support¹⁶⁰. This person primarily would mediate between United States and Russia to 'end the war'.

As for the right person was chosen Finland's president, Martti Ahtisaari, a career diplomat with great experience, who had worked as advocate for Russia, and

158 *Independent International Commission on Kosovo*, "The Kosovo Report", 2006, p.3-9.

159 *Independent International Commission on Kosovo*, *op. cit.*, p.7-10.

160 Perritt Henry, *The road to independence for Kosovo: A chronicle of the Ahtisaari Plan*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010, p.3-10.

had accomplished in many difficult negotiations with the United Nations. He was also a peacemaker of the UN in Bosnia task force in 1992 and 1993 and had spent thirteen years heading the UN effort that led to peaceful independence for Namibia. He had won the presidency in 1993 despite having never held elective office. Ahtisaari also enjoyed the benefit of having strong ties to the EU. From the U.S. perspective, Ahtisaari was also ideal, because they had confidence that the President of Finland would present NATO's conditions to Milosevic with clarity and resolve.

M. Ahtisaari played very significant role in the issue of Kosovo and his name was very well linked to what was current situation in Kosovo. His primary goal was to bridge the differences between US and Russia. The key point to his plans was the bad health condition of Russian President Yeltsin and the financial deadlock of Russian economy due to the stock market crash in 1998. The core of his efforts was to achieve a peace agreement that coincides with the withdrawal of Serbian security forces with the suspension of NATO bombing. Further necessary condition was that NATO would constitute the core of peacekeeping operations, with the exception that Russia would participate in these operations¹⁶¹. The final agreement between the mediators came when Russia compromised with the westerners. On 3 June 1999, when Milosevic saw that all three had agreed and Russia compromised with NATO demands, he accepted the terms of an international peace plan to end the fighting, because there was no way to escape from it¹⁶². In the six-page military technical agreement, the Yugoslav military had agreed that an international military force, commanded by NATO, would occupy the province. The agreement outlined a strict timetable for withdrawal, with the first of Yugoslav forces to depart northern Kosovo within twenty-four hours and calling on all 40,000 Serb troops to pull out via four designated exit routes by June 21. These international forces, forming the KFOR, had control of the borders with Albania and FYROM, and ensured that Yugoslavia would have no word in determining which refugees would be allowed to return. It was agreed that the NATO Secretary-General would declare a bombing pause if the Yugoslavs began a pullout from northern Kosovo within twenty-four hours, meeting the first phase of the agreement. Although the KLA was not mentioned in the

161 Perritt Henry, *op. cit.*, p.2-7.

162 Julie Kim, *Kosovo and U.S. Policy: Background and Current Issues*, CRS Report for Congress, 2007, p.2-5.

agreement, the Yugoslavs were given direct assurances that the rebels would be demilitarized¹⁶³, and those guarantees were crucial in allowing the agreement to move forward. In signing the agreement, NATO has assumed responsibility for Kosovo's security. Just after the Serbs withdrawal, KLA announced ceasefire. The UN Security council passed the Kosovo resolution by a vote of 14-0, with China abstaining. With this resolution NATO activated KFOR. Russia without waiting for NATO permission dispatched first about 186 Russian peacekeepers from Bosnia to Kosovo and claimed their own sector. Yugoslav police and military officials did the best to facilitate the Russian troop movements by keeping the roads free of retreating troops and refugees. At this time Vladimir Putin as national security advisor took part in the finalization of the agreement¹⁶⁴. On 10 June, 1999, the North Atlantic Council ratified the agreement and suspended air operations.

Finally, the agreement was ratified by the Yugoslav parliament adopting the proposal amid contentious debate with delegates coming close to fistfights at some points. On 12 June, after Milosevic accepted the conditions, the NATO-led peacekeeping Kosovo Force (KFOR) began entering Kosovo. KFOR had been preparing to conduct combat operations, but in the end, its mission was limited peacekeeping. The first NATO troops to enter Pristina on the 12th of June, 1999, were soldiers from the British Special Air Service, despite NATO's diplomatic embarrassment since Russian troops arrived first at the airport. The Russian peacekeeping troops arrived in Pristina from Bosnia and they facilitated the arrival of at least 600 more Russian paratroopers Russia achieved its goal to arrive first in Pristina and was able to choose first its own territory close to Serbian population .

3.4.4 The course from Kosovo's war up to declaration of independence

Since June 1999, Kosovo has been governed by an interim administration led by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) established by the UN SC Resolution 1244 (1999). The Resolution, calls for "*substantial autonomy and meaningful self-administration for Kosovo*" and reaffirms that the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Yugoslavia shall be respected. Headed by a

163 Perritt Henry, *op. cit.*

164 Julie Kim, *op. cit.*, p.3-7.

Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), the operational framework of UNMIK has been divided into four pillars:

- (i) Police and Justice, under the direct leadership of the UN;
- (ii) Civil Administration (UN);
- (iii) Democratization and Institution Building (OSCE);
- (iv) Reconstruction and Economic Development (EU).¹⁶⁵

The military component has been led by NATO-led KFOR on the basis of UNSC Resolution 1244. KFOR was set up as a separate body from UNMIK and, while the necessities of the work required cooperation with UNMIK, it is not controlled by the civilian authority in Kosovo¹⁶⁶.

In 2001 the Constitutional Framework for Provision Self-Government in Kosovo that was issued by the SRSG created a system known as the “Provisional Institutions of Self-Government”¹⁶⁷ (PISG). Furthermore, the ‘Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan’, put together by UNMIK in 2004, spelt out the strategy to achieve a democratic society, based on the rule of law and effective equality.

In 2004 the promised democratic reforms made slow progress and several riots broke up by the majority of Kosovo Albanians who were by now openly calling for full independence. The UN representative in Kosovo reported it was time for the European Union to be given a greater role in determining the future of Kosovo.¹⁶⁸

In October 2005, the UN Security Council mandated the start of formal status talks between the Serbian Government and the Kosovo Albanian leadership, under the supervision of the Contact Group, with no provision for returning in the status before

165 James Ker-Lindsay, “Between “pragmatism” and “constitutionalism”: EU-Russian dynamics and differences”, *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, Vol 7, 2, 2011.

166 Stefan Lehne, “Kosovo and Serbia: Toward a Normal Relationship”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2012 [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Kosovo_and_Serbia.pdf]

167 On a Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government in Kosovo see: UNMIK/REG/2001/9, 15 May 2001, [<http://www.unmikonline.org/regulations/2001/reg09-01.htm>]

168 Vedran Džihic and Helmut Kramers, “Kosovo After Independence Is the EU’s EULEX Mission Delivering on its Promises?”, *International Policy Analysis*, July 2009, pp. 6-13, [<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/ipa/06571.pdf>].

1999 or to allow Kosovo to unite with another state.¹⁶⁹ Kofi Annan, the then Secretary-General of the UN, appointed again Martti Ahtisaari, the former president of Finland to serve as his special envoy. Martti Ahtisaari envisaged that the independence of Kosovo would be an imperative and the only accepted solution by the people of Kosovo¹⁷⁰. Ahtisaari decided to focus on the structure of the new state, but he knew that the negotiations would not be easy. He knew that Serbia would accept only some form of extensive autonomy for the province. Furthermore, at the same time Serbia passed an amendment to the Serbian constitution, recognizing that the region of Kosovo belongs to Serbian territory. In 2007 Ahtisaari returned with an improved proposal and he forwarded it on to the Security Council.¹⁷¹ The new proposal provided up higher sovereign rights in Kosovo, in order to compel Serbia to make a hasty compromise, foreseeing that the situation will deteriorate at the expense of its national interests, if continually rejects the proposals of the UN mediator. This seems to be a diplomatic tactic employed by the mediators that sometimes may tend to serve the interests of the strong side, to send the message to the other side on the table of negotiations, that any refusal on a proposed solution would have two possible effects:

- 1) The non-accomplishment of an agreement, and the consequent recognition of the sovereign rights of the newly formed country,
- 2) The acceptance of the proposal, knowing that the next proposal would be worse than the previous one.

However, the new proposal would be ratified by UN and fortunately met a greater degree of concern within the Security Council than had been expected. In addition to Russia, which led the criticisms of the Ahtisaari plan on the grounds that it had not secured the support of Belgrade and Pristina¹⁷². To this end, the Council accepted a Russian proposal for a fact-finding mission to Brussels, Serbian and Kosovo, consisted of the fifteen permanent representatives in order that they have the

¹⁶⁹See: Security Council , *Statement by the President of the Security Council* <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Kos%20SPRST%202005%2051.pdf> and *UN: Security Council Deciding Whether To Start Talks On Kosovo's Future* , <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1062365.html>

¹⁷⁰ International Crisis Group, *Kosovo And Serbia After The IcJ Opinion*, Europe Report, N°206 – 26 August 2010.

¹⁷¹ See: UN Security Council Document, S/2007/168/, Add.1. 26 March 2007

¹⁷² Perritt Henry, *op. cit.*, p.3-12

chance to learn at first-hand about the situation in the province and the proposals that had been put forward.¹⁷³

On the other hand Washington insisted that they would support a declaration of independence by the people of Kosovo and declared that they would recognise Kosovo without a UN Security Council resolution¹⁷⁴. Soon afterwards, in mid-May, the United States and Germany presented a draft resolution to the Security Council proposing that Kosovo be awarded ‘supervised independence’ in accordance with the Ahtisaari proposals. Russia immediately objected on the grounds that it would not accept an imposed solution¹⁷⁵. Direct talks between Presidents Bush and Putin on the issue during the G8 summit in Germany failed to bridge the differences and it was obvious that the two sides would avoid any kind of compromise. Both US and Russia agreed that further talks between Russia, US and EU (the so called Troika) had to start again to bridge the differences and explore a new proposal.¹⁷⁶

After the repeated failures of the tripartite negotiation process, more and more states announced that the proposal of an independent Kosovo would be the best solution. There were several conditions invoked by countries that recognize Kosovo’s independence such as the right of self-determination, the will of people, the human rights, the statehood capacities and etc. All these conditions were recognized in case of Kosovo by more and more countries¹⁷⁷. Furthermore, US decision makers promoted that solution, because US after two successive wars in Iraq and Afghanistan could not afford its engagement to a third war or to send troops to participate in one more peace enforcement operation¹⁷⁸. As a result, from a very early stage in the process US officials made it clear to their EU counterparts that the United States intended to recognize independence. Europe could either agree or live with the consequences.

173 Caruso Ugo, “*Kosovo declaration of Independence and the International Community - an assessment by the Kosovo Monitoring Task Force*”, *JEMIE* 7 (2008) , European Center for Minority Studies, 2008 (2).

174 Ker-Lindsay James, *Between “Pragmatism” and “Constitutionalism” : EU-Russian Dynamics and Differences during the Kosovo Status Process*, *Journal of Contemporary European Research* .Volume 7, Issue 2, London School of Economics and Political Science, p. 2-20.

175 *Idem*.

176 Gerard Toal ”*Russia’s Kosovo: A Critical Geopolitics Of The August War Over South Ossetia*”, October 2008.

177 Grace Bolton & Gezim Visoka, *Recognizing Kosovo’s independence: Remedial secession or earned sovereignty?*, Oxford, St Antony’s College University of Oxford 2010, p.1-19

178 Cross, Sharyl, *Russia and NATO Toward the 21st Century: Conflicts and Peacekeeping in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo*, San Jose, 2001,p.5-20

Besides, Kosovo Albanians made it clear that they would resist to any attempt to reintegrate Kosovo back into Serbia¹⁷⁹, even under a high degree of autonomy, and the only feasible exit strategy became the independence. The four European countries adopted the proposal for independence as the only realistic solution¹⁸⁰. Russia also advocated that the solution must be approved by Kosovo Albanians. European decision makers understand that any solution has to be unanimous that means it needs Russian's acquiescence¹⁸¹.

During negotiation process, some anti-Russian prejudice was displayed by several states, because they considered that Russia took advantage of the Kosovo crisis to return in the international arena as a big power¹⁸². Putin's reaction against US and Europeans' intention to an eventual recognition of Kosovo was intense and also was criticized adversely by pro-Western political elite in Russia, which considered that such a development could cause domino effects to other Kosovo-like areas in the world and especially in the Russian open wound in the south Caucasus¹⁸³. In addition, US and EU did not take into consideration the issue of Slavic solidarity and the natural affinity that felt Russian population with Slavic states and the impact that might had the recognition to the Russian population. Above all, western negotiators underestimated the seriousness of Russian predominant argument that the recognition of Kosovo was against the international law¹⁸⁴, because Kosovo was recognized as Serbian territory under UN Security Council Resolution 1244, and as shown at the start of this article, any attempt to end Belgrade's rule over the territory without Serbian consent would necessarily undermine international law.

Comparing the attitude of EU against Russia and the US it is obvious that there was an in depth division in the attitude of European states and they failed to

179 Ker-Lindsay, James, Kosovo's status is still in doubt. Time to Britain to rethink the need for new talks, London, The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2010, p.1-3.

180 UK, France, Germany and Italy, see: A Kosovo Chronology
[<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/etc/cron.html>]

181 Grace Bolton & Gezim Visoka, op. cit., p. 2-14.

182 Denis Mancevic "The Russians are coming": Russian foreign economic policy to ex-Soviet states – the cases of Georgia and Ukraine, p.1-33.

183 Kosovo and the Caucasus: A Domino Effect, <http://inserbia.info/today/2013/12/kosovo-and-the-caucasus-a-domino-effect/>

184 Chris Borgen, Kosovo, South Ossetia, and Crimea: the Legal Rhetoric of Intervention, Recognition, and Annexation See: <http://opiniojuris.org/2014/04/02/kosovo-south-ossetia-crimea-legal-rhetoric-intervention-recognition-annexation/>

produce a joint position on the proposals. Furthermore, comparing their attitude with their previous attitude in other similar ethnic conflicts, where one group had sought to declare independence – such as South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Transnistria, it had adhered to the prevailing norms on secession and had strongly favoured reconciliation within existing borders. European (and US) officials have repeatedly sought to portray Kosovo as a “unique case” precisely in order to ensure that its effects are not felt elsewhere¹⁸⁵. It was made clear by Kosovo Albanians that any attempt to give them autonomy in the Serbian territory, would put in danger the safety of UNMIK (UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo).

On the other hand, Europeans considered that any proposal has to take into consideration the Serbian minority in Kosovo and the recognition needs a provision about the future of minority¹⁸⁶. Thus the European Union found itself with a serious dilemma. On the one hand, if it chose to take the side of Washington, and bypass the Security Council altogether, it would clearly raise serious concerns about international law. Furthermore, if it chose to align with Russia it risked the destabilizing of situation on the ground, which could lead to a rebellion against the UN and NATO and leave a dangerous vacuum in the Western Balkans. Britain and France were firmly supportive of Washington’s position, while a number of smaller countries were opposed to any kind of recognition of Kosovo, unless sanctioned by the UN Security Council.

In 2007, when the revised proposal was unveiled, the EU sought to allay Russian concerns that a status decision on Kosovo might set a precedent elsewhere. A number of attempts were made to persuade Moscow to change its mind but they were refused each time by Russians¹⁸⁷. When Putin travelled to Austria and Luxembourg and delivered a further warning against any moves to grant Kosovo statehood. Putin again stressed that no final decision on the status of Kosovo without Serbia’s agreement and warned that attempting to do so would set a precedent. By August 2007, when the Troika started its work, it appeared as if the European Union simply

185 *Majority Refuses to Follow US on Kosovo*, See: <http://de-construct.net/e-zine/?p=3154>

186 Steven Woehrel, *Kosovo: Current Issues and U.S. Policy*, Congressional Research Service, 2013, p.1-14.

187 Ker-Lindsay James, “Between “pragmatism” and “constitutionalism”, *op. cit.*,

abandoned its effort to persuade Moscow to change its position. Any attempt by Troika to achieve a compromise fell in deaf ears¹⁸⁸.

The attempt of Troika to show that any effort to provide a viable and fair solution in Kosovo in order to highlight the European unity was impossible, it understood that a political solution was imperative. In the end of 2007, most EU states discerned that the solution of independence was imperative.

In 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared independence from Serbia. Within days it had been recognised by the United States and a number of the larger members of the European Union. In the months that followed, many others followed suit. However, five EU members – Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Spain – have steadfastly refused to recognise Kosovo; as have Russia, China and the large majority of UN members.

3.4.5 After the Independence

The declaration of independence of Kosovo entered into force on February 17, 2008 by unanimous decision of the General Assembly of Kosovo. All 11 representatives of the Serb minority boycotted the decision. International reaction was mixed, and the global community divided on the issue of international recognition of Kosovo. The reaction of Russia to the 2008 declaration of independence of Kosovo is one of the powerful trumps of the Serbian opposition.

After the declaration of independence a number of serious incidents took place to confirm the constant danger of instability,. On 17 and 21 February 2008, demonstrators in Belgrade attacked several foreign embassies, drawing harsh international criticism of Belgrade's incapacity or unwillingness to prevent these incidents. Before and after 17 February, grenade and Molotov cocktail attacks were directed at UN and EU facilities and vehicles in northern Kosovo. Other attacks

188 *Troika considers introducing new text*
<http://www.b92.net/eng/news/comments.php?mm=10&dd=26&yyyy=2007>

followed on 21 and 25 February against border police at the Merdare and Mutivode posts.¹⁸⁹

On 3 March, Serbian Railways staff attempted to take control of a section of Kosovo's railway network in the municipality of Zeeman in northern Kosovo. Finally, on 17 March, UNMIK police and KFOR had to intervene to break the occupation of the district court in north Mitrovica by former employees demanding that they be returned to their jobs. This intervention provoked a reaction from local groups of Serbs, who mobilized to free some of the detainees. Allegedly using women and children in the front lines, they blocked the street, and attacked police forces and troops with small arms, grenades, and Molotov cocktails. Reports indicated some 100 foreigners and 80 Serbs wounded, and one Ukrainian UNMIK policeman deadly injured.

The 17 March UNMIK/KFOR operation appeared to have been more an ad hoc reaction to provocation than part of a carefully choreographed plan. Legitimate questions have arisen as to whether its timing, tactics and potential consequences were fully considered in advance. In addition, the ICO already faced problems. It abandoned its satellite office in north Mitrovica due to security problems and relocated the personnel to south Mitrovica.

The unilateral declaration of independence was widely viewed as a major defeat for European diplomacy. Having been recognized as the key actor shaping the future of the Western Balkans, the Union had singularly failed to provide leadership on the issue and fell victim to Russian and American machinations. EU states blamed mostly US as the major responsible actor. From the very start, a number of key actors openly sided with the United States on the question of independence, such as Britain and France.

Russia's opposition to independence without Serbia's permission was understood, but it was too late to change course. EU leaders sought to try to persuade Moscow – rather than Washington – to change its mind, even though the Russian

189 Szymon Kardaś, "Great Unfulfilled Expectations: Russia's Security Dialogue with Europe", NORDIKA Programme, February 2014, p. 3-6.

position on the question of mutually agreed secession was far closer to what would usually have been expected to be the EU position. However, little incentive was offered to Moscow to change its mind.

At the International level, EU High Representative Javier Solana, Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt and NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer were the only senior officials to visit Kosovo in the first month of independence. On 28 February in Vienna, several EU member states and the U.S. took the lead to establish an International Steering Group to supervise Kosovo independence. The International Steering Group, formed by twenty-two countries and not including Russia, is a shadow of the structure called for under the Ahtisaari plan and it is composed entirely of countries that support Kosovo's independence.

In March 2008, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov linked the demands for greater autonomy for Albanians in FYROM with the Kosovo issue. Lavrov said, "Whatever happens this is not accidental. The Albanians in FYROM have been demanding a level of autonomy that is a clear step toward independence. Furthermore, events in other regions of the world, give us reason to suppose that we are only at the beginning of a very precarious process "

On March 23, 2008, Putin ordered urgent humanitarian aid for Kosovo Serbs. The new Prime Minister of Kosovo Hashim Thaci, attempting to state his opposition to this project, said that Russia could send aid only if they had agreed with the government in Pristina¹⁹⁰.

Furthermore, the situation was made more complicated by Russia's continued firm support of Serbia and efforts to discourage recognitions and resistance to UNMIK downsizing. While the Serbian strategy was to divide Kosovo, the IC did not have a clearly defined and coordinated response. Moreover, Belgrade instructed Kosovo Serbs to refuse contact with the new EU missions by insisting that the only international presences with which it would cooperate were those mandated under Security Council Resolution 1244 of 1999, namely UNMIK and NATO.

190 Markovic Nina, « Russia's Role And Influence In The Balkans In The 21st Century: Investment, Energy And Politics», University of Melbourne , 2009. This paper was presented at the 10th Biennial Conference of the Australasian Association for Communist and Post -Communist Studies (AACaPS) in Canberra, 3-4 February 2011

The UNSC remains divided on this point: The five members with veto power, three (the United States, the United Kingdom and France) have recognized the declaration of independence of Kosovo and the Democratic Republic of China has expressed concern, urging the continuation of the previous frame negotiation of both sides. Russia rejected the declaration and considers it as an illegal declaration. On May 15, 2008, Russia, China and India issued a joint statement calling for new negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina.

Kosovo's independence has split the international community. The Ahtisaari plan, the ICO and the EULEX mission lack UN Security Council backing due mainly to Russian opposition. Therefore, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated on 18 February that: "It is my intention to act in an effective, realistic and concrete manner. In doing so, pending Security Council guidance, I might have to adjust to developments and changes on the ground". But in the face of strong opposition from Russia, which also held the presidency of the Security Council in March, to any Ahtisaari-like transition, he did not extended a public invitation to the EU missions.

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On 11 March, UN and EU officials met in New York to search for a cooperation formula; some concrete ideas were discussed, but no final plan was agreed.

As for the OSCE, the future of the Kosovo mission, which is supposed to provide much of the ICO's field presence, has been put into doubt by Serbia and Russia, which are keeping it on a renewable monthly mandate while pressuring it to be "status neutral."

Despite the fact that EU Member States have decided that each individual state will recognize Kosovo if it wants, the EU decision was taken by consensus, the EU had assigned to the Committee of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (known as EULEX) to ensure peace and continue the remote supervision. On November 26, 2008, the Security Council gave the green light for the deployment of EULEX in Kosovo. The EU mission operating under the resolution of the UN

191 Caruso Ugo, "Kosovo declaration of Independence and the International Community - an assessment by the Kosovo Monitoring Task Force", GESIS, May 2008, p. 5-9.

Security Council 1244 (UNSCR 1244) and was intended to take the role of police and the implementation of justice in Kosovo.

On the other hand, the diplomatic recognition of Kosovo by the US and its allies in February 2008 created new opportunities for Russian diplomacy to pursue systematically the reintegration of the independent Transcaucasian republics in the Russian sphere of influence. The Russian intervention in South Ossetia in August 2008 and the subsequent diplomatic recognition of independence South-Ossetia and Abkhazia came to confirm dramatic warnings of Vladimir Putin on a possible linkage between the case of Kosovo with those secessionist republics of Transcaucasia.

On May 29, 2009, President Medvedev described Serbia as the "key partner" of Russia, Southeast Europe. Russian Ambassador to Serbia Aleksandr Konuzin said in a statement in Belgrade in June 2009 that "We are ready to support Serbia's position in relation to Kosovo."

During the discussions before the International Court of Justice in December 2009, Russia said that the general international law prevent Kosovo's declaration of independence as secession is permitted only in cases of the former colonies and that the people of Kosovo has not the right of self-determination. He also recalled that the Security Council in two respective cases declared the independence of Northern Cyprus and Rhodesia as illegal.¹⁹²

The General Assembly of the United Nations on September 9, 2010 adopted a resolution calling for a dialogue between the Serbia and Kosovo. Both parties have indicated their willingness to participate in the negotiations carried out under the auspices of the United Nations and the mediation of EULEX.

Eventually, the first round of negotiations began on March 8, 2011 and since then it irregularly repeated. The Serbian side insisted that the agreements should be in accordance with the principles of the UN resolution 1244 and the Serbian Constitution, while at the same time, Belgrade made a great effort to put in the negotiations the issue of the future status of Kosovo. On the other hand, the leadership of Kosovo insists on the adoption of a new constitution and the principles of the

192 Markovic Nina, *op. cit.*, p. 3-9.

Ahtisaari plan. Russia as a permanent member of the UN Security Council firmly prevented the recognition of Kosovo and held steady its posture to abide by the principles of UN resolution 1244.

3.4.6 An assessment of the EU position

Following the recommendations made in the Ahtisaari proposal, the EU had started preparations for the deployment of two separate missions: an International Civilian Office, which, according to the Ahtisaari proposal, is meant to take over the leadership of the international presence in Kosovo from UNMIK; and an ESDP rule of law mission. The Council approved the deployment of these two missions on 4 February 2008, and the Council statement of 18 February places these two missions under the aegis of resolution 1244. Supporters of this approach cited paragraph 10 of the resolution 1244, which "authorizes the Secretary-General, with the assistance of relevant international organizations, to establish an international civil presence in Kosovo". Moreover, the EU contends that 1244 did not predetermine the outcome of final status talks.

Confirming the above interpretation of UNSC Resolution 1244, the EU was of the opinion that "acting to implement the final status outcome in such a situation is more compatible with the intentions of 1244 than continuing to work to block any outcome in a situation where everyone agrees that the status quo is unsustainable." In addition, Solana, in an interview to the Belgrade weekly NIN, declared that the decision of the EU to send its mission to Kosovo could have not be qualified as a violation of international law, although UN Security Council Resolution 1244 did not mention such a possibility. Furthermore, the European Union officially endorsed the Ahtisaari plan. However, some of its member states - Slovakia, Greece, Cyprus, Romania and Spain - are known to be cautious, due to traditional ties with Belgrade or fears of potential repercussions of Kosovo's independence in their domestic affairs. Thus, many of these countries found it difficult to recognize the independence of Kosovo in the absence of endorsement by the UNSC.

3.4.7 Co-operation among the International Organizations in Kosovo

The lack of proper co-operation within the IC is evident and can produce unexpected and negative effects in the next future. This is confirmed by the fact that the building of EU"s mandate in Kosovo; this has not been paralleled by a progressive

withdrawal of UNMIK. The absence of consensus within the UN Security Council has prevented this, and the UN Secretary General has so far refused to take any unilateral decision regarding UNMIK's mandate. Because of this uneasy situation, it remains unclear how the coexistence of these two presences will develop in the future. It is also unclear how these two organizations will interact with the new Kosovo institutions.

Another issue of concern about the future of the UNSC Res. 1244 is whether the resolution, which put an end to the conflict in 1999 and organized the international administration of Kosovo, remains valid and continues to provide a legal basis for the international presence in Kosovo. In his report dated 28 March, the UN Secretary General recognized that "the evolving reality in Kosovo is likely to have significant operational implications for UNMIK. Pending Security Council guidance, there might be a need for UNMIK to adjust its operational deployment to developments and changes on the ground in a manner consistent with the operational framework established under Resolution 1244 (1999)." However, co-operation has been hampered by the Russian influence in the Security Council. Moreover, holding the Security Council presidency in March, Russia is maintaining pressure on the Secretary-General to keep UNMIK well budgeted and staffed, and to resist UNMIK-EULEX transition.

But without consensus on Ahtisaari, there is no consensus on UNMIK's fate. The UN Secretariat is reluctant to allow the mission to start relinquishing powers to the Kosovo government and EU missions. UNMIK will remain for now, and Pristina and Belgrade are each already challenging it. Pristina is in fact determined to prevent UNMIK from assuming any residual post-transition role. "From June it has no job to do here....We will tolerate them longer only if the EU needs them for a few more weeks" is a common refrain.

The coalition of Kosovo's supporters does not want to force the pace of transition, and the 120-day period looks increasingly empty of content, with no specific benchmarks or agreed-upon timelines. UNMIK will not disappear as assumed under the Ahtisaari plan, and Kosovo may find itself with multiple international presences working towards different goals.

The poor cooperation between the European Union Planning Team (EUPT) and UNMIK is one example of this situation. EUPT has been inwardly focused, on its own mechanisms, and its concern to present a new face and not be tutored has created a legacy of poor communication with UNMIK Police. They have not shared reports, EUPT chose not to co-locate staff, and the two leaderships did not even meet during the weeks just before and after independence.

Concerning the co-operation between the EU and NATO, already in 2006, as explained by the international Crisis Group, the two organizations were working together, agreeing at the staff level on technical arrangements working out details covering four areas: border management, military support to police operations, response to civil disturbances, and information/intelligence exchange. At that time, NATO further insisted that its continued military presence in Kosovo would be independent of the ICR and that there would be no UNTAES-like unification of civil and military commands in a single official.

Two years after, the issue has not gain from talks initiated in 2006. For instance, before the independence communication between NATO and the EU was good in the field but dysfunctional at the political level, according to officials and experts. A top diplomat at NATO said there was “enormous frustration” on both sides that NATO and EU policymakers were not talking to one another even though they shared the same security goals in Kosovo. On the ground, however, co-operation were going smoothly, with a variety of agreements and joint procedures signed and ready to be signed as soon as the EU would receive its mandate for Kosovo.

Today, however, the cooperation between NATO and the EU is problematic. Blockages due to well-known political issues have prevented the EU mission from using NATO assets on the ground.

“Autonomy” is the key-feature for the OSCE too. On this issue, on 14 October 2007 Ambassador Tim Guldemann, Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, stated: “If the EU Mission is deployed and replaces the UN Mission, the OSCE Mission would become an independent mission, if all OSCE participating states agree to maintain the OSCE presence.” However, though its field presence is assumed to continue by the

EU planning for Kosovo, the future of the OSCE mission in Kosovo is still uncertain, as its continued presence on the ground is subject to monthly reviews.

In order to solve these problems, the IC should agree on a common, comprehensive strategy for Kosovo. Furthermore, more flexibility is needed to allow cooperation to be improved. An agreement to differ but work together would be suitable.

CONCLUSION

The above study aimed to demonstrate the shift taking place in Russia's foreign policy in the Southeastern Europe and especially in the Balkan Peninsula after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the role of Russia in the developments of Yugoslav crisis and particularly we focus in the role of Russia in the case of Kosovo. This engagement gave evidence of the bad situation of the Russian state the very first years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the consequences of this fact were reflected in the limited capacity of Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet era, particularly in an area which was under the Soviet sphere of influence for almost half a century.

The Russian foreign policy in the Balkans from 1991 to date was configured according to the development of domestic affairs and based on the aspirations of the Russian leadership in the area. Russia's involvement in the developments in Southeastern Europe was inspired by its inherent tendency to demonstrate its recovery and its quest for power in the international competitive environment after a long period of isolation due to its economic crisis.

Russia strove to reverse the adverse conditions that met in this area when it attempted the comeback in the international stage as a powerful actor. In long run in the post –Soviet era it was presented an escalation of the engagement of Russia's foreign policy in the Balkan region, following the revival of the Russian state, favorable of the growth of the Russian economy during Putin's governance. Additional emphasis was placed on identifying those elements which prove the role of economic reforms to the recovery course the Russian economy and subsequently the recovery of Russian foreign policy, partitioning the post-Soviet era in two main sub periods: the first period marked by the dominance of the president B. Yeltsin and the second period marked by the dominance of the president V . Putin, who has been proved a smart and visionary politician, more capable than his predecessor.

The first elected by people Russian president, B. Yeltsin, could not inspire his people the renaissance of USSR, because he seemed unable to face the huge economic problems inherited from the previous regime. Viewed with criticism the basic

components of the ideology dominated in the Russian foreign policy by Yeltsin, it demonstrated a clear lack of realism, consistency and coherency. So, there was little room for effective foreign policy in SE Europe, while the expanding eastward influence of the western coalitions, limited the occasions for an effective comeback of Russian entity in Eastern Europe.

His successor V. Putin, pursued to de-ideologize Russian foreign policy, replacing it with a "political realism". He recognized without hesitation the full integrity of the states of the former USSR and excluded all thoughts on the revival of the Soviet Union of his political agenda, putting in priority the economic growth which is essential not only for the survival of the Russian state but for an effective foreign policy. At the same time made it clear that Russia could not afford the role of exclusive regional superpower. Russia struggled to regain its place in the international system, optimizing its natural resources and its energy reserves. Balkan Peninsula was the energy road to carry its energy reserves to Western Europe to cover the increasing energy demands of Europe and for that reason it was concerned for a secure and under the Russian influence Balkan territory. Russia used Balkans to improve its international image and become a respected interlocutor in international affairs.

Russia due to the unfavorable economic situation it has experienced in the 1990s, could not play an important role in the Yugoslav crisis. Russia failed to prevent either the Bosnian or the Kosovo war. After the two wars, Russia participated in the peace negotiations and contributed to the peace implementation forces. Russia participated in the Dayton Accords as an observer and in the subsequent peacekeeping forces, which increased Russian prestige among Serb populations. Russia intentionally raising its profile as a protector among Serbs, but at the same time it was escalated its differences with NATO.

Russia in the case of Kosovo maintained a balanced foreign policy between Serbs and western forces. Russia did little to prevent the air campaign in Kosovo due to economic crash in Russia in 1998 and the subsequent financial assistance that was expected from western countries, but which followed a pro Kosovar foreign policy. On the other hand, if NATO did not engage Russia in the negotiation process, the outcome would be different. Russia had many similar to Kosovo issues in its borders with the new emerging states from Soviet Union. Furthermore, Russia was afraid that

NATO's airstrike in Kosovo would make a precedent to intervene in Russia's neighbourhood without UN mandate. In Kosovo there was more active participation by Russians special envoys in the peace negotiations process, in order to find solution for the peaceful withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo. Russia dispatched about 3000 troops to Kosovo between 1999 and 2003. When Russia pulled its forces out from Bosnia and Kosovo, played only a marginal role in Kosovo crisis. The Ahtisaari plan, which involves a major role for the EU as a transitional administrator in Kosovo, gave none to Russia..

Russia rejected the Ahtisaari plan, mostly because it opposed to its national interests, although it knew that the only viable solution for Kosovo was the *Declaration of Independence*, given that 90% Kosovo's population were Albanians. Furthermore, Russia pursued to ensure the protection of the Serbian minority in Kosovo, claiming that any action taken by international community for the recognition of Kosovo should be in accordance with international law, without creating any precedent that could be called by other secessionist regions in Russian borders. Russia's policy on Kosovo is based for the most part on its wider interests, historic legacies and concerns about precedents rather than on concerns about Kosovo itself. After the declaration of independence despite the Russian veto in UN, more and more countries recognized the independent Kosovo adopted the Russian point of view. Kosovo is not recognized by other countries that have Russia alike fears of actions taken by their own secessionist movements.

The most influential supporters of an independent Kosovo such as the United States, major European players such as France, United Kingdom and Germany and most other Western states argued that the case of Kosovo is unique and people of Kosovo are responsible to determine their future. This implies that people can decide for themselves who governs them. According to the United States this is also applicable for external self-determination, and thus independence. The two sides of the conflict seem to follow their own political agendas, than caring for legal arguments. In this sense the matter of recognition is a political affair, rather than a legal one. The issue of stateness in the Kosovo case depends on the will of people of Kosovo to be governed. Consequently, the concern and the primary target of International community in Kosovo should be how to establish democracy in an

emerging state where the elected government should respect the human rights of the Serbian minority, rather than bloc its independence.

In conclusion, Kosovo crisis and the procedures followed for the recognition of independence is tangible example of pluralism that exists among international actors based on their national interests and a field that prevails the aspect of big powers which are always the regulators of the developments. From the crisis of Kosovo and up to the declaration of independence the US and EU played a leading role, while Russia kept defensive attitude in order to maintain the current situation. Russia during that period was powerless to influence the outcome of any international crisis. After the declaration of independence Russia and primarily through its role in the UN Security Council prevented the legitimization of independence by UN, while most countries proceeded unilaterally to the recognition. On the other hand, Russia during Putin's governance took advantage of the Kosovo crisis to achieve successfully its exit from the international isolation and demonstrate its value as a considerable force in the global competition for power. Russia promoted its national interests through the crisis of Kosovo, alleging the circumvention of international laws in the Kosovo's declaration of independence, revealing the arbitrariness with which NATO was acting as a global policeman. Overall evaluation of Russian engagement in crisis of Kosovo, one can conclude that Russia hardly hindered the international recognition of Kosovo, but its efforts raised its prestige in the international stage and enforced its position as a equivalent interlocutor of USA in the international affairs.

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