

DISMEMBERING YUGOSLAVIA AND ESTABLISHING THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO. EFFECTS ON THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SYSTEM

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Abstract

The case of Kosovo represents an ethnic conflict pronounced at maximum in which the nationalists Serbs appealing to armed pressure, combined with acts of violence, summoned the Kosovo Albanians, discriminated in all aspects, to leave their homes. According to the UN data on refugees' problems, the number of Kosovo Albanians threatened by genocide danger passed one million persons. This fact motivated the EU and NATO to resort to extreme actions.

The two millions Albanian ethnics claiming for independence have obtained it. Kosovo independence is a consequence of the internationalization on large scale of the dispute and the involvement of the international community in this conflict, in elaborating and taking responsibility for a project validated by the United Nations. The Kosovo subject was presented by mass media as a dangerous example for many areas in Europe with similar problems, especially for Russia but also for other regions on the European continent in which the „the Kosovo solution” raised hopes among the separatists. The disputes on the issue of territorial separation such as the Basques and Andalusians, the North Ireland Movement, Walloonians and Flemish, Corsicans, the Lombardy League, and why not the problem of Transylvania, are just some of them.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, Kosovo, geopolitics, international relations, interethnic relations, Balkans, UN

INTRODUCTION

The intention for elaborating this analysis came from the attempt to summarize in one paper the postwar evolution of the Kosovo province in Yugoslavia, the geopolitics of the Yugoslavian space, the facts which lead to the dismemberment of this state and mainly the reaction of the international community to the dismemberment of Yugoslavia. Not lastly, I have chosen this case study because the Former Republic of Yugoslavia and the current Serbia is a neighboring state of Romania and its dismemberment had a strong echo in our country. Because of repeated Yugoslavian crises, Romania faced a period of fears concerning a possible extension of the crisis beyond the Yugoslavian borders, able to destabilize the entire region. That kind of threat has proved to be, fortunately and for the moment, groundless.

The aim of this paper is to clarify, in a simple and comprehensive fashion, the complicated issues aroused in a geopolitical area distinguished by its immense conflictual potential. In order to do this, the paper first analyzes the geopolitical aspects concerning Yugoslavian space at the end of the twentieth century, as well as the international community reaction to the dismemberment of Yugoslavia. For a better comprehension regarding the geopolitical context, I will present a short historical approach of the studied area as the foundation for the future establishment of the Republic of Kosovo.

From a historical perspective, the dismemberment of Yugoslavia and The Soviet Union in 1991, two ethnical-federal communist states, announced the end of an era in international relations. The exit of the Soviet Union from the international scene in 1991 essentially contributed to the transformation that had started with the reforms of Gorbachev. In a similar way, the collapse of the Yugoslavian state in 1991 represented a challenge for the new post-communist international system capacity to maintain the basic principles of international order, as they were included in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975.

The essence of the political international system, more precisely its polar structure (bipolar), has been affected by the changes that took place in the Soviet Union. The Yugoslavian crisis generated inside the international system a crisis of efficiency in the moment in which the foreign politics of the important powers proved to be inefficient and incapable of putting an end to the ethnic cleansings, genocide and change of borders through force. The international community proved as such not to be capable to face the rapid political changes in Europe that followed the Cold War.

While the relations between Greeks and Albanians are considered to be “strained”, the ones between Serbs and Albanians become explosive. This is also due to ethnic problems – to be more concrete, due to the two millions Albanians that live compactly in Kosovo. Cradle of the Serbian civilization in the Middle Ages, the place where the national voivodeships were born and have died, the Kosovo province became deeper and deeper embedded in the Albanian culture starting with the end of the 19th century. Propitious were in this case the geographical and historical conditions favored by the policies undertaken by the Ottoman Empire, and afterwards by the rule of Tito (Zbucea, 2001, 99). Belgrade did not renounce to the idea that the regions belonged to the Serbian state entity. The Albanians from the Serbian province asked for independence, while the most radical claimed also for the unity with Albania. In its intention to put an end to the bloody conflict that could rekindle the Balkan „powder keg”, the international community offered, at Rambouillet, a solution that would satisfy both parts: an enlarged autonomy inside the actual borders of Yugoslavia (*După Bosnia Kosovo?*, “România Liberă”, 19.05.1996).

Unfortunately, both the Serbs and the Kosovo Albanians refused to sign it. The military intervention of NATO led to the end of the conflict and to serious political and social changes in the region. The involvement of big powers put

under light even more the secular disability of the states in the area to install a peace atmosphere in the region. This fact would make Professor Dr. Gheorghe Buzatu to state in his paper "Război în Balcani. Iugoslavia, primăvară sângeroasă la sfârșit de secol" (Balkans at War. Yugoslavia, a Bloody Spring at the End of Century – my translation) the following: „What did the great powers aimed at in Kosovo in 1999? There, right now, they are fully picking the fruits of their own errors, which were not small and definitely they were not the last ones” (***,1999).

GEOPOLITICAL ASPECTS IN THE YUGOSLAVIAN SPACE AT THE END OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Yugoslavia, starting with its establishment in 1918, was a European and Balkan pole of instability, tensions and interest games of the big powers. With traditional enemies in the North, with allies which did not respect their engagements, this state could not face the internal and international contradictory evolutions to the end of the millennium, a fact materialized in the disintegration of the federal state. Yugoslavia has always been a big artificial entity united only by the common language imposed by the authorities and by the permanent external danger. This fact did not impede the ethnic groups to be in a constant dispute. Following the death of Tito in 1980, the Yugoslavian state – lacking its dictatorial personality – confronted with the decline of the communist doctrine, started to disintegrate. Because of this action, five states resulted, complicating at maximum the geopolitical relations existing in the area. The big states and the states in the area acted according to their own interests, mostly divergent. The war in Yugoslavia underlined that the Balkan area was a space in which geopolitical and geo-strategy placed question mark regarding future evolutions.

After 1945, the communist regime under the rule of Tito, tried to remove the weaknesses noticed in the interwar period. Major efforts were done to counterpart the desire for monopole of the Croatian and Serbian rules (Zbucea, 2001, 87). Through dictatorship, Tito succeeded in maintaining the unity of the Yugoslavian people by creating a true federal system, reuniting all of the six constituting republics: Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The central authority remained in Belgrade, fact that offended especially Croats that were, under those circumstances, ruled by Serbs. The Yugoslavian mosaic reproduced, at a smaller scale, the ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of the Balkan Peninsula. Regions in the North have been inhabited by Catholic population, with a more developed economy and Western behavior, while the South regions, former areas ruled by Turks, where the Orthodox Church benefited from the tolerance of the Ottoman Empire, have had low developed economy. The decentralization of power led immediately to a stronger development of each republic and province in part, but mostly to the promotion of nationalism and simultaneous abandonment of federal ideas. The emergence, after the death of Tito, of some factors of other nature emphasized and

offered force to the centrifuge tendencies of the federal state. The most important factors were: the economic decline; deepening of the differences between the economic developed areas and the poor areas; the exodus of workers from the South to the North, fact which advanced the ethnical heterogeneity in republics; the numerical raise of unemployed persons; the decrease in the living standards. Based on the provision regarding self-determination and national independence, written in the 1974 Constitution, in 1991 Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and afterwards Bosnia-Herzegovina separated themselves from Yugoslavia (Posea 1999, 52).

The situation emerged in former Yugoslavian space, in only a few decades, cannot have a base and cannot be explained only by the fact that the problems of the national minorities have not been solved. The idea that stood at the basis of constituting the Yugoslavian federal state was that it could have become a modern and developed European state. Unfortunately, each Yugoslavian people, no matter how much they earned or lost, felt like the other cheated.

Considering the evolution and the attempts of the international community to solve the Yugoslavian crisis, some geopolitical conclusions can be drawn. The sovereign state continues to be considered by the nations lacking a state as a panacea for their real or imaginary discontents, but also as a „vehicle” for satisfying their ambitions.

The International community does not selectively apply the self-determination principle. The recognition of Croatia by the EEC inferred that the Serbs in this republic constituted a minority and not a nation, although the entire problem being at the origins of the Serbian-Croatian conflict derives from the insistence of the communities to maintain the nation state. The important problem of minorities also covers aspects related to self-determination. Theoretically, minorities are beneficiary of human rights and the right to self-determination. The separation of these concepts is difficult to argue. As such, the Albanians from Kosovo argued that their rights (the rights of minorities) had been violated. The Serbs wanted to stop a possible succession of the region but not to violate the minorities' rights. When the Croatians denied the Serbian quality of constitutive nation of the republic, they knew they created a situation meant to stop the secession of one minority.

Another conclusion that results from the Yugoslavian crisis is that a way to solve the tensions between two fundamental and internationally accepted principles – that of inviolability of frontiers and of self-determination – resides in the subordination of one to the other. The frontiers and not self-determination should be sacrificed, as the desire of a nation to build a state cannot but temporarily be suppressed. In Yugoslavia, the EEC supported the secession of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, which changed the map of Southeast Europe. The abandonment of one principle in a certain context and its reformulation in a different context is an error. This has led to the exodus of people, to complaints and tensions.

At the same time, it was necessary a rapid and efficient reaction from the part of the international community in front of ethnic tensions with conflict potential.

The realities existing in 1992 in the Yugoslavian space were instable but also hard to accept. Only Slovenia, with an “uncolored” ethnic structure but also with an organized economy and with uncontested borders, could hope for a security climate. Instead, Croatia had a strong and numerous Serbian minority, but also a high number of citizens on the territory of other republics. Not a single Croatian party renounced to the idea of the “Big Croatia”, becoming already a revisionist state that in the future would try to obtain all the territories inhabited by the members of their ethnic group.

Serbia had big issues regarding the Kosovo area but also the Sandzakul area, with unsatisfied Muslims that could follow the Kosovo model. The Hungarian ethnics from Vojvodina could decide for a secessionist course of action if there will be favorable conditions. In these circumstances, Serbia is obliged not to cede anything as in this way the dismemberment process could become irreversible as well as the coming back of Serbia within the frontiers confirmed at the Berlin Congress (1878).

Bosnia-Herzegovina, internationally recognized and member of UN and OSCE, remains a state with multiple and serious problems. The possibilities it has once the UN forced withdraw would be: a reentrance into the state of war, implementation of agreed treaties which foreseen a unified state, with a central government that unites two entities – Serbs and Croatian Muslims; an armed ceasefire through which the limiting lines between the entities would become permanent division lines, without a central government. There is the possibility for the state to dismember, with Croatia and Serbia each annexing a part of the country, leaving a Bosnian mini-state to survive around the Sarajevo capital. This fact would affect the fragile stability in the Balkans with consequences on the relations between Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Macedonia.

With reference to Montenegro, a republic that together with Serbia forms Yugoslavia, it is also possible for it to opt for secession. Some years later the two states separated, which practically meant the end of Yugoslavia.

The crisis that Macedonia passes through will lead to conciliation with Serbia, with the aim of eliminating the Albanian-Muslim danger. The reluctance towards Bulgaria denotes the Macedonian attempts not to generate a large-scale conflict in the region from which nobody would have anything to win.

From all of the former neighbors of Yugoslavia, only Bulgaria is favorably situated in order to have territorial requests. Albania, being in a strained economic situation, will not to be able to construct its nationalist rhetoric on a complete force in the near future.

Unfortunately, a general political agreement to satisfy all parts is a non-realistic plan. The international involvement will also generate disputes and confusions, and it is even possible to regret the helping hand offered to the

dismemberment of Yugoslavia.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY REACTION TO THE DISMEMBERMENT OF YUGOSLAVIA

The Western reaction to the disintegration process of Yugoslavia could be divided in two distinctive periods. The first period dates from the plebiscite organized by Slovenia in December 1990 and the adoption by Croatia in the same month of a new constitution, up to the independence proclamation by both republics on June 25, 1991. During this period, almost all Western countries, with few exceptions (Germany and Austria), refused to recognize the two republics. The politics of Western states towards Yugoslavia is mainly based on the support for the territorial integrity principle against the right to self-determination.

The referendums in Croatia and Slovenia on the topic of independence that took place in December 1990 and May 1991 respected the general accepted procedures through which an ethnic community tries to obtain the recognition of the right to self-determination from the part of the international community. As such, these referendums were compatible to the ones organized in the Baltic States approximately in the same period. Anyway, the majority of Western leaders did not have this opinion at least until the middle of 1991.

In the USA, President Bush considered the Croat President F. Tudjuman and the Slovenian President M. Kucan as being nationalists in search for conflicts. Both were regarded as supporting a „suicidal nationalism” politics, as the American President declared in Kiev on August 1, 1991. There was no chance that the Bush administration would support these states.

After the intervention of the Yugoslavian federal army against Slovenia, followed by the proclamation of this state's independence, the politics of Western governments towards Yugoslavia has changed considerably and there started to appear a kind of sympathy towards these two republics. The violent military intervention, the surprising resistance of the Slovenian forces, followed by the defeat of the federal army, made the public opinion in almost all Western countries to express itself stronger and stronger in favor of the two republics.

Some weeks before Slovenia and Croatia proclaimed their independence, the American state secretary James Baker arrived in Yugoslavia and informed the leaders of the republics that „the US and EC will not recognize these two republics in case they will unilaterally leave the Yugoslavian Federation and will not beneficiate from economic support and assistance”.

In the first crisis of this type following the end of the Cold War the EC member states identified two new threats towards the European stability: these were Slovenia and Croatia. Instead, the Yugoslavian communist government and the federal army were trying to maintain in the European conception the state integrity and the European stability. This preference for maintaining the status-quo existing in the Balkans, even if it meant keeping a communist party at rule, against the obvious dissatisfaction of the population, characterized the Western politics

towards the Yugoslavian Federation.

Although not expecting for international support, still Croatia and Slovenia did not expect such a hostile reaction from the part of the West. Ironically, the US and some influential members of the EC (France and Great Britain) decided not to take into account the fact that the parliaments and governments of Croatia and Slovenia were democratically elected and that the great majority of citizens (the Serbs from Croatia boycotted the referendum) in the two republics voted in favor of independence. Hence, in „The Economist” there were written the following: „The West wrongly trusts the federal government which is weak and undemocratically elected”.

There were at least three distinct elements that have influenced the position of the US and the European Community towards Slovenia before the 1991 June war between the Slovenian state and the federal army:

1. Maintaining the existing status quo (keeping Yugoslavia) means to maintain stability in Europe.
2. The European states that supported the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia had their own problems, being confronted internally with strong autonomist movements or even secessionist movements. France had problems with the separatists in Corsica, Spain had problems in the Basque Land, while Great Britain continued to have problems in Northern Ireland.
3. Two key states, the US and France, usually having divergent opinions regarding the European issues, were leading the states’ coalition that opposed recognizing the independence of Croatia and Slovenia. Both states, the US and France, had a political culture and a historical experience opposed to the requests of Croatia and Slovenia. The US had to go to war to maintain federalism, while France resistance to decolonization (see for example Algeria and Vietnam) and its political belief „the republic is one and indivisible” did not leave room for supporting the self-determination principle. It was unrealistic for Slovenia and Croatia to expect diplomatic recognition from the part of a country that recently denied to existence of a „Corsican people”. Hence, it was not surprising that the French External Relations Minister Roland Dumas declared: „the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia would put gas on fire”.

After the start of the war between Slovenia and the federal army in June 1991, the drive of the EC to maintain a Yugoslavian federal state started to decrease and some Western governments started to talk openly about the recognition of the two republics. The Danish and German governments argued that „the independence of the two republics is according to the self-determination principle mentioned in the Helsinki Act for security and cooperation in Europe from 1975”. Austria, which even before the military intervention was in favor of the independence of the two states (territories that were part of the Hapsburg

Empire), was notified by the Bush administration not to „encourage separatism in Slovenia”. On July 3, the state secretary James Baker told his German correspondent that „Bonn makes a mistake to wish now for the recognition of these two states”.

The violent intervention of the federal army dissatisfied not only the states that sympathized with Slovenia and Croatia but also the states that tacitly supported the military intervention because the violence of this intervention became incompatible with their declared policy of respecting human rights.

In addition, the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) took the initiative to solve the crisis, in July, through an emergency session during which it decided to send a mission to Yugoslavia, mission that would „establish a new constitutional order”. The Yugoslavian federal government refused to accept the mission that it considered to be an interference in the internal affairs, being strongly supported by the Soviet Union. Finally Yugoslavia and Soviet Union agreed to support the CSCE mission but with the condition that this would have a limited scope, that of facilitating a political dialogue between the parties involved. The Soviet Union insisted that this mission would not be considered an example applicable in the future also to other states.

The Yugoslavian crisis in 1991 demonstrated the limits of CSCE, an institution in which the activity can be paralyzed by using the veto right by a single member state. The CSCE functioned according to the consensus rule. This rule combined with the principle from Helsinki regarding non-interference in the internal affairs of a state, could block the CSCE initiatives and seriously diminish its efficiency.

Due to a bigger homogeneity and due to the different decision making process, the EC was more suitable to face the Yugoslavian crisis than CSCE. This does not mean that the EC exercised an effective control upon all the actors in the Yugoslavian crisis.

In the case of Yugoslavia disintegration, the violent character of the process, the atrocities committed and the lack of dialogue made necessary an intervention from the part of international organizations (UN), EC and US.

After the failure of EC and CSCE to get to a solution for solving the Yugoslavian crisis, the UN decided to intervene more actively in the Yugoslavian conflict. The UN activity reflected the attitude that the permanent members of the Security Council had towards Yugoslavia. The wars in Yugoslavia were considered civil wars and not aggression wars, and it was necessary to send humanitarian aids and peacekeeping forces in the area and not a peace making force. The national interests were relevant also inside the UN, and in Yugoslavia were sent peacekeeping forces. Their inefficiency was fully proved (they did not succeed in demilitarization of the conflict areas, nor to allow the return of refugees) and the UN mission was doomed to failure. The third one after the ones of the EC and CSCE.

The US position in the conflict can be defined as a run from responsibility.

With the fall of the Iron Curtain and the end of the Cold War, the US reconsidered its position and its strategic interests in the world. In the absence of the geopolitical competition with the Soviet Union, the American leaders considered they were allowed a relaxation and retreat attitude, ignoring the Yugoslavian conflict and arguing that the US national interests are not affected by the Yugoslavian crisis. In the American mindset, the EC and CSCE should find a solution, and not the US. Anyways, the US attitude evolved from indifference, to sustaining the integrity of Yugoslavia, and in the moment it became clear that the USSR will fall down, the US did not mention anything about the Yugoslavian unity. In April 1992, the US recognized the independence of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The repeated internal and external critics, the repeated breaches of human rights in Yugoslavia and not lastly the fall USSR woke up the American administration from lethargy and determined it to pass to more decisive actions in Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslavian crisis and the disintegration of the federal state generated a differentiated approach, more indecision, more hesitations and changes of position, and the Western unity in front of this problems leaved much to be desired. The US was running from responsibility and involvement, France, Great Britain and Germany and different opinion and interest related to the Yugoslavian wars and crisis, while the UN attitude reflected integrally these disagreements.

The USSR dismemberment affected the essence of the international political system, its bipolar structure. In reality in the moment the USSR dismembered, the international political system was not bipolar for a long time. Its character transformed in the moment that Gorbachev started to implement „the new political thinking” and renounced to the competition with the West in favor of collaboration. The disintegration of Yugoslavia generated instead an efficiency crisis inside the international system when the big powers did not manage to come to an amiable solution in the case of the Yugoslavian crisis.

Both dismemberments left their prints on the international system. If we attempt to relate to the importance and the role that Yugoslavia and USSR played in the international system, we can easily notice that USSR was a world superpower, sharing this statute only with the US, while Yugoslavia was a regional, Balkan power. Its importance in the international system rose especially because of the USSR, more specifically due to the ideological break between the Yugoslavian and Soviet communist. During the Cold War, Yugoslavia benefited from the support and backing of the West, while the West used Yugoslavia as Trojan horse in the communist camp. Once with the end of the Cold War the importance of Yugoslavia at the international level considerably diminished, the start of the Yugoslavian crisis raised low interest at the international level. „The Salvation” came again from USSR. Both states faced the same type of problems: the nationalisms from the republics and their resistance to the attempts of centralization from the two communist federations. However, USSR as opposed to Yugoslavia had gained the Western consideration through the reforms initiated and the new international attitude, but its integrity represented a major political

objective for the US and Western Europe. The decision to support the integrity of Yugoslavia was in fact the result of the decision to maintain the unity of USSR, in order to avoid the creation of a precedent for Yugoslavia. Once again, Yugoslavia became more important at the international level due to the Soviet Union.

THE PROVINCE OF KOSOVO – A SHORT HISTORY

Kosovo is a contested region in the space of the former Yugoslavia. The biggest part of the region is under the administration of the Kosovo Republic, partially recognized. Serbia does not recognize the Kosovo secession, and considers it to be an entity ruled by the UN within the state sovereignty, as the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohia, being recreated by Slobodan Milosevic, after the Serbian constitutional reforms from the end of the 1980s.

Kosovo does not have an exit to the sea and is neighboring Serbia in the Northeast, Macedonia in the South, Albania in the West, and Montenegro in the Northwest. Pristina is the capital of the province and the biggest capital in Kosovo. In the past, Kosovo was part of the territory of the thracian-illiric tribes, afterwards of the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Bulgarian Tsardom, Serbian Tsardom and the Ottoman Empire. In the 20th century, it was divided between the Serbian Kingdom and the Montenegro Kingdom, while in the end returned to the successor state, the Yugoslavian Kingdom.

Kosovo, the poorest of the Yugoslavian regions, an area that nobody, not even the other Yugoslavians visited, was the one that started the decay of the state created by Tito. The situation in Kosovo was unnoticed in the West, while in Slovenia and Croatia it was regarded as an inevitable burden for their republican budgets, as well as the most undesirable destination for the recruits that has to serve the national military service.

The Serbs' obsession for the Kosovo province will maybe never be conceivable for foreigners. Even from the beginning of the 17th century, the Serbs stopped to represent the majority of the population in this region, which few Serbs have ever visited, with the exception of the ones that actually lived here. In spite of all this, for the majority of Serbs, out of which not all are extremist nationalists, Kosovo is a holy place (Bennet, 1998, 114), doomed to remain forever Serbian. This sentimental attachment to Kosovo, called „cradle of the Serbian nation”, cannot be explain but as coming from a collective feeling of nostalgia towards what it could be, if the medieval Serbian Empire would not have been destroyed by the Turk assault over Europe. Its roots are in the Serbian Orthodox Church, which propagated and perpetuated the national conscience during the Ottoman domination, and in the legends from the Serbian folklore transmitted from one generation to the other during the centuries.

The Serbian claims over the province of Kosovo could not be compatible and cannot be compatible even today with the fact that Albanians represent the majority of the population in this province, which explains the brutality of the Yugoslavian administration in Kosovo between the two world wars and even until

the end of the 1960s. When Tito decided to emancipate the Albanians in Kosovo, the new politics was inevitable against the interests of the Serbs in this province and of the Serbian national ideals. Therefore, although he tried to be impartial in the relations between the two peoples, refusing to transform the Kosovo province in a republic, as the Albanians would have wanted, Tito did not succeed to determine the Serbs to accept the new order.

On March 11, 1981, the students from the Pristina University organized a demonstration through which they protested against the poor living standards in the hostels. When the police abused force against the demonstrators, the revolt extended in the entire province, the local communists asked for help from Belgrade, and on April 3, the martial law was instituted.

The consequences of the disturbances and repression in 1981 were not immediately visible, although the recourse to force was an extremely significant element. In the vision of Tito Yugoslavia was conceived in such a way that theoretically all-Yugoslavian peoples could feel that they belong to the same motherland and they will benefit from the same treatment as the rest of the country. Tito himself always tried to be impartial and not favor any people against another people, and to be able as such to intervene any time and solve any possible conflict. Nevertheless, when the JNA (Yugoslavian federal army) set its guns against the Albanian citizens of the country, the Tito vision on Yugoslavia suffered seriously at its basis. Only one year after its death and more than one decade before the country started to decay in a civil war, the Yugoslavia of Tito had already disappeared, at least at the conceptual level, even if formally it continued to exist.

The relations between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo were strained, having at the basis an extremely low level of living in a continuous decline. The Albanians in Kosovo were decided to maintain at any price the advantages they recently received regarding the autonomy and got to the conclusion that the best way to realize this was for the province of Kosovo to become a republic. Instead, the Serbs in Kosovo which felt more and more threatened as their percentage related with the total population continued to drop (Almond, 1994, 205), did not see with good eyes this dream and were decided to determine the revocation of the quasi-republican statute of the Kosovo province. These disputes were more and more inflamed by the nationalist feelings, which Tito succeeded to keep under control, but which a politician lacking qualms could now exploit.

On April 27, 1987, in the Kosovo town of Polje, the place of the former tragic battle, which now hosted the central headquarter of the Serbs and Montenegrins Committee in Kosovo, Milosevic launched an offensive against Stambolic and in fact against the Yugoslavia of Tito. In a discourse at the television, he confirmed the genocide allegations against the Serbian nationals and appealed to the war traditions of the Serbs, promising: „Nobody will ever beat you.”

Before Milosevic had the discourse in Kosovo Polje, not a single communist politician, not even Stambolic, did launch an open appeal to the local

nationalisms of one of the Yugoslavian peoples. In the veritable tradition of Tito, the political discourse was extremely boring and formulated in a complex jargon which aimed to put in fog any potential controversy and to consolidate the belief in Titoism. Milosevic became the first politician that renounced to the Titoist jargon and, once with it, at any attachment towards the idea of national equality. After a series of discourses, its message became clear: the Serbs needed to fight for their rights as nation, and he, as president of the Communists' League in Serbia, could best lead this fight in the name of all Serbs.

The decisive battle in the disintegration of Yugoslavia did not take place in 1991, but in 1987 (Bennet, 1998, 127). The fight was not between Serbs and non-Serbs, but between two wings of the Communists' League in Serbia, between the supporters of a Serbian national ideology incompatible with a multiethnic country and the ones that remained attached to the concept of multinational state. The main protagonists were Slobodan Milosevic, on the part of the Big Serbia, and Dragisa Pavlovic, that became the main defender of the Stambolic wing in the Communists' League in Serbia, while the battlefield was the Communists' League in Serbia itself and the Serbian mass media.

The fight for power from within the Communists' League in Serbia peaked during the eight plenum, in September 1987, when Milosevic asked for the exclusion of Pavlovic. On September 23, Milosevic won the battle, while Pavlovic was swept. Three months later, Stambolic himself, beaten and helpless, resigned from the position of president of Serbia, while Milosevic replaced him with an acolyte of him.

Step by step Milosevic raised the pressures exercised upon the leaders of Vojvodina and Montenegro, which were already unpopular and generally considered corrupted and arrogant, until, towards the end of the year, tens and even hundreds of thousands of demonstrators started to gather regularly around the parliamentary buildings, asking from here the resignation of governors. In the absence of any support from the part of the federal authorities, both governments were paralyzed by the explosion of nationalism and conceded Vojvodina in October 1988 (Glenny, 1992, 34), and Montenegro in January 1989. Immediately after the members of the governments resigned they were replaced with supporters of Milosevic, which started a process of radical cleansing of the society, the party and the mass media. The demonstrators used to throw in the parliamentary buildings with residues of yoghurt from the free meal they received, which made the demise of the governments of Vojvodina and Montenegro to be known outside Serbia as „the yoghurt revolutions”. Although non-violent, they were still revolutions in the real meaning of the word, which inclined the balance of power in Yugoslavia in favor of Milosevic.

While Milosevic dismembered piece by piece the Yugoslavia created by Tito, the federal authorities did not know how to react. When the attacks upon Vojvodina reached their peak, the president of the federation, Raif Dizdarevic, warned that he may need to put in force the emergency state, but then withdrawn

this idea, in order not to trigger the start of a civil war when more than 350.000 persons demonstrated in Belgrade against the interference of the federal government.

When Milosevic started its assault in Kosovo, The Communists' League in Yugoslavia, weaker and weaker, decided that the best tactic was to sacrifice the rebel province. The Serbian communists were terrified by the escalation of nationalism in Serbia and tried to convince themselves that by sacrificing the Kosovo province, they could satisfy the ambitions of Milosevic, hoping at the same time that the problems in this province could trigger his fall.

On March 23, the legislative chamber in Kosovo, surrounded by tanks and flown over from low altitude by Mig airplanes, was forced to accept a new constitution by which the authority was conceded to Serbia. Five days later, in an atmosphere of big happiness, the Serbian Parliament also proclaimed officially the constitutional changes that destroyed the last vestiges of Tito's Yugoslavia.

The balance of power in Yugoslavia was decisively inclined in favor of Milosevic because of the victory in Kosovo. At that moment, he controlled four out of the eight federal entities and had enough power to be able to ignore the federal opposition. Until then, the CLY accepted tacitly the brutal attacks of Milosevic, but the situation changed after the turbulences in Kosovo, when the Slovenian communists, under the pressure of the local public opinion, broke the lines.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

The Albanian-Serbian conflict related to Kosovo has a larger resonance than the other conflicts in the area. The territory of the Kosovo region was populated from the Middle Age by both peoples, representing a mix province, a border province. The ratio between the two communities was different in time and the invocation of historical motives for dominating the region is equally founded and unfounded for both parts (Glenny, 1992, 103). The Yugoslavian crisis unleashed after 1989 had in Kosovo one of the main starting points. Initially, the Albanians in Kosovo asked for this region (10.900.000 km² and 1.530.000 inhabitants) a statute identical with the one of the six republics, but, once with the radicalization of the positions of Croatia and Slovenia asked for independence from Belgrade, and in Pristina the separation tendencies from Yugoslavia became more and more evident. In this situation, Milosevic suspends in 1990 the statute of autonomous province for Kosovo, the area being put under strict military control. In February 1998, the situation in Kosovo suddenly started to damage, the province proclaiming its independence under the name of Republic of Kosovo. Apparently, the US does not support the separation aspirations of the Albanian nationalists. Still, the Serbs considered that behind the problem were the Americans that could not remove Milosevic after the crisis in Bosnia (Serebrian, 1998, 104).

After the end of the War in Kosovo and the end of the bombardments of NATO upon Yugoslavia, the territory entered under the interim administration of the United Nations. In February 2008, the Assembly in Kosovo declared that the

province is independent and known as the Republic of Kosovo. Starting with November 9, 2009, the independence is recognized by 75 UN state members. On October 8, 2008, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution that requests the International Court of Justice in Hague an advisory opinion regarding the problem of the independence declaration of the Kosovo province. The two big ethnic groups in Kosovo, Albanians and Serbs, manifested hostility towards each other during the history until the present moment, each group claiming that the region belongs to it.

On June 3, respectively June 5, 2006, Montenegro and Serbia declared their independence, signaling the end of the Yugoslavian state. Kosovo continued to be a subject of territorial dispute between the Republic of Serbia and the self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo. Kosovo declared its independence on February 17, 2008, while Serbia argues that it is part of its sovereign territory. Seventy-one from the 192 state members of the United Nations recognized Kosovo.

The Assembly in Kosovo with a unanimity quorum adopted the independence declaration of the Republic of Kosovo from Serbia on Sunday, February 17, 2008. All of the 11 representatives of the Serbian minority boycotted this action. The international reaction was divided between the states that recognized the independence of Kosovo and the states that did not recognize it.

On February 4, 2011, the Republic of Kosovo obtained 81 official diplomatic recognitions as independent state. Seventy-five out of 193 (42%) state members of the UN, 22 out of 27 (81%) state members of the European Union and 24 out of 28 (86%) state members of NATO recognized the Republic of Kosovo. Serbia refuses to recognize its independence. Currently 87 out of the 193 state members of the recognized the independence of the Republic of Kosovo, which is also member of the IMF and the World Bank. Five member states of the EU refused to recognize the independence of Kosovo: Cyprus, Greece, Slovakia, Spain and Romania.

More states expressed their concern on the unilateral character of the Kosovo's declaration, or explicitly announced that they will recognize an independent Kosovo. The UN Security Council remains divided over this dispute: out of the five members with veto right, three (US, Great Britain, France) recognized the independence declaration, while China expressed its concern, urging the continuation of the former negotiations. Russia rejected the declaration and considers it illegal. On May 15, 2008, Russia, China and India made a common declaration in which they requested the launching of new discussions between the authorities in Belgrade and Pristina.

Although the EU member states decided individually if they would recognize Kosovo, the EU through consensus requested the EU Mission (EULEX) in Kosovo to ensure peace and continue the external monitoring. Due to the dispute in the UN Security Council, the reconfiguration of the UN Mission for the Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the partial transfer to the EULEX mission encountered some difficulties. Despite the protests in Russia and Serbia, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon continued with the reconfiguration plan. On 15

July, 2008, he declared: „Taking into account that the Security Council is not able to offer guidance, we have informed the Special Representative to go further with the reconfiguration of UNMIK ... in order to adapt UNMIK to a changed reality”. According to him, „the United Nations Organizations maintained a strict neutrality position regarding the problem of the state of Kosovo”. On November 26, 2008, the UN Security Council agreed to the deployment of the EULEX mission in Kosovo. The EU mission functions according to the UN Resolution 1244 that first placed Kosovo under the UN administration in 1999.

A resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on October 8, 2008, supported the request made by Serbia to ask for an advisory opinion from the part of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the independence unilaterally proclaimed by Kosovo. The International Court of Justice presented its advisory opinion on July 20, 2010, concluding that the independence declaration of Kosovo „did not breach any applicable norm of the international law”.

Due to the claims of Serbia that the Kosovo territory is part of the sovereignty's integrity, its reaction included also the recall of its ambassadors from the states that have recognized the independence of Kosovo for consultations for some months, accusing the Kosovo leaders of high betrayal, and announcing plans for judging the case at the International Court of Justice. At the same time, Serbia excluded the ambassadors of the states that recognized Kosovo after the vote in the United Nations General Assembly on the initiative of Serbia for asking an advisory opinion from the part of the International Court of Justice.

The Kosovo case represents an ethnic conflict pronounced at maximum in which the Serbia nationalists appealing to armed pressure, accompanied by acts of violence, summon the Kosovo Albanians, discriminated in all aspects, to leave their homes. According to the UN data on the refugees' problems, the number of Kosovo inhabitants of Albanian origin being in danger of genocide bypassed one million persons. This fact motivated the EU and NATO to resort to extreme actions.

The two millions Albanian ethnics who wished for independence have obtained it. The independence obtained by Kosovo is a consequence of the internationalization on large scale of the dispute and of the involvement of the international community in this conflict, in the elaboration and taking responsibility for a project validated by the United Nations.

The Kosovo subject was exploited by the mass media also as a dangerous example for many areas in Europe with similar problems, especially for Russia but also for other regions on the European continent in which the „the Kosovo solution” raised hopes among the separatists. There are well known the disputes on the territory of Spain with the Basques and Andalusians, the North Ireland Movement, Walloonians and Flemish, Corsicans, the Lombardy League, and why not the problem of Transylvania.

As we know, in international relations there are no feelings but only interests. As such, the position of the actors involved directly or indirectly in this

conflict strictly reports to each one's interest. Of course not always the position of a state or organization is unanimously supported by its members. The states that refused to recognize the independence of the Republic of Kosovo were entitled to proceed as such, firstly because of their internal position. Maybe the best example is Russia, where Kosovo can create a very dangerous precedent in the South Caucasus area (Sergentu, 2011) and not only (Azerbaijan and Mountainous Karabakh, Moldavia and the Transnistrian area).

There are also states that have recognized the independence of Kosovo despite the risk generated by the possibility of a diplomatic precedent. Surely, the economic-social situation and the internal mechanisms of functioning in these countries offer a certain security regarding the separatist moves, no matter if we talk about France, Italy or Great Britain.

Unfortunately, the events in the last years determined in Serbia the credibility of the integration in the EU to ruin, making place to more anti-European forces, although the EU politics seeks to strengthen the cooperation between it and Serbia, without any form of conditionality (Lazea, 2012).

The conflicts in Southeast Europe (either passive, or active) made for the Balkans to become after Caucasus the second region of high conflict seismicity in the world, but without any doubts the Balkans outrun in terms of gravity of the conflicts and impact upon the global geopolitical climate the Caucasian conflict area (Serebrian, 1988, 88). Usually, each of the Balkan conflicts area studied as separate entity and probably do not represent such a big danger, but the real danger is caused by the accumulation of tensions in time, fact that could trigger a chain reaction detonating the entire subcontinent and involving inevitably the big allogenic powers.

CONCLUSION

In 1997, an armed rebellion starts in Kosovo against the Serbian rule. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) started to launch attacks against the Serbian and Yugoslavian forces, but also against the Serbian and Albanian officials and others considered by KLA „collaborators”. Although the Serbian response was pretty minimum, by the middle of 1999 hundreds of people died and 100.000 of Albanians in Kosovo remained without houses.

The conflict culminated in 1999, when more than half of the Albanian population searched for refuge and some hundreds have died. After the end of the conflict, the majority of the Serbian population in Kosovo and Roma, searched for refuge in Serbia, being afraid of or experimenting persecution from the part of Albanians that looked for revenge, adding to the big population that was already in refuge.

Meanwhile, Milosevic was not considered anymore a peace column. On May 27, 1999, he was imprisoned and accused by the ICTY for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Kosovo. Despite this, Milosevic still beneficiates from support and popularity.

He constantly argued that all his actions were according to the law and constitution of Yugoslavia. The constitution made a clear difference between the terms of „nation” and „people”, and as Croatia was a nation it comprised also other peoples beside the Croatian one, including many Serbs. Milosevic claimed that the law offered self-determination to peoples, and not nations. On this basis, he affirmed that the Croatian Serbs, and later, the Bosnian Serbs, should not have been the subjects of the independence declarations made by Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

He admitted to have sold arms to Bosnian Serbs, but he affirmed he stopped delivering arms when it proved that they were used in massacres. At the same time, he denies the fact that Serbia was ever in war. During the wars in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia, Milosevic was only president of Serbia, and not of Yugoslavia, and argues that his government was involved indirectly through the support offered to Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia. Many are skeptical regarding this claim, but also on his intentions. The biographer Lebor considers that Milosevic broke the links with the Bosnian Serbs due to the excessive inflation.

In Kosovo, Milosevic argues that he recognized the right of the Albanians to „self-determination”, but not to independence. Likewise, he argued that the KLA organization has a neo-Nazi character and wanted to ethnically purify Kosovo, and after the independence, the province will get in their hands. He often referred to Kosovo as an essential part of Serbia due to its history, numerous churches and culture.

On the massacre of Albanians in Kosovo in 1998, Milosevic denies to have given orders. He considers that there have been sporadic events in the rural areas in the West of the province, committed by paramilitary and rebels. He claims that the members of the Serbian army or police involved in the massacres were convicted to many years of prison.

The Kosovo case represents an ethnic conflict pronounced at maximum in which the Serbian nationalists appealing to armed pressure accompanied by acts of violence summon the Kosovo Albanians, discriminated in all aspects, to leave their homes. According to the UN data on the refugees’ problems, the number of Kosovo inhabitants of Albanian origin being in danger of genocide bypassed one million persons. This fact motivated the EU and NATO to resort to extreme actions.

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