

American policy on the Balkans: Successful story or a diplomatic failure?

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Abstract

The United States of America is a country which left a significant mark and still has a strong influence on the world political scene and the changes in the international relations especially in building the strategy of worldwide foreign policy.

The paper will try to give an overview of the events that marked the 1990's of the last century, with an accent on the breakup of Yugoslavia and the role of U.S. foreign policy in this period. The paper will especially focus on the process of the dissolution of Yugoslavia as well as the role of the United States in the Dayton Agreement and the ways of implementing the peace through the assets of diplomacy. Dayton differed from the traditional methods of negotiation in a way that included the U.S. leadership and its implementation depended on the will of the international community, especially the United States who led the efforts.

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The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of a new chapter in the world politics that the previous stable and predictable system of international relations replaced by a insecure international framework which was characterized by fragmentation in the international relations and the emergence of strong nationalist tendencies within the states. The end of the Cold War was manifested through certain events that prevailed on the international political scene at that time. The defeat of Communism, manifested by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union imposed the need for redefining the relations on a global level.

The United States from the Second World War emerged as one of the strongest countries. Characteristic of the United States in the period after the Second World War was the opposition of the relations with the Soviet Union, a period known as the Cold War.

In the years that followed the Second World War, the US foreign policy relied on the power of the nuclear weapon. The nuclear weapon was a helpful way to ensure that the Western Europe will rely on the United States as a guarantee of their own security rather than looking for external adjustment with the the Soviet Union (Office of the Historian. US Department of State).

The beginning of the Cold War was an expression of the failure to implement the principles agreed on the conferences in Yalta and Potsdam (Scott 2007). Soon, The United States started again to confront with the Soviet Union militarily, economically and politically.

After the Cold War, the United States enjoyed a degree of world hegemony. The French often critically disposed towards the United States, invented a new word -

superpower, to describe the American status without precedent (Safire 2003).

Within a short period in the early 90 - es, peace and world order seemed achievable. The end of the Cold War and the sudden defeat of the Soviet Union eliminated the major reasons for national tensions and reduce the threat of nuclear disaster. President George Bush proclaimed a new world order led by the United States. Fukuyama welcomed the "end of history", the absolute triumph of capitalism and democracy over fascism and communism (Fukuyama 1992). Despite all these event, from today's perspective, it is important to note that the end of the Cold War caused an explosion of ethnic regional conflicts in the South Eastern Europe.

At the end of World War II, Yugoslavia emerged as it was conceived in Jajce. By 1948 Yugoslavia was the best student of the Soviet Union (Dokmanovic 2005). However, during the time the relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR were deteriorated as a result of the desire of the USSR to dominate with the communist countries by underestimating them economically (Dedier 1953). It is important to note that Stalin systematically and cold prepared the subordination of Yugoslavia, as the central point in South Eastern Europe. He profusely used the fact that Yugoslavia was under threat from the other great powers in the early years of the war and USSR were trying to complicate those relations in order Yugoslavia to become their prey (Dedier 1953). These were the immediate causes of conflict between these two countries.

The interests of the United States in the Balkans

During the Cold War, the American - Yugoslav relations were defined within the broader context of relations East - West.

The United States supported Yugoslavia in its independent course since decided to go to the way of self-governing socialism, separated from the USSR with the Resolution from the Inform bureau in 1948. Relations between Yugoslavia and the United States basically remained good over the years due to the fact that the United States respected Tito in order to prevent any association of Yugoslavia to the Soviet Union. In other words, the United States needed an ally in the region in order to prevent penetration of the USSR to the heart of Europe.

Nationalism as a destiny of the Yugoslav Peoples

Besides the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States faced new problems in the region of South Eastern Europe, especially in the Balkans (Cox; Stokes 2008). With the end of the Cold War, the ethnic hatreds reached the boiling point and the state began to fall apart. Among the other factors, the disintegration of Yugoslavia was caused primarily by nationalist tensions among the two biggest nations, Serbian and Croatian. Serbian nationalism was embodied through Milosevic's efforts to create a Greater Serbia, and the thesis of supporters of Milosevic that they were the last line of defense and rescue of Yugoslavia as an equal union of all Yugoslav nations in which the Serbian people should get an equal position. The Croatian nationalism unlike Serbian was dedicated to the creation of a new independent state that was largely distinct from those of the other Yugoslav peoples. The supporters of Tudjman developed discourse in which Croatian nationalism constituted contrary to the others, especially

against the Serbs / Yugoslavs, which hampered the real development of the Croatian people. The Croats communist system interpreted as something that is imposed from the outside - by Serbia in this particular case, not by the Soviet Union.

The Dissolution of Yugoslavia and the administration of the President George Bush

George Bush was the 41th President of the United States. The function President he performed from 1989 to 1993, when inherited Ronald Reagan. The period in which the president George Bush led the United States signifies quite turbulent chapter in the world history. Precisely in his time, major changes have occurred on the international political arena. In these years, the world was facing with the collapse of the Soviet Union, which in some way signified the end of the policy of balance between the two superpowers – the United States and the Soviet Union.

George Bush took the office in a time when the Soviet Union was disintegrating and when Moscow was looking for a new framework of understanding with the West. The question is: *"What was the position of the United States in the new world order?"* Given the fact that the future of the Soviet Union was clear, even clearer was the role of the United States in the new world order. After the Cold War the United States were the most powerful country on the world's political scene militarily as well as economically and politically.

In the period between 1989 - 1990, the focus of the Bush's policies were aimed at finding a way to deal with the collapse of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and consequently, how to deal with the effects that were caused by the collapse (Smith 1994). Along

to this, the Bush administration was engaged in war with Iraq known as the Gulf War.

The administration of the President George Bush supported the promotion of democratic - liberal values around the world, especially in the countries that emerged with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and the new states in Eastern and Central Europe. Perhaps the greatest triumph of the Bush administration aimed at spreading democracy worldwide, was the moment of spreading democracy in Latin America, especially with the election of Violeta Chamorro as president of Nicaragua, which marked the end of the eleven years of governance of the regime of Sandinista.

The winter 1990 -1991, the Bush administration was concerned about the resistance to changes in the Soviet Union. The situation became especially alarming when Eduard Shevardnadze resigned from the position of Foreign Affairs Minister, accusing Gorbachev that he was moving too much to the right and its approach to the right could result in reforming the Communist Party, or worse with preparing a military coup. In such a situation, Washington had to recognize that its impact on Moscow was limited, given the fact that certain events on the domestic political scene in the USSR, might have a negative outcome for U.S. policy in the region.

Perhaps the biggest failure of the Bush administration was the failure to comply with the European Union on the issue of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, since they were engaged with the events in the Middle East, or the development of the situation that culminated with the attack of United States on Iraq as a result of the Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Where the American interests were threatened, the ultimate asset of diplomacy was used. Thus, the United States used force to deal with the problems that emerged in

the Middle East. Through the launch of "*Operation Desert Storm*", U.S. foreign policy was focused on events related to the Gulf War ((Office of the Historian. US Department of State).

The Relations Between the United States and Yugoslavia during the dissolution

This section will cover the views of U.S. diplomats and officials about the question of dissolution of Yugoslavia.

During the whole period since the start of the crisis until the final outcome, the position of the United States regarding the question of dissolution was unchanging. The United States advocated for united Yugoslavia.

Since the start of fueling the crisis, the United States condemned the use of force as a tool for achieving political goals and undermining the democratic process of peaceful dialogue.

The events that marked the crisis in the Yugoslav presidency with the non election of Stipe Mesic for president of the Federal Presidency in June 1991, caused reactions by American side. The United States called for unimpeded transfer of the constitutional power. The United States expressed support for progress towards a democratic and unified Yugoslavia. According to them, the unhindered constitutional transfer of power in accordance with the accepted practice was a very important step in that direction.

For the United States the dissolution of Yugoslavia was unacceptable but also unacceptable was the violent preservation of the unity of Yugoslavia because in this way democracy would be stifled, considered the U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmerman. He also mention that the script for the peaceful dissolution could not be

imagined. Zimmerman said that democracy and unity were inseparable principles upon which the American foreign policy toward Yugoslavia was based (Zimmerman 1999).

One of the most important events in this period was the visit to Yugoslavia of the Secretary of State James Baker. James Baker visited Belgrade on 21 June 1991. The visit was aimed to confirm the position of the United States in order to support the united and democratic Yugoslavia. According to him, this should be achieved through dialogue, without violence and bloodshed. Baker believed that opportunities for dialogue aimed at resolving the crisis have not been exhausted yet. In other words the republics still could agree on a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

Dissolution of Yugoslavia

In 1991, Yugoslavia amid fierce ethnic fighting faced with the collapse of the long-standing common state. The conditions for collapse of the political regime of "self-governing socialism" and the conditions for failure of his model "real socialism", among other factors, should be sought in the immanent weakness of this regime, which among other things also belonged: institutionalized political monopoly of the Communist Party (SKJ), permanent inferiority of the "self-governing social economy" compared to the market economy in terms of meeting the material needs of members of society, the growing deficit, as well as the legitimacy of the regime (Goati 1996).

The dissolution of Yugoslavia was the final outcome of the open hostilities between the member states of the Yugoslav federation. What all feared, yet there was to happen. In less than four years the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed as a result of the three year exhaustive war on the territory of

Bosnia and Herzegovina with which two entities were established: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska.

Several years after the Dayton agreement, Kosovo was the flash point of a new conflict. The situation once again required a long standing political, financial and even military assistance from the Western countries. The reason for such set of circumstances, inevitably leads to the question about the quality of the policy of the Western countries in this region (Meier 1999).

Dayton

In the period between 1991-1995, Bosnia represented the chaos that many feared after the Cold War. After the breakup of Yugoslavia in Bosnia as ethnic composed state the violence reached a shocking degree of brutality. Thousands of people, mainly Muslims were kidnapped from their homes to be subjected to violence and terror. Influential at that time was the comment of Robert Kaplan who noted that: "*Such bloodshed can only be explained as the release of old ethnic hatreds between Serbs, Muslims and Croats that Cold War pushed in the shadow*" (Kaplan 1993).

In May 1993, President Clinton sent the Secretary of State Warren M. Christopher to Bosnia in order to find a solution for the conflict. Europe hoped that finally will find out how America plans to intervene, but Christopher was sent to Bosnia as an observer. The European Allies were not so happy about this because they expected a strong leadership from the President Clinton regarding this issue. The war in Bosnia had taken a larger scale. This situation stressed the American foreign policy. Some of the officials such as Madeleine Albright, Lake and Holbrooke advocated for stronger

intervention. Others, including Christopher, wondered whether it is worth their effort and believed that the United States only retained the problems rather than solving them.

In the summer 1995, the number of victims in Bosnia reached 300,000 and more than a million people have fled. As the conflict took a larger scale, Islamic extremists from the Middle East arrived in Bosnia in order to help the endangered Muslim population (Chollet 2005).

In July 1995, Serb forces flooded the small town of Srebrenica and thousands of Muslim men and boys were massacred. This genocide was one of the greatest horrors in the history since the Second World War. This situation has strengthened the position of America towards intervention.

Clinton's new policy was aimed at implementing the strategy of NATO airstrike over Bosnian Serbs if they continue to attack the Croatian and Muslim population. In this way, the UN officials had first to identify the targets before any air attack. The bombing by NATO coincided with sending new diplomatic support in order to conclude a peace treaty. A key figure in this diplomatic support was Richard Holbrooke, tireless negotiator who understood the connection between military force and diplomacy. In November 1995, a delegation of Holbrooke managed to bring the warring parties to negotiate in Dayton, Ohio. Twenty-one day the representatives of the international community and the representatives of the warring sides in Bosnia, negotiated to reach an agreement in order to stop the war. At the end of 1995, sixty thousands NATO troops, including twenty thousands Americans were present on the territory of Bosnia in order to begin the process of implementation of the agreement (Warren 1998).

Dayton and the future of the Balkans

The Dayton Agreement introduced a different way of resolving violent conflicts. In the past, the success or failure of peace negotiations depended on whether a conflict was ready for resolving. The maturity of the negotiation process depended on a number of factors including the common perception of the parties that an agreement through bargaining is desirable. (Haass 1990). Dayton differed from the traditional methods of negotiation in a way that included the U.S. leadership as well as pushing the opposing sides to negotiate. This approach not only had a profound impact on the stability of the agreement that was reached, but the implementation depended on the will of the international community, especially the United States who led the efforts (Daalder 2000).

Conclusion

The fact that in Yugoslavia there was an opportunity for a different political outcome is an indisputable. Only if the political elites took a different position in terms of the common good, not in order to satisfy their own appetites and desires the chaos could be prevented. Until the outbreak of the civil war in Slovenia in June 1991, the position of the international community was to preserve Yugoslavia. After the outbreak of the war, the process of disintegration of Yugoslavia became inevitable, and the international community played a less important role than internal factors.

The secondary role of international community and the untimely response from the same lead to a major disaster in the Balkans, which undoubtedly could have been avoided.

Unfortunately, the administration of the President George Bush did not deal with the problem. Moreover, this condition was inherited by the next President of the United States William Jefferson Clinton.

The fact that the administration of the President Clinton used force aimed at ending the war in former Yugoslavia, raises the question of the quality of the American foreign policy in the Balkans and the fact that if they reacted on time, the disaster might be prevented. Transferring the responsibility from one to another, the European Union and the United States failed to deal with the problem in the former Yugoslavia respectively.

This entails another question: If we make a comparison between the approach of the Bush administration and that of Bill Clinton, we can not say which of them was successful. We can not claim that the approach of the Bush administration was wrong, nor to claim that Clinton was successful only because he put an end to the war in Yugoslavia. The approach of the administration of the President Clinton aimed at using force to deal with the situation caused by the civil war, is marked as a failure of this administration, and thus for the President himself. The fact that the United States used military force to achieve results is a clear indication of the inconsistency of the foreign policy of the United States in the region, if you take into account the commitments of the United States for a peaceful resolving of the Yugoslav crisis.

The success of the U.S. administration in Dayton had a great influence on the American foreign policy. Three areas were particularly emphasized: First, the way in which the Dayton Agreement was reached retreated primary responsibility of United States for the future of Bosnia. As a result of this the United States were engaged in

Bosnia and in the next few years that followed the Dayton Agreement, American soldiers were present on a Bosnian soil. The only question was: Why would United States accept engagement for such period of time? The answer would be: to ensure that violence will not be repeated, and in order to build a multiethnic, democratic and prosperous Bosnia. Second, the U.S. policy toward Bosnia in 1995 had a major impact on how the Clinton administration and others saw the connection between the diplomacy and the power. Finally, the war in Bosnia has proved essential for the return of the United States foreign policy towards Europe on the right track. Within a few years after Dayton, the vision of Clinton for Europe is that of a undivided, peaceful, democratic was on the right direction to become a reality.

The crisis in Bosnia was of great importance for the United States because they helped to continue the process of integration into NATO, a policy that continued into the next administration. Providing security, NATO has given support through the necessary reforms that have been allowed to enter the Warsaw Pact countries into NATO. The policy of expanding NATO, promoted by Clinton, was a significant factor in creating a peaceful, undivided and democratic world.

The end of the war in Bosnia represented a turning point for the American foreign policy. The experience with the war in Bosnia had an impact long after the finishing of the war. This experience has shown that America used military force to achieve results.

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